Reflecting on the Role of Non-Profits in the Refugee Claimant Process:
An Inquiry into the Welcome Collective

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Abstract

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Emma Tallon

During the 'neoliberal turn' and the disinvesting the in social sector (1980s-2000s), over 830,000 refugees entered Canada either through the Federal Government's Resettlement Programs or private sponsorship (Picot, 2019). Simultaneously, the government began off-loading social responsibilities to non-profit organizations to reduce government responsibility, including the support of refugee communities. Since then, non-profits have become key actors within the refugee claimant process. Drawing from ethnographic data, including in-depth interviews conducted with service providers at the Welcome Collective, a refugee aid organization in Montreal, Quebec, as well as participant observation, this thesis explores the role of non-profits in assisting individuals within the refugee claimant process. Service providers discussed their roles as not only mediators, but actors in providing both material and immaterial support to meet the needs of refugee claimants. This thesis makes use of Institutional Ethnography (IE) to investigate the importance of differentiating between vulnerability and precarity within refugee aid. Within Canada, the State follows a vulnerability narrative when managing refugee populations—focusing on the individual and their ability to integrate into the economic system, as well as society more-broadly. Conversely, precarity underscores the external circumstances acting independently of the individual that serve to hinder mobility and erase past identities. It is in engaging with both the local, the refugee community, and the trans-local, the State processes, that one can uncover non-profit's complex role within the refugee claimant process—one that must maintain a relationship between the local communities and trans-local processes. It is through IE that the Welcome Collective's infrastructure of care for refugee claimants becomes evident, including their use physical space, relation to the government, as well as their work with documents, that all work in tandem to destabilize the State's vulnerability narrative and suggest a relational narrative that acknowledges the level of precarity.

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Thank you to Rhea, my friend and 'unpaid-therapist.' Our conversations always bring clarity and peace for me. Without them, I would not be where I am today. I am forever grateful to have you as a guiding light in my life.

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Dedication

Like everything I do in life, this thesis is dedicated to my Dad, Paul Tallon. My Dad was the reason I began my research initially. He has always been biggest support and advocate and continues to be so to this day. I am forever grateful to have him by my side.

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time"

T.S. Eliot

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Introduction: *Research Methodology: Shifting the Narrative from 'Vulnerable' to 'Precarious'*

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In early December, I made my way to the Welcome Collective's warehouse located on the ninth floor of an office building. The Welcome Collective began in 2018 as a network of thirteen women working together to collect donations in support of Syrian refugees arriving in Montreal. Since then, the organization has grown quite rapidly into a registered non-profit organization that specializes with equipping families with the necessities of home upon arrival in Montreal. I had moved to Montreal two months prior. I was looking forward to seeing the university campus, getting to know my fellow classmates and Professors (whom I had 'met' only via Zoom), as well as exploring a new city. Yet, this proved to be difficult. The summer before I moved to Montreal, my family and I went through a period of turmoil. My Dad passed away in early-August. Not only was I in a new city and dealing with the loss of my Dad, but I was also away from my Grandma and dog, Blue, who had become my rocks and continue to this day to be so. I was in search of a community, something that would be emblematic of home and belonging. It was in this time in my life that I found that Welcome Collective, and for that I am forever grateful.

The Welcome Collective focuses firstly on meeting the immediate material needs of refugee claimants, including but not limited to clothing, kitchen appliances, and furniture. All the donated items are sorted and stored in the Welcome Collective's warehouse—fully stocked from floor to ceiling—and then delivered by one of the Welcome Collective's drivers to the refugee's home. After the immediate needs are met, the organization then provides social support, including connecting those involved to other organizations offering health, housing, and educational support, as well as food bank locations. By early December, I had been volunteering at the warehouse

consistently for a month and a half and I was already feeling comfortable approaching the service providers and asking them questions. Once I finished sorting through newly arrive donations (consisting mostly of baby clothes and blankets), I sat with Kate, the Communications Coordinator at the Welcome Collective. Before commencing my fieldwork, I knew that I did not want to follow a traditional interview framework. Instead, the interviews I conducted followed a dialogical form—pulling from Shamser Sinha and Les Back (2014) who called for the dismantling of "the relationship between observer and observed, data and analysis and participants and authors" (Sinha and Back, 2014: 476). Regarding migrants, Sinha and Back (2014) observed how the traditional interview framework tended to *reproduce* that of the nation-state; one of domination and hierarchy. Akin to the authors, I was motivated to move away from this in my own engagement with the refugee claimant process in Canada.

I started with simply asking Kate to tell me about herself and what got her to where she is today. I provided her with the space to direct the question as she saw fit. Akin to many of the service providers at the Welcome Collective, Kate began as a volunteer with the Welcome Collective's Welcome Group—whereby she was partnered with a newcomer family, consisting of a pregnant single mother, in Montreal to help them to feel safe, comfortable, and, above all, supported in the city. Her reasoning for getting involved was personal. She is originally from the United States and recognized that many of the claimants arriving in Montreal at that time were pushed by U.S. policy from their homes where they have lived for many years, as reflected in initiatives such as then-President Donald Trump's 'Remain in Mexico' policy, the targeting of the 'Diversity Visa Program,' as well as deliberately slowing applications for green cards and

permanent residency cards (Keck and Clua-Losada 2021). "I felt *outraged* that the government that represents me was making people's lives so difficult," Kate explained to me. She worked alongside the Welcome Collective's service providers and made sure that the woman had furniture in her unit, as well as all the necessary connections to other organizations, including food banks and healthcare, particularly to aid the woman in her trimester. She said that her work as a Welcome Group Representative made her wonder, "What would they do if they did not have Welcome Collective? [...] If there wasn't Welcome Collective, she [the woman] wouldn't have a mattress to sleep on." Kate's role as a Welcome Group Representative begged her to realize that there are many other individuals and families that are falling not simply between the cracks in Canadian society, "but *gaping holes*." As my work with the Welcome Collective revealed, these 'holes' include everything from housing, furniture (i.e., mattress, couch etc..), and household essentials (i.e., kitchen appliances), to providing social support and inclusion, including but not limited to language training and employment and education resources.

I then asked Kate how she envisioned the 'future' of Canada's refugee claimant process in an ideal world. With her being the Communications Coordinator, our conversation inevitably shifted to the use (and power) of rhetoric. Kate said she envisioned a government-led public relations campaign that humanized refugee policy, rather than denoting refugees through a one- dimensional lens. Kate's critique is reflected in the Canadian media. For instance, Victoria M. Esses and Stelian Medianu (2013) explore the media's objectification of refugees in Canada through citing the media's common argument against the arrival of Tamil refugees: that "they were bogus refugee claimants trying to take advantage of Canada's lax refugee system to get into the country

illegally" (528 emphasis added). Jason Kenney, the Immigration Minister at the time, echoed concerns of illegality, as stated in the Vancouver Sun, "We obviously don't want to encourage people to get into rickety boats, pay thousands of dollars, cross the oceans and come to Canada illegally" (Hansen, 2009). In contrast to the rhetoric employed by Kenney, Kate argued that a public relations campaign that served to value refugees would "*imbue all of society*" and shift societies' often negative imagination of refugees.

Kate expanded on the need for humanized policies in discussing the difference between 'vulnerable' and 'precarious.' Rolf Pendall, Brett Theodos and Kaitlin Franks (2012) offer interesting insight into this distinction. They state that there are two subsets of vulnerability: vulnerability and precarity. While the authors highlight that precarity and vulnerability are related terminologies, it is important to differentiate between the two to highlight the external circumstances outside of the individual. Within the original understanding of vulnerability, the focus is on the *individual's* circumstances—their experience, emotions, and personal turmoil. It is, therefore, up to the individual to confront their circumstances. Meanwhile, within precarity, the responsibility is on the external circumstances and the institutional, economic, and social barriers that can hinder refugees from being able to sustain themselves. For instance, within the refugee claimant process, there are various external factors that relate to one another that serve to hinder mobility and growth, such as difficulties claiming asylum, trouble entering the country, as well as trouble accessing necessary services once arrived, such as housing, clothing, and healthcare. The concerns speak to the precarious nature of the refugee claimant process—chocked full of barriers, complications, and above all, lack of government support. In highlighting the relationality of precarity, one can recognize the various

factors influencing the experience of newcomers. The authors reason that, in contemporary society, the focus is on vulnerability, not precarious circumstances (Pendall, Theodos and Franks, 2012: 288). Therefore, it is often seen as the *individual's* responsibility to change their circumstances. This is problematic, as it does not consider the previously mentioned external circumstances that people confront in being able to live as refugees in Canada. It is ever more important to make the distinction clear and develop a comprehensive framework that responds to the relational and precarious nature of the refugee claimant process and meets the legitimate needs of the community. As was evident in my conversation with Kate, it is a lack of understanding of the community's actual needs that is a contributing factor to the insecurity of refugees. We discussed the great power that lies in shifting the narrative away from envisioning refugee populations as 'vulnerable' towards 'precarious', as precarity implies the vulnerability of someone's *physical* situation that is both beyond their control and not their job to fix. It became clear to me in this conversation; the problem is not to do with individual refugee claimants, as certain media outlets and governing officials would like society to believe. The problem is external and involving a multitude of relations, including individual to the State, individual to non-profit, as well as non-profit to the State—to name a few. One way to approach the question is through Institutional Ethnography, which theorizes the relationality of the refugee claimant process and observes it in daily practice.

To refer to the question I posed above, the 'gaping holes' Kate typified are difficult to identify because society is consumed with 'single vulnerability' and neglect the precariousness of vulnerability, the external nature of the problem extending beyond the individual. It is challenging to identify the gaps in the delivery of services when one

is not facing the gaps themselves. Often, this is evident in the lack of infrastructure available to newcomers in accessing services or even claiming refugee status. For instance, if one is not able to claim asylum, they are not able to enter the country. Conversely, if one does not understand English and is unable to access a translator, they are unable to complete the necessary paperwork to receive their 'brown paper' for employment, as well as the paperwork need to access social housing. The relationality becomes evident once one recognizes the various factors working in tandem to one another to hinder newcomer mobility—hence fostering a precarious environment, as evident in the inability to enter the country or access services once in the country. It is only when someone confronts the limitations for themselves, or speaks to someone who has, that the relationality becomes unavoidable. To confront this oversight, my research project follows Dorothy Smith's methodological framework of Institutional Ethnography (IE) to understand the various relations within the refugee claimant process. Smith (2005) offers noteworthy insight into how to shift one's object of study away from focusing solely on single vulnerabilities and the resulting objectification the individual. In its place, Smith draws attention to the institution as her object of analysis and explores how, traditionally speaking, "sociology was not designed for exploring the institutional relations and organization from the standpoint of people, let alone activists trying to bring about change" (Smith, 2005: 28). Instead, traditional sociological methods prioritize objectivity, in treating certain populations (i.e., migrants) not as individual people, but as mere "objects of study" (Smith, 2005: 29). Smith's critique is expanded in the work of Oliver Bakewell (2008), as he explores how researchers often serve to reflect the State's inclination to focus on single vulnerabilities and, in turn, objectify and divide refugees

and migrants from society at-large through labels such as 'victim' 'guilty.' For my

research, the State refers specifically to what Smith (2005) refers to as the ruling

relations, the *work* done to facilitate organization and integration on behalf of holding

governing positions, as well as non-governmental organizations. work with the Welcome

Collective sheds light on the difference between vulnerability and precarity, as their focus

is on addressing the precarious state refugee claimants find themselves. This is evident in

the first line of their Vision and Values Statement: "Welcome Collective is an

organization whose core mission is to mobilize Montreal's local community to provide

immediate help to the city's *most precarious* refugee claimants." While the State follows

a 'vulnerable' identity when managing refugee populations and place a high amount of

onus on the individual and their ability to continually engage with lifework to face their

circumstance. IE urges one to focus on the external circumstance to highlight the *situated*

experience of refugee claimants to recognize that the identity is a relational condition that

is fraught with precarity at various levels of the process. The relationality is key, as it

speaks to problem with individual responsibility and the various factors working in

tandem to hinder or further newcomer experience. For instance, perhaps a lack of

language supports leads to difficulty completing government support paperwork which

then leads to an inability to access necessary social support, including but not limited to

healthcare resources, education, shelter, as well as accessible food banks. This is one

example of the relational nature of the refugee claimant process and the subsequent need

to highlight the external circumstances that stand outside an individual's control.

For my research project, I had the opportunity to work with the Welcome

Collective. Engaging with IE, I examined how the organizations operates both at a local

and trans-local level; from the level of the individual refugee claimant accessing services to interactions with State process that serve to manage and dictate the refugee claimant process, while remaining invisible to the refugee claimant on the ground. To echo Smith (2005), although my research endeavour begins from the local level, vis-à-vis those accessing services and "directly involved in the institutional setting [...] they are not the objects of investigation" (Smith, 2005: 38). Rather, the experience with organization, as well as with the refugee claimant process, itself became my object of inquiry. It was the relationality, rather than the individual, that was at the core of my research. Researchers engage in a dialogical relationship which highlights the relationality of experience to uncover the work people do every day and how the work connects to others, including the local and trans-local— the local being the refugee aid organizations, namely the Welcome Collective, and the trans-local being the governing processes that dictate and manage the refugee process, such as Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and the Ministry of Immigration, Francisation and Integration (Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et de l'Intégration). My project is concerned with the Welcome Collective's relationship between the local, the community, and the trans-local, governing officials. It is their *relationships*, rather than the individual community, that is important for this analysis. It is concerned with exploring how individual identity is transformed into a 'legible' case file through specific institutional practices and how the Welcome Collective has become a key actor in the system—not only *mediating* but embedded themselves. The objective is to highlight the 'work' done by service providers to follow their mandate, while also maintaining a relationship to the local community and trans-local processes (Smith 2005: 125). The project seeks to uncover the infrastructure

of care fostered by the Welcome Collective to serve their community, including their use

physical space, relation to the government, as well as their work with documents, that

seeks to destabilize the State's vulnerability narrative and suggest a relational narrative

that acknowledges the level of precarity.

The trans-local level works to regulate, manage, and rationalize the refugee

claimant process, particularly through deciding who is permitted entry into Canada and

who qualifies for upward mobility in Canada once achieving approval. It is the larger

force governing the operations. This is done using technologies, such as physical border

lines, as well as citizenship qualifications. The main question I sought to uncover

throughout my research was: How do refugees come to be classified and objectified as an

identity in the Government of Canada's operations to 'manage' those desiring to enter

Canada, as well as who is able to access services once in Canada? I then asked: How do

the service providers employed by Welcome Collective act as not only mediators in the

refugee claimant process, but key actors within the system? Through working with the

Welcome Collective, I was able to follow the Welcome Collective's privileged entry

point into the everyday challenges facing refugee claimants and garner a sense of the

state of precarity to demonstrate that the concern is not vulnerability, but the precarious

environment. The infrastructure of care fostered by the Welcome Collective meets the

needs of the local community, as well as faces the pressures of the State to subscribe to a

narrative of vulnerability that centers around individual responsibility to 'integrate' into

society. In the face of external constraints posed by Canada's complicated and

inaccessible immigration system, as well as the constraints posed by society more-

broadly (vis-à-vis a lack of sufficient understanding, rise of discrimination and anti-

migrant sentiment.), the time has come to both criticize the system and observe how

alternative organizations are stepping in to fill the gaps in services and support.

First and foremost, my responsibility as a researcher is to the local organization,

Welcome Collective, who opened their doors to me and allowed me to work alongside

them and ask them (I'm sure rather incessant at times) questions. My intention is not to

compare to other non-profits or critique the organization, but to investigate the work that

they do, as well as the work of the individual service providers involved, and what this

work looks like daily. My research is based on three main components. First, I engaged in

participant observation, as I worked and volunteered alongside service provides to

observe how the various service providers and volunteers conducted their work daily.

Second, in addition to the first-hand information I garnered, I also conducted interviews

with six of the organization's service providers, including the Communications

Coordinator, the Director of Development and Impact, the Welcome Guide Coordinator,

the Director of Social Initiatives, the Logistics Coordinator, and the Executive Director.

Thirdly, I reviewed several of the organization's public documents and records, including

their 'mission statement,' the information brochures outlining their services, as well as

the forms that need to be completed to access their services and workshops. While the

organization acts at arm's length from the State, it is through the documentary process

that the inevitable link between the local and trans-local becomes most apparent.

In telling the story of the organization, I have used pseudonyms to protect the

identities of the service providers. However, for clarity and coherence, I do include the

service provider's job title to provide insight into how the Welcome Collective functions

as a collective whole. I have not made the name of the organization or their location anonymous, nor have I used pseudonyms. The Welcome Collective is proud of the work that they do to support refugee claimants in Montreal and are appreciative of all the societal support they receive. It is with great pride that I have been given the opportunity to observe the work of the organization that serves to facilitate community, collectivity, and mutual empowerment throughout Montreal, Quebec, as well as beyond. As Parvati Raghuram (2021) suggests, researchers have an intrinsic responsibility to reflect on ethical and moral implications of their work on refugee populations, as they play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion and understandings—vis-à-vis both positive and negative (Raghuram, 2021: 16). As a reader, I ask that you leave your preconceived notions of the refugee claimant process at the door and open your mind to hear from the service providers working directly to support refugee communities. It is important to note that this research is mediated through my own perspective and the points of analysis chosen are what I deemed as most common in my conversations. To refer to Raghuram (2021), sociological and anthropological work holds great power for uniting society and creating spaces for advocacy, empowerment, and meaningful societal change. It is my hope that my work as a distinct partnership with the Welcome Collective will serve as a reflection of this.

Chapter One: *Spaces of Care and Constructing 'Welcome' in Refugee Resettlement*

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Fieldnotes from Friday, March 25, 2022: "Hi Emma," I look up from my work and smile at Jane, the Welcome Collective's Director of Social Initiatives, whose smile and vitality one cannot help but desire to emulate. She asks, "after you are done, would you be able to take X to find a mirror?" "Of course," I reply. I turn back to the immigration form I am assisting a client complete. After a rather humbling morning of reading through immigration forms and responding to questions, I was eager to walk through the warehouse and help X find a mirror for their home. I close the 'Google Translate' app on my phone, slide it into the front pocket of my bag, and meet with X outside the Social Initiatives Room. We begin to walk the aisles in search of a mirror.

Two months prior, I returned to the Welcome Collective's warehouse after a brief hiatus sparked by the winter break, as well as the third COVID-19 inflicted lockdown. I was eager to deepen my understanding of the organization and see the familiar faces that I had come to appreciate as friends. At this time, I had been volunteering regularly since October and had spoken to most of the service providers, as well as some of the volunteers. I was beginning to feel *'at-home'* in the space—a theme which will be unpacked further below. However, on this morning, it became clear to me that I had not yet taken the time to truly take in the physicality of the warehouse—particularly the layout of the space and how it differs from organizations I have encountered in the past as either an employee, intern, or volunteer. Today, to my surprise, turned out to be the perfect day to do just that. Peter, the Welcome Collective's Director of Operations, informed me, as I exited the staircase on the ninth floor and entered the warehouse, that they were going to be reorganizing the warehouse on that day to better serve families, staff, as well as volunteers. My eyes immediately lit up as he handed me a blueprint of the space. He and I laughed as I pulled out my tattered Moleskin notebook and showed him the rough blueprint I made after my first visit to the warehouse months before. To

say that his was more professional and understandable would be a vast understatement. It was clear that, like Peter, I too had been infatuated with the physical space of the Welcome Collective since I arrived, even if I had not yet taken the time to truly appreciate the layout of it.

For the Welcome Collective, the physical space of the warehouse and office fits into the classification of "workstation equality" and open space put forward by Zerella et. al., who argue that an absence of private offices, cubicles, and other visual signifiers of hierarchy, and a workplace *independent* of traditional hierarchies, positively impacted the culture of the organization. (2017). First and foremost, the Welcome Collective's physical space is a literal warehouse, and the desks are positioned next to all the furniture—something that Peter brought up with a light chuckle when I asked him how the space differed from other non-profit organizations. Before delving into the meaning behind the layout, I will first provide a walk-through of the space. In the reorganization, the Welcome Collective made space to have a welcome/waiting area in the entry way. There are two chairs, as well as a side table with brochures outlining the organization's work. To the left of the entry way is a large bin with wheels labelled 'Renaissance.' Any clothing item or small household item that the Warehouse Coordinator or volunteer think will not be of use (due to improper season, ripped, stained, etc.) get put into this bin and picked up by Renaissance—a Montreal-based used consignment store. Across the bin stands a table with various household trinkets, including but not limited to a fire-glass vase, various table lamps, as well as a collection of framed artworks. I am immediately welcomed by Susan, the Warehouse Coordinator.

Susan leads me down the middle aisle that is stacked with couches, ottomans, as well as rugs. Some of the furniture has green tape on it with a families' name—meaning that the family has recently come to the warehouse to pick out the furniture for their home, which will be delivered by the Welcome Collective's team of movers and drivers. Due to COVID-19, the Welcome Collective was not able to have families come into the warehouse to pick out their furniture. However, the week that I am there, this is changing, and they are preparing to once again receive families—hence the reorganization. The other two aisles also contain the large donated furniture items, including couches, side chair, dressers, and floor rugs. All are in great shape and of differing styles and colours depending on a given families' preference.

At end of the aisle on the far wall, baby items are stored. Diapers, baby wipes, baby blankets, as well as baby clothes are stacked high on two aluminum shelves. These items will eventually be sorted by one of the volunteers into 'newborn baby kits,' something I have done many times as a volunteer. Susan then leads me to the warehouse's sorting table. This is where all the donated items are taken, sorted, and then placed in their proper location. Next to the baby storage is the kitchen area. Any kitchen item, as well as appliance, that is donated to the Welcome Collective is stored here. The kitchen items are used to make 'kitchen kits'—containing cups, mugs, plates, bowls, utensils, Tupperware, baking molds, as well as pots and pans. Kits are made depending on the number of family members. Susan and I begin to sort dishes and utensils on the table and place them in their proper spots. Occasionally, the items will be sticky—for what reason, I am not sure – or layered with a coating of dust. I put on the rubber latex gloves and try to wipe the item clean using a paper towel and disinfectant spray. The

gloves are too large for my fingers and the tips reach over the edge whenever I try to pick something up. Certain items will not be of use, such as a mixer that is missing the necessary spools. Similar to unused clothing, the items that will not be used get put back into a box to be donated to Renaissance. I reach for the boxing tape and begin to tape closed the box and the screech of the tape reverberates around me. I then take the permanent marker and label the box 'donations.' Surrounding the warehouse are large, all-encompassing windows. I place two yellow coffee mugs with sunflowers circling the outside on their proper spot on the shelf and look out the windows; although the winter gray is still in full bloom, the sun is trying its best to peek through.

Across the aisles on the opposite side of the warehouse, the packaged kitchen and newborn kits are stacked for easy access for families to come pick up or for the Welcome Collective's Movers to deliver. There are various carts and dollies scattered throughout to aid in moving larger items.

The 'office' area of the Welcome Collective is located along the wall next to the donated items. The desks are arranged in a linear manner. Kate, the Communications Coordinator, informs me that the desks are laid out depending on where an individual would like to be. Often, this relates to one's role and who they interact with most in their work. I sat down and spoke with Peter, as he was the one to initially brainstorm the reorganization and have blueprints of the space made. I was curious what inspired his layout of the warehouse. I wanted to see if Peter intentionally chose to move away from traditional office space, particularly notions of authority.

> **Emma:** When you were planning the new layout, did you intend to follow a non-hierarchical approach?

> **Peter:** It was not a conscious intention. I think it just flows from how we work. It is organized by practical things […] We are grouped by role [gestures to fellow Logistics staff seated in desks around him].

Peter then went on to demonstrate a conscious engagement with hierarchy that results in a simultaneous *unconscious* engagement with non-hierarchical authority. "It is funny that you mention it. I did wonder, does Rita [the Executive Director] want to be anywhere in-particular because *'she's the boss,'* but she just said, *'put me wherever.'*" In our conversation, Peter describes his own effort to grapple with questions of authority. Although he felt inclined to ask Rita where she would like to have her desk, as she holds a 'Director' position within the organization, Rita's response demonstrates that the question of hierarchy is not even on her mind. Later in our conversation, Peter demonstrated a conscious engagement with non-hierarchical authority. He explained the decision to organize the Welcome Collective's staff page on their website in alphabetical to move beyond the ranking system. Emily, another service provider at the organization, discussed the desire to have the physical space emulate the values of the organization, as evident in its open, inviting, and welcoming atmosphere. The Welcome Collective's non-hierarchical approach to organizing is *not* to disregard the fact that certain staff members receive more pay than others, but, as Kate examined, to recognize "that no one's job is more important to the other." However, as hypothesized above by Maher and Hippel (2005), Peter did disclose that the level of openness can create a distracting environment for work—particularly regarding private phone calls or conversations. "Any tips?" I asked Peter. "Bring a pair of headphones," he responded with a grin. It was clear that the level of 'chattiness' or workplace distractions was not a hinderance to the organization's

function, but something that can (and must) be worked around for the benefit of staff,

volunteer, and family comradery and equality.

Following my conversation with Emily on the organization's values, I became

particularly interested in exploring distinctly *how* the layout of the organization reflects

not only the values of the organization, but their approach to refugee aid and how they

are able to construct a physical infrastructure of care that addresses the precarity of the

refugee claimant process. The Welcome Collective approach to refugee aid is evident in

their name: 'welcome' 'collective.' Together, the two terms speak to an allying of not

only individuals, but of material and immaterial resources. The name denotes community,

safety, familiarity, and kindness—themes that became ever more evident to me as my

research alongside the organization progressed. Peter explained that the name was the

product of a collaborative brainstorming session during the early days of the

organization's establishment. On their website, the Welcome Collective describes their

mission as mobilizing "Montreal's local community to provide immediate help to the

city's most precarious refugee claimants." The focus on mobilizing exemplifies how the

organization is not only working to serve refugee claimants in the community, but to

provide a platform for fellow community members to come to volunteer and learn more

about the refugee claimant process. Peter described the organization as a conduit: "We

bring people together who want to help. We are sort of a conduit to *help people help*."

Speaking to the Welcome Collective as a 'conduit' highlights the organization's

community-aid, as well as a volunteer ethic that is put forward. Individuals are given a

platform to provide support within their community and assist in constructing an

infrastructure of care for the benefit of society at-large. It is a distinct volunteer ethic, as will be explored further below.

The Welcome Collective is currently made up of fourteen service providers, a Board of Directors consisting of ten individuals, as well as a robust community of volunteers—ranging in age from high school students to those in retirement. Since 2017, the organization has accrued more than 300 volunteers and supplied over 1,500 refugee claimants and their families with furniture. Along with the service providers, volunteers are tasked with sorting donations and keeping the warehouse organized, helping to facilitate special events for refugee claimants both in-person and over Zoom, including a workshop on immigration forms as mentioned in the introduction, as well as aiding to pick-up and drop-off donations with the Welcome Collective's Driver and Movers. In partnership with the Welcome Collective's 'Welcome Groups,' an initiative that matches volunteers with refugee claimants to help them navigate the refugee claimant process, volunteers can meet with individual claimants one-on-one and ensure that their needs, as well as the needs of their family members, are being property met, including but not limited to providing information on neighbourhood food banks, housing support, and educational resources. I had the opportunity to work as a Welcome Group Volunteer and will be reflecting on my experience in more-depth later. Every service provider that I spoke with stressed the key role that volunteers play for the organization, describing volunteers as "crucial" and the "backbone" of the organization, as is reflected in the organization's tendency to hire individuals who have volunteered with the organization and, in turn, understand and exemplify their vision.

Like my conversation with Peter, Jonathan Darling (2011) explores how community care centers are not only spaces for those in precarious situations, but spaces where a distinct "ethic of care" is furthered by volunteers (Darling 2011: 410). Darling refers to the ethic of care as "giving hospitality, *constructing* welcome" (Darling 2011: 410 emphasis added). What does it mean to construct 'welcome?' For Darling, it refers to creating a sense of 'home' within the space, as well as a feeling of safety and friendship. Similarly, for David Conradson (2003), creating a sense of 'welcome' refers to the "everyday encounter" where individuals feel safe to meet, come together and promote mutual well-being in each space (Conradson 2003: 508).

The notion of 'constructing welcome' for volunteer and client support was particularly evident in the reorganization. 'Constructing welcome' speaks to the difference between precarity and vulnerability, as the organization is adapting their physical environment to provide an infrastructure of care to support for those in precarious situations. Moreover, the organization recognizes the power that physical space has on one's circumstances. Darling (2011) explores how, within community care centers, hospitality and welcome are "entangled in relational webs of friendship, advice and help," which he goes on to refer to as "moments of hospitality" (Darling 2010: 410, 411). As part of the reorganization, the Welcome Collective's volunteers were a topmost priority for Peter. He wanted to ensure that not only was the warehouse organized wisely to support their work, but that there was, to use Darling's terminology, 'moments of hospitality:' areas where volunteers felt they could go to sit, have a bit to eat, and talk amongst their peers. Whenever I am at the warehouse, there are always snacks scattered

on the conference table for volunteers and staff alike. Coffee is often brewing, along with the occasional pizza delivery knocking at the door.

Comparably, during the reorganization, the Welcome Collective also constructed 'moments of hospitality' for their clients. Now that the organization is beginning to receive families in the warehouse, they have set up a children's play area full of books for children of all ages, puzzles, beanbag chairs, and stuffed animals. Families are now able to come to the warehouse in-person. They can walk around the space, pick out the furniture items that will work in their home (as evident in the green tape posted on various items with families' names), as well as try on outerwear and shoes to ensure proper fit and comfort. The only 'private room' at the warehouse, excluding the bathroom, is the 'Social Initiatives Room.' It is immediately evident to me that Jane, the Welcome Collective's Social Worker and Director of Social Initiatives, is particularly proud of this space. It is accessed through a hallway close to the entry way. The space contains a large table surrounded by office chairs for families to meet privately with the Social Initiatives Team. There is a large rug sprawled along the floor—immediately bringing warmth to the room. In the corner of the space, there is an arts and crafts area fully stocked with pencil crayons, colouring books, paper, as well as for children, or they may go out to the play area if they prefer.

The Social Initiatives Room is where individuals can bring any question or concern that they would like clarity on to the Social Initiative Team, ranging from questions on accessing healthcare, completing government paperwork, as well as requiring a certain item for their home or for their child's schooling. In constructing 'moments of hospitality,' Darling (2010) posits that the physical space "is given, ears are

placed to listen to others, time is taken to consider and respond to questions" (411). The

Social Initiative Room is open and inviting. When a client arrives in the space, a

volunteer or service provider will often ask the individual if they would like snack or

something to drink. They are not met in a top-down hierarchal manner. This is

particularly important within the refugee claimant process, as individuals are often met in

an authoritative manner in legal meetings and meetings with immigration officials. It is of

the upmost importance that refugee aid organizations do not reproduce this hierarchy in

their work. Rather, the volunteer or service provider will sit beside them at the encircling

conference table. If possible, they will address the individual using their preferred

language. For instance, Jane, the Director of Social Initiatives can speak English, French,

Portuguese, and Spanish, and there are other service providers and volunteers who can

speak Creole, Arabic—to name a couple more. As was made clear in the vignette above,

my language skills (or lack-thereof) are certainly *not* something that I bring as an asset to

the organization and, for this, I am grateful for the wealth of language knowledge the

Welcome Collective provides.

Similar to Darling's emphasis on 'moments,' Conradson (2008) explores the

"everyday encounters" that occur in centers of care—whereby the everyday is

transformed into an arena of care and compassion. In visiting the warehouse to select

furniture and pose questions to the Social Initiative Team, one can enter a distinct 'space'

of care and support. As Conradson (2008) posits, this space allows individuals to "to

temporarily distance themselves from domestic sources of frustration and difficulty" as

service providers and volunteers craft a space that is supportive and comforting for

individuals (Conradson 2008: 519). For the Welcome Collective, crafting a supportive

space is synonymous with creating a sense of home, as evident in the organization's

name: 'welcome.' They recognize the level of 'frustration' and 'difficulty' Conradson

speaks to and want their space to be safe and comforting for their community. Relatedly,

as explored by Mountz and Hiemstra (2014), the process of refugee migration, including

endeavours to claim asylum and complete paperwork to be considered a 'refugee

claimant' within a given country's immigration system, instill feelings of 'chaos,' 'crisis,'

and 'fear'—not to mention feelings of isolation and confusion implicated when one

enters new environment. For instance, one not only needs to attend to the bureaucratic

structure, but to a new social, environmental, and cultural climate, as well as looming

emotional strains in leaving a place considered 'home' and possible loved ones who

remain. In lieu of this, it is ever more important that organizations set to support refugee

claimants must craft an environment that is safe, welcoming, and emblematic of 'home.'

Allison Williams (2002) discusses the distinctly therapeutic potential of tapping

into the 'home' space, particularly as space relates to one feeling secure, listened to, and

recognized. It is important that people feel safe in the Social Initiatives Room.

Historically-speaking, creating a 'safe' space within urban centers for refugees and

refugee claimants has often been associated with the sanctuary movement, where

physical spaces have been constructed to protect individuals from outside threat and

policies of inclusivity are presented (Bauder 2016). In the mid-to-late twentieth century,

national and international dialogue shifted focus to the question of 'legality' of migrants,

refugees, as well as refugee claimants—hitting a high-point with the election of Donald

Trump in 2016 and the advancement of his anti-immigrant agenda (Bauder 2016; Keck

and Clua-Losada 2021). David Moffette and Jennifer Ridgley (2018) explore the rise of

the sanctuary movement the U.S. in the 1980s, whereby sanctuary city initiatives commenced following the rise individuals fleeing violence and persecution in Central America. It began with faith-based organizations offering sanctuary in physical terms, as churches became safe-havens, "a sacred space of protection and care from the violence of the secular world," but has developed into policy initiatives (Moffette and Ridgley, 2018: 148). For instance, in Canada, Toronto activists launched a 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' (DADT) campaign in 2012—barring municipal administrators from tracking one's status to protect undocumented refugees and migrants (Bauder 2016). The initiative led to the city, as well as the Toronto school board, adopting similar initiatives. Although the initiative was largely disregarded, it did lead to a key lobbying campaign and the development of by-law protections, including access to health programs and shelter. Bauder also highlights how municipal officers tend to not follow the DADT practices and continue to enforce status inspections. Yet, the sentiment of the sanctuary movement, particularly the idea of protection, remains prevalent throughout the county.

Although the Welcome Collective differs from the sanctuary movement in the sense that it works particularly with refugee claimants, rather than 'undocumented' individuals, the sentiment of the two remains rather synonymous. For instance, analogous to the Welcome Collective, the sanctuary movement serves to challenge the agenda of the nation state through creating an alternative infrastructure of care, as Toronto-based activist Faria Kamal states, "[I]deals don't have to get passed at the 'top' in order for them to manifest themselves in our day-to-day lives," but *horizontally* and in collaboration with the community (Nail et al. 2010).

Similarly, Emily, the Director of Development and Impact, discussed how the Welcome Collective's focus on *collective* seeks to challenge the nation-state's tendency towards integration. For Emily, integration denotes a sense of loss and does not consider the material predicament of refugee claimants or, rather, the precarious nature. Both the sanctuary movement and the Welcome Collective provide alternative ways of thinking that stand outside those of the nation-state; ones that ultimately serve to challenge traditional understandings of hierarchy (Bauder 2016; Kamal 2010). While 'integration' suggests notions of amalgamation, Maurizio Arteri (2020) explores how drop-in care centers create "motility" for migrant populations—different from mobility in the sense that it refers to the cultivating *potential* of mobility and identity, rather than the reduction (Arteri 2020: 2). As posited by Mountz and Hiemstra (2014), Arteri (2020) recognizes the chaos that ensues in the migratory process, particularly the bureaucratic barriers, including completing paperwork to receive brown paper to be able to access employment. For Arteri (2020), centers of care foster aspirations for migrants; "they provide a compass that helps to develop a vision for the future" (Arteri 2020: 4). The possibility of envisioning a future through confronting bureaucratic and physical barriers provides individuals with hope for themselves, as well as for their family. It also relieves the anxiety that arises in the constraining position. For instance, Ryan Frazer (2020) states that, "[R]esettlement is not some linear movement. […] it is much more wild and often mundane process, through which *new geographies of care* […] often emerge" (Frazer 2020: 1 emphasis added). In my conversation with Jane, the Director of Social Initiatives, she discussed her experience working with Montreal-based shelters for refugees prior to joining the Welcome Collective. She became increasingly knowledgeable on the legal

side of the refugee claimant process and discovered the importance of fostering

aspirations:

> Although one can read about the legal perspective "in theory,
> […] it is when you support refugee claimants in that process
> that you can actually know how it is really happening. […]
> A certain number of claimants cannot read or write. There is
> no service that exists for them to get help to write their story
> [which is needed when making a refugee claim in the Court].
> What happens, in most cases, is the lawyers tell them to 'find a
> friend to write your story.' […] There were times when
> people needed to write their stories very quick and there
> was no support for them."

Through organizing workshops, such as the aforementioned workshop on

immigration forms, as well as workshops over Zoom held in partnership with PRAIDA

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

understanding the asylum claim process, the Welcome Collective not only supports

refugee claimants by providing necessary information but fosters aspirations that extend

beyond present circumstances through crafting new geographies of care. These 'new

geographies' speak to the adaptability of the Welcome Collective's physical space, as

well as the staff and volunteers. The true power of the organization rests in its ability to

address problems occurring on-the-ground and provide a space for remediation. As

explored in the opening of this Chapter, the Welcome Collective not only confronts

bureaucratic barriers through organizing workshops. They also confront physical barriers

by meeting the immediate material needs of refugee claimants and their families. By

opening its doors for families to enter the space, the warehouse has been turned once

again into a *relation space*; it is not seen as closed or as something 'out there,' but as deeply intertwined in the interaction that one commences when migrating, forming an asylum claim, and becoming a refugee claimant. The relationality of space not only refers to the physical makeup and open atmosphere, but the moments of connections that occur within the space *following* its establishment. Darling (2009) posits that "[T]hinking space *relationally* […] creates the imperative to consider, and actively engage, these geographies of connection" (Darling 2009: 127 emphasis added). The warehouse space is conceptualized as an arena of knowledge, full of insight, and connection that is active, alive, and continually *engaged* by the actors in the space. This is evident in the on-going conversations happening throughout the warehouse with service providers and volunteers alike, ranging from updates on their family, plans for the long weekend to changes in Canada's refugee policy.

While the relational nature of space allows for deeper connections between individuals within the space, as well as within the individuals themselves, the relationality is not without controversy. For instance, Frazer (2020) argues that limits within the relationality are necessary as they "work to both produce and delimit our caring relations with others" (Frazer 2020: 4). Although relationality implies a level of closeness and trust, it is important that service providers don't take on more than can be handled and risk overworked or 'burnt-out.' Although direct mentions of burn-out did not come up in my conversations with service providers, it was clear that the work being done to support individuals navigating the refugee claimant process is on-going and tedious, as evident in my conversation with Emily. Emily discussed the problems that arise in operating without government funding:

> **Emma:** How do you see the Welcome Collective's work in relation to the
> government?
> **Emily:** We get no money from the government. We received a small grant from
> the city […] It was for six months and that was over. *I actually feel like we are
> doing the government's work.* […] This service is very-much essential and I think
> everybody knows it on a personal level, but the issue really is the funding
> structure from Federal to city is very tied to what the Provincial government
> wants.

Whilst the Welcome Collective's funding structure and relation to the Federal and Provincial government will be explored in the following Chapter, Emily does speak to the pressure put onto non-profit organizations to provide support and the overwhelming feelings that arise as the demarcating lines of care begin to blur. Similarly, Peter discussed how when the organization was first getting started, it was made up of only volunteers (himself included) who would often work seven days a week—regularly phoning each other on weekends. However, as the organization has grown into a "responsible employer," Peter answers with an illuminating sense of pride, this has changed. Yet, he was also sure to highlight how the situation is different for those working in the Social Initiative Team and directly interacting with refugee claimants. Similar to Frazer's (2020) discussion on setting limits, Peter discussed the importance of setting boundaries in order to allow for a reasonable work-life balance.

Kim Robinson (2013) explores the nature of non-profit work, particularly the close-knit relations that develop between service providers and the community they are working with. Robinson (2013) argues that the traditional non-profit structure and supervision practices do not take into consideration what is happening on the ground for

refugee communities. Similar to Jane's discussion on the need for practice, the service

providers Robinson (2013) spoke to highlighted this disconnect:

> "Health and social workers in both Australia and the
> UK described what they saw as a *gulf between theory*
> *and practice* and how the day-to-day demands of the
> work prevented them from engaging with an academic
> literature that did not speak to them"
> (Robinson 2013: 98 emphasis added).

In focusing on theory over practice, the service providers stressed a lack of

funding, insufficient training, as well as overall support in their working—leading to

instances of 'compassion fatigue,' 'burnout,' and 'a sense of powerlessness' (Robinson

2013: 90, 93). The Welcome Collective's non-hierarchal physical layout and approach to

organizing and 'managing' allows the organization to confront the discrepancies put

forward by Robinson (2013). At the weekly staff meetings, everyone has a chance to

speak, voice their concerns, and suggest possible changes and implementations. No one

position, or perspective, is seen as above another and every service provider is willing to

lend a helping hand to fellow employees. In my conversation with Kate, she discussed the

Welcome Collective's weekly meetings. She stated that they begin with everyone sitting

at the conference table in a circle, and then going around the circle and giving everyone a

chance to provide updates, voice concerns, and ask questions. Many of the service

providers I spoke to discussed how their roles often overlap with one another, as Emily

described her position as a 'gap-filler,' as she steps in wherever she is needed on a given

day. Similarly, when I asked Peter what his role consisted of in the organization, he

replied that he "wears many hats"—hence speaking to the *collective* nature of the organization's approach to work.

Similarly, the Welcome Collective takes pride in preparing and supporting their volunteer community to avoid feelings of anxiety and discomfort. For instance, before being partnered with a refugee claimant family in the Welcome Group initiative, volunteers must first complete necessary training and attend mandatory meetings with the Welcome Collective's coordinators. I know first-hand that this training is detailed and thought-provoking. It gives volunteers a chance to imagine various scenarios and brainstorm ways to properly respond to the. As a volunteer at the Welcome Collective, I received online training manuals on the various services in Montreal based on neighbourhoods, as well as where to refer families for any issues they may be experiencing, including childcare support, clinics, and food banks. The training explains Welcome Collective's organizational structure and vision. Volunteers are also required to go through a process of sensitivity training—whereby they are briefed on the proper language and tone to use in the weekly conversations with the families they were partnered with. The training also goes over how to set boundaries in your conversations, particularly the importance of confidentiality for yourself, as well as for the individual you are speaking with.

As a Welcome Group volunteer, you are added to the Welcome Collective's online 'Slack' channel. Here, you can voice any question or concern to the coordinators and expect a fast turnaround. Moreover, you are also required to attend weekly one hour 'check-in' meetings over Zoom with the coordinators, as well as with fellow volunteers. This gives volunteers a chance to talk with one another, compare their experiences, and

share resources in order to more-adequately support the family they are working with. By instilling a level of open dialogue and communication, the Welcome Collective can take meaningful steps to avoid bombarding and overwhelming volunteers and staff alike. My intention is not to argue that overwhelming feelings do not arise. Given the nature of the Welcome Collective's work with refugee claimants, individuals are bound to feel overwhelmed. My intention, rather, is to demonstrate the Welcome Collective's level of awareness, open-communication, and upmost support, as evident in the welcoming atmosphere of the organization, as well as their ever-growing volunteer community.

Darling (2011) also explores how care centers are not just relational spaces that allow for meetings and connections but are deeply tied to political relations. A distinct power relation is at play—whereby an individual enters a space to receive care. Chris Beasley and Carol Bacchi (2005) argue that ethics of care often serve to instill an 'us versus them' dichotomy—"invoking an asymmetry we find concerning. The ethic of care […] appears to retain a focus on 'the fragility of the other' and the 'radical generosity of altruistic existence'" (Beasley and Bacchi 2005: 59). The dichotomy speaks to the distinction between precarity and vulnerability put forward by Rolf Pendall, Brett Theodos and Kaitlin Franks, as the focus often rests on the vulnerability of the individual put forward by the State (2012). Inadvertently, the ethics of care can often serve to dehumanize individuals, while simultaneously providing support. Darling (2011) designates this relation as a 'hosting/giving' and 'receiving'—whereby one is tasked with providing a service or recourse, while the other *receives*. He goes on to argue that:

> "The active, caring citizen is constructed here as
> one equally capable of being uncaring, ungenerous
> and even hostile, while the figure of the asylum

seeker as 'bare life' is maintained as a passive recipient
of either response – subject to the whims of compassion."
(Darling 2011: 415).

His work speaks to the precarious nature of non-profit work, as it is built on the compassion of other people, which can come and go as '*whims*.' In response, Beasley and Bacchi (2003) call for a "politically framed ethic" that is void of preconceived assumptions and a focus on the 'other.' For the Welcome Collective, the "political framed ethic" to care is evident in their focus on constructing an infrastructure of care that confronts the State's vulnerability narrative. Service providers and volunteers alike receive anti-oppression training before beginning their work with the organization— consisting of reflecting on one's positionality and the most-effective language and communication tools, as well as those to avoid. The training gives them the tools to recognize the precarious nature of the refugee claimant process and develop mechanisms to confront it.

To conclude, the top-most priority of service providers and volunteers alike is creating an infrastructure of care that provides support but does not neglect to reflect on the external circumstances—the precarious nature of the refugee claimant process. The Welcome Collective's work is not just about providing support but advocating for a narrative that sheds light on the false pretences of the State's agenda. The refugee process is lengthy and tiresome for those involved. Rather than meeting the needs of those in precarious situations, the process often fosters an environment of precarity. Through prioritizing 'welcome' in their physical space, the Welcome Collective can make use of its resources to create an infrastructure of care that meets *both* the emotional and physical

needs of their community. Referring to the use of IE, it is important to underscore that this venture takes work, but it is crucial, as it allows the service providers to shift focus from single vulnerability to questions of precarity and the power that can come with enhancing and enriching one's physical circumstances—making it above-all safe and supportive.

Chapter Two: *Government-Non-Profit Relations and the Delivery of Social Services*

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Fieldnotes from Wednesday April 20, 2022: Today, I was invited by Emily to sit-in and observe a meeting that was organized by the Bureau d'intégration des nouveaux arrivants à Montréal, otherwise known as BINAM. BINAM is affiliated with the City of Montreal and works to support newcomers arriving to Montreal. The objective of the meeting was to help the Canadian Ukrainian Congress in Montreal supporting those fleeing the war in the Ukraine and arriving in Montreal, particularly through sharing knowledge on the intricacies of operating a non-profit organization to serve newcomers. The meeting was held over Zoom following the COVID-19 protocols (at the time, Rita was at home sick with COVID-19). It was attended by Emily, the Welcome Collective's Director of Development and Impact, and Rita, the Welcome Collective's Executive Director, as well as a representative from Red Cross, Sun Youth, and Salvation Army. It was held in French—a language which, although I am learning, I am far from fluent. I relied on Emily to provide interpretations and translations for points that I did not understand. The meeting began with a brief introduction of each attendee. Emily and I smiled at everyone in the corner of our Zoom screen.

Throughout the meeting, I learnt that the Canadian Ukrainian Congress had been collecting items to send over to those in the Ukraine, as well as equipping eight churches to support those arriving in Montreal. However, understandably so, they were beginning to feel overwhelmed. I also learnt that the Congress is relying predominantly on volunteer-based support, including 'host families' to provide housing for those arriving. The three main concerns that the Congress would like help with included locating sufficient housing, finding employees and, above all, accessing government funds. They stated that they believed the process will move quickly if the government intervenes— prompting Emily to say to me privately that the opposite will occur. The Congress also spoke of concerns around meeting the material needs of those arriving, particularly scheduling pick-ups and drop-offs of furniture and household items. As mentioned, the Congress is relying on community support, which, although suitable temporarily, does not allow the Congress to meet their long-term organizational goals. In the meeting, it became clear to both Emily and I that the Congress was looking to delegate responsibilities to community-based non-profit organizations—sparking a hint of frustration for Emily, as non-profits are already struggling to meet the needs of the

community without the added pressure. Emily disclosed to me that, before the war began in the Ukraine, there were more than 1,000 refugees in Montreal not receiving adequate support. She explained to the Congress that, although the Welcome Collective is not able to provide the exact support that the Congress is seeking, such as scheduling and carrying out deliveries or providing furniture and supplies from their warehouse, the Welcome Collective does have pre-existing resources that the Congress can make use of within their endeavour. In response to delivery concerns, Emily explained that there is currently not a service that exists to meet that specific need for newcomers. The Welcome Collective developed their own expertise on managing and facilitating pick-up and deliveries to meet the subsequent need. Emily also referred to the Welcome Collective's Welcome Guide, an online resource that serves to consolidate all the resources a refugee claimant may need upon arriving in Montreal, including food bank locations based off neighbourhood, healthcare facilities, as well as legal and educational support—to name simply a few. I thank Emily for including me in the conversation. We exit the 'Zoom room' and enter a subsequent Zoom meeting with Rita to debrief while my mind fills with questions.

I found the meeting thought-provoking, but it led to more questions than answers. Why is it that BINAM and non-profit representatives had such different understandings of government funding? Is it possible to reconcile these differences and foster a strong and functioning non-profit organization with government partnerships, such as BINAM?

Prior to commencing my fieldwork at the Welcome Collective, I assumed that the cons of government-non-profit relations outweighed the pros. I completed my Bachelor of Arts in Political Science at the University of Toronto in April of 2020. Although I found my degree intellectually eye-opening and am proud to say I am a University of Toronto alumnus, I also developed a disdain for any bureaucratic institution. In my defence, I have been involved in one too many unpaid student positions within bureaucratic organizations throughout my university career to not have some level of

contempt. Working 9:00 to 5:00pm at a desk job, reading and completing paperwork could not be farther from how I envisioned my life. Upon graduation, I wanted to 'enter the field,' work 'on-the-ground'—not at a desk or, even worse, in a cubicle. I sought to see the problem for myself and believed that those holding governing positions simply could not do so. This is what led me to pursue my master's at Concordia University in partnership with a non-profit organization that works with the refugee community in Montreal to meet their material needs. In my own naiveté (yes—I am aware that I completed my BA just a mere two years ago), I did not see the role of bureaucracy or of governing relations more specifically. I was not yet aware of the history of government-non-profit relations, nor did I fully comprehend the inner-workings of non-profit organizations. Although I cannot say I apprehend every ambiguity of non-profit organization structures, I can say that my analysis on the Welcome Collective is a meaningful step in unpacking the haziness of non-profit structures and their relationship to governing bodies.

Dan Trudeau (2008; 2012) and Nina Martin (2012) posit that government-non-profit relations are highly complex and cannot be sufficiently identified as 'good' or 'bad,' as I initially assumed before embarking on my fieldwork. Rather, "the reality […] is less clear" (Trudeau, 2008: 442)—requiring "a more nuanced view of […] their complex relationship to larger structures of economic and political governance" (Martin, 2012: 410). When discussing government-non-profit relations, it is necessary to provide contextual background, specifically the rise of the neoliberalism and its subsequent implications. In the decades following World War II, the welfare state went through a period of growth—marked by an increase in social spending on behalf of the State

(Trudeau, 2008: 444). Yet, beginning in the late 1970s and into 1980s and 90s, a neoliberal agenda took hold throughout North American and Western Europe. It was seen as a step in furthering the financial power of the capitalist system. Although neo-liberalism is typically thought of in terms of Ronald Reagan in the U.S. and Margaret Thatcher in the U.K. (the *'figure-heads'*—you could call them), it is important to remember that Canada was part of the same equation. William K. Carroll and William Little (2001) explore the rise of neoliberalism in Canada, particularly with regards to the classic neoliberal 'checkpoints' including the replacing of post-WWII Keynesian governing structure. For instance, previous investments in social services were disregarded and deregulation, privatization, and globalized markets began to take top-priority in the "needs and interests of capital" (Carroll and Little, 2001: 35). In particular, the Fordist-era of "state programs of regional and cross-class income redistribution" in Canada were replaced by a post-Fordist era of "continental neoliberalism"—whereby the focus shifts externally to Canada's position in the globalized world, as evident in the signing of the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 1989 and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 (Carroll and Little, 2001: 38). Agreements such as this are central as they highlight the State's focus on capitalist accumulation over the delivery of social services.

Amidst the neoliberal turn and waning of the welfare state, the State began offloading social responsibility to non-profit organizations. As Trudeau (2008) explores, it was initially thought that the transfer of responsibility was a positive step. It was envisioned as a way of directly responding to the community's needs, as those working in the non-profit sector interact with the community and, in turn, are more aware of needs

than governing officials who do not necessarily interact with the community. Although

partly true, the answer to the question of government-non-profit relations cannot be

answered in a singular statement, as posited above by Trudeau (2008) and Martin (2012).

For instance, traditionally speaking, non-profits have held some level of autonomy

separating them from the State, allowing them to engage in advocacy work and collective

engagement independent of state interference (Trudeau, 2008: 2808).

Although the benefits of establishing a partnership will be explored in the

following section, it is important to also note that problems that can, or inevitably do,

arise. First and foremost, at the centre of any partnership is the question of power

dynamics and imbalances. Within government-non-profit relations, the pendulum often

shifts in favour of governing bodies, as they have access to more resources, as well as a

strong organizational capacity compared to non-profit organizations. Arising from the

power imbalance comes the idea of the 'shadow state'—whereby non-profits are at risk

of becoming merely an arm of governing bodies through providing *state-funded*

programs that serve to insert "state interests into the agenda of participating

organizations" (Trudeau 2012: 444). Following IE, it becomes clear that it is up to non-

profits work to balance their commitments to meet the needs of refugees and the demands

put on them by the State. Non-profits' work, in part, involves translating the lived

actualities of refugee claimants into something that is legible in the eyes of the State.

Susan Ilcan (2009) argues that "[T]angled relations between the state and the volunteer

sector contribute to the development of an enterprising volunteer sector that engages in

neoliberal market planning"—

whereby volunteers are not only concerned with serving the community, but with

navigating the neoliberal market (Ilcan 2009: 224). If both relationships are not

maintained, non-profit risk losing sight of their original mandate and allowing for the

allure of neoliberalism, particularly the desire for government funding, to divert their

resources away from their community-centered goal. Moreover, non-profits lose sight of

their once-present autonomy, and it becomes difficult for them to follow their own

agenda and still qualify to receive government funding.

Historically speaking, it is non-profit autonomy that has allowed them to engage

in advocacy work and not be constrained by the State. The State is motivated to put

constrains on non-profits to ensure that non-profits subscribe to the State's agenda—

emphasizing *integration* in their work. For instance, relating back to the neo-liberal shift

within state operations, governing bodies tend to prioritize neo-liberal ideals of economic

self-sufficiency and meeting the needs of the capitalist system over providing social

services, as investigated by Aihwa Ong (2003)—whereby the goal of the agenda is to

promote "the civic duty of the individual to reduce his or her burden on society, and

instead to build up his or her own human capital" (Ong 2003: 12). In this regard, human

capital refers to one's ability to access and attain employment and, as a result, contribute

to the capitalist system. Subsequently, organizations that do not promote economic self-

sufficiency directly through their services have a difficult time accessing government

funding and are often forced to change their original agenda in order to qualify to receive

government funding. Trudeau (2008) explores how within government-non-profit

relations, the government becomes a customer to non-profits—leading to questions of

accountability, as non-profits are not only accountable to the community they are serving,

but to governing bodies as well in order to ensure funding support continues (Trudeau 2008: 2813). Often, accountability towards the government overpowers that of the community and non-profit organizations are held back from doing their "*actual work*," such as community engagement and responding to on-the-ground needs (Trudeau 2008: 2814 emphasis added). In its places, non-profit energy goes towards making their organizational agenda 'legible' to the State via program installation and subsequent documentation that take organization resources, including staff and funds, away from community-based initiatives.

In the previous Chapter, I briefly discussed a conversation I had with Emily on the Welcome Collective's relationship to the government. She exclaimed that the Welcome Collective was "doing the government's work" to support newcomers in Montreal. The pressure to meet the material needs of newcomers often falls on non-profit organizations, including the Welcome Collective, as well as Salvation Army and Red Cross, as explored in the opening vignette. Although the Welcome Collective did receive a small grant from BINAM, an organization affiliated with the City of Montreal, that lasted six months, they have not received any other government support. Part of the reason for this disconnect is the fact that the Welcome Collective's work is not *legible* in the eyes of the State. James Scott (1998) explores the notion of state legibility in his analysis and argues that the goal of the State is, above all, the creation of order. More colloquially, "[T]he utopian, immanent, and continually frustrated goal of the modern state is to *reduce* the chaotic, disorderly, constantly changing social reality beneath it to something more closely resembling the administrative grid of its observations" (Scott 1998). For our Canadian society, the 'administrative grid' reflects the ambitions of

neoliberalism. The Welcome Collective's work does not directly address the neo-liberal concerns of promoting economic self-sufficiency. In the context of Montreal, Quebec, promoting the French language is on the top of the State's agenda, as evident in the passing of Bill 96 requiring refugees to learn French within six months of arriving in Montreal. French language requirements not only promote the integration into Montreal society, but also into the economy—hence the promotion of economic self-sufficiency under capitalism. Yet, that is not to say that the Welcome Collective's work does not address concerns of the French language or economic self-sufficiency. Emily explains to me that, technically-speaking, the Welcome Collective's work does constitute 'integration.'

> **Emily**: I think, for this year, the mandate was French, and we just don't fall into that category.
>
> **Emma**: But … You do in a sense?
>
> **Emily**: We fall into every category, but we do not have a specific program for language training. […] That does not mean that we would create a workshop for this. It is more important to do the *actual work* that we are doing.

Emily recognizes that going out of their way to meet the concerns of the State, although increasing their chances of receiving funding, would also divert their attention away from meeting the material needs of the community, also typified as their *actual work*. It seems Emily is indirectly speaking to concerns of the shadow state—where non-profits lose sight of their original mandate in favour of the government. Ironically, BINAM was the organization they were applying to receive funding from—the same organization discussed in the opening vignette. Beyond meeting the material needs, the Welcome Collective acts akin to a moving company: facilitating the picking up and delivering of furniture and supplies to newcomers in Montreal. Often, the delivery is

scheduled before the newcomer arrives—allowing their space to be stocked with the

basic material necessities of home. On average, the Welcome Collective helps eight to

eleven families per week and has assisted approximately 1,500 families since their

initiative began four years ago. This takes a team of not only movers and drivers, but also

those tasked with organizing the pick-ups and deliveries, managing the warehouse facility

and keeping it in order, and meeting with families to ensure their needs are being

adequately met—to name just a few of the roles at the Welcome Collective. As explored

above, concerns over picking up and delivering furniture were frequently brought up by

the Canadian Ukrainian Congress. Yet, oddly enough, it was the Welcome Collective's

focus on moving that BINAM said they "wouldn't touch," Emily divulged to me.

BINAM's mandate is more about integration specifically, a word which Emily, as well as

fellow Welcome Collective colleagues and volunteers, are hesitant to use:

> **Emily**: I hate the word integration. […] There is a sense of loss when you
> integrate. That is the whole reason for why Canada tries to differentiate itself from
> the U.S.—the melting pot versus multiculturalism—you know? That difference is
> supposed to *highlight differences*. […] When we talk integration, we talk the
> opposite.

Referring to the undeniable role of neoliberalism in Canada's refugee claimant

process, refugee initiatives funded by the State also tend to focus on cultivating an ideal

citizen—one who works to continue the cycle of capitalism through becoming part of the

economy, including employment and language training. In her ethnographic investigation

on Cambodian newcomers in the U.S., entitled *Buddha is Hiding*, Ong typifies

citizenship as an experience—something between Cambodian refugees and government

authorities that can *happen*, but also not happen, as governing authorities can choose to

not approve requests for citizenship (Ong 2003, 16). In lieu of this, citizenship is

distinctly tangible, as the changes and impacts can be physically identified and monitored, while leaving a long-lasting impact on those experiencing it. In order to make citizenship 'happen' one must fit the categorical imperative of capitalism—integrating into the market, reducing one's 'burden' on society, and the colloquial 'pulling up by the bootstraps' (Ong 2003: 12-13). The task of making one fit the government's presupposed mold often falls on non-profit organizations, as, if they are successful, their chances of receiving lasting government funding increases. Nina Martin (2012) refers to non-profits as "labour market intermediaries" who serve to help newcomers navigate the capitalist economy, including but not limited to finding employment and helping families and individuals get by with low wages. Oftentimes, this is done through resume writing workshops and skill training, particularly language training—what Martin (2012) characterises as 'direct' interventions into the capitalist economy (Martin 2012: 399).

However, Martin (2012) also posits that non-profit's role as labour market intermediaries puts them in quite an uncomfortable position, as non-profits often help newcomers navigate the exploitative nature of the capitalist economy (i.e., low wages, long working hours, worker abuse) without necessarily challenging it. The Welcome Collective is interesting in this regard. In my view, they do not fit Martin's role of directly intervening in the labour market, as they have yet to hold resume writing workshops or job skill trainings. Yet, that is not to say that they do not engage with the capitalist economy in some way. For instance, the Welcome Collective creates alternatives to the ideal capitalist citizen—what Martin (2012) describes as utilizing a "[F]rom client to employee" model (Martin 2012: 408). Emily has been working with the Welcome Collective since its inception and has participated in many of the organization's

hirings. Akin to many other refugee aid non-profit organizations, she discusses how the

Welcome Collective endeavours to provide refugee claimants themselves the option to

apply for positions. They know first-hand what the process is like and where assistance is

particularly needed. For instance, the Welcome Collective posts their job advertisements

on Montreal-based refugee aid Facebook pages, as well as in 'What's App' group chats

for refugee claimants. A member of the Welcome Collective's Board of Directors said to

Emily that, in order to make sure that those with lived experience are part of the hiring

practice, it is important to have a point system.

> **Emily**: "If you speak more than one language that we need on the team, if you have lived
> experience—that all counts towards points for the interview. If all things are equal, […]
> then that's when people with lived experience will win."

Later in this Chapter, I will discuss in more detail concerns of NGO-ization—the

process where non-profits risk becoming corporatized and professionalized to appear

more legible by the State and lose sight of their original motivations. I will explore the

main risk of non-profits submitting to the capitalist system, rather than working to

challenge it. The Welcome Collective challenges the concern of NGOization through

their hiring practices. Aziz Choudry and Dip Kapoor (2013) explore the rise of

NGOization over the past 30 years. They explore how, under NGOization, "staff are not

movement activists who have found paid work in the organization, but people who have

received professional training" (Choudry and Kapoor 2013: 14). Conversely, the

Welcome Collective hires those who are passionate about refugee rights and are keen to

advocate for said rights. It is not to say that professional training is not an asset, but it is

not the main factor that the hiring committee will look for. Rather, they want to hire

someone who is well-rounded and suited for the position, including their living

experience, passion for the organization, as well as their education and professional

background. Kate, a fellow Welcome Collective employee, described the Welcome

Collective's hiring structure as "building a solidary network"—whereby "volunteers'

become employees, clients become volunteers and then employees." The Welcome

Collective recognizes that to construct an infrastructure of care that confronts the

precarious of the refugee claimant process, lived experiences are essential. As explored in

the previous Chapter, the Welcome Collective has a lively and growing volunteer force.

Oftentimes, the Welcome Collective will turn to their volunteers when hiring, as they are

the individuals who are emblematic of the organization's values and comprehend the

motivations and goals. For instance, Kate, the Welcome Collective's Communications

Coordinator, began as a volunteer at the organization in the 'Welcome Groups.' It is

important to those at the Welcome Collective that their colleagues are likeminded and,

above all, passionate about refugee welfare and rights within Canada.

　　　Those at the Welcome Collective also recognize that conducting and preparing for

a job interview is a lengthy process, and it is important to not waste the individual's time.

Like other refugee aid organizations, they recognize that integrating into the capitalist

economy is unavoidable for refugee claimants to be able to support their families. For

instance, following a job interview, a representative from the Welcome Collective will

often meet with the newcomer who applied for the position and provide notes for

improvement. In doing so, the job interview becomes both an interview, as well as an

impromptu job workshop, and allows the Welcome Collective to assist newcomers in

navigating the capitalist system. However, a problem emerges: the threat of

'NGOization.' As stated above, under NGOization, non-profits take on a 'corporate,'

'business-like' structure in their operations to ensure efficient operations. They become

professionalized and, instead of challenging State power, they learn to work within it. For

instance, they "operate in ways which accept capitalism rather than seeking to transform

the system *altogether*" (Choudry and Kapoor 2013: 6). Although the concern of

NGOization is valid, there is something that sets the Welcome Collective apart from

other operations. For them, the focus is not on just integrating into the capitalist

economy, but on providing ongoing material and immaterial support. Integrating into the

capitalist economy and learning how to navigate Canada's job market is seen as one piece

in a large puzzle.

　　　　Furthermore, reflecting on the role of volunteerism within government-non-

profits relations, it is also important to underscore that, although volunteerism is

important in community development, it is difficult to run an initiative that is solely

volunteer base. Rebecca Nesbit et al. (2017) explores how non-profit organizations tend

to rely on volunteers when they are small, as they are still growing and do not yet have a

budget that allows them to hire more staff. It is important to highlight that the Welcome

Collective is a growing organization, but it is limited in the number of staff it can

withstand. Although they do rely on volunteer support, for the larger projects and

operations, they turn to their paid employees. They want to ensure that volunteers do not

feel as though they are being overworked. They are also sure to emphasize volunteer

appreciation events, such as pizza parties and thank you cards, as evident on their

Facebook page.

To reiterate, while human resource capacity is an important part of instilling organization within non-profits, it requires more than simply recruiting volunteers. The Welcome Collective functions the way it does due to both its employee *and* volunteer base—both are necessary and vital to the organization's structure. Nesbit et al. (2017) discuss the importance of having an employee designated to planning and managing volunteers who can accommodate volunteer needs and match them to the role best suited to them (Nesbit et al. 2017: 507). Typically speaking, few non-profits have a position solely for this purpose. Marcia Finkelstein (2008) endeavoured to better understand volunteer motives and how to ensure long-term participation. For instance, if the role was career-driven for the volunteer, they were more likely to continue. Meanwhile, volunteers in positions where they felt 'less satisfied' were less likely to remain (Finkelstein 2008: 15). Finkelstein (2008) recommends that organizations "periodically reassess volunteers' motives and, if they are not being met, offer new opportunities for helping," including having a position within the organization dedicated to doing just that (Finkelstein 2008: 16). The Welcome Collective has a paid position entitled 'Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator' who serves to recruit volunteers, match them with roles suited to them, and ensure upmost volunteer satisfaction. I personally enjoyed my time as a volunteer at the Welcome Collective and always found the work to be fulfilling. Judging by the smiles and laughter on volunteers' faces, I believe that my fellow volunteers felt similarly. Yet, positions like this are only possible when the resources are there to support them.

In the Zoom meeting, Rita spoke to concerns on running an organization solely volunteer based. She stated that operating with a volunteer base is not sustainable in the long run, as the organization is left to rely on societies' generosity. This can fluctuate

depending on how much time, energy, and resources one has access to. Although volunteers receive the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping those within the community, the amount of work an individual will do without receiving financial retribution varies. Like Emily, she agreed that the Welcome Collective does have resources that the Congress can utilize, such as opening the Welcome Collective's warehouse to the Congress for them to see how the facility is organized, as well as how deliveries and pick-ups are scheduled. In doing so, the Congress may be inspired to institute changes in their own organization structure. The representatives from the other charitable organizations provided helpful information and the Congress representative thanked everyone for attending. Emily and I said goodbye and exited the Zoom meeting and enter a follow-up Zoom meeting with Rita to debrief.

Both Emily and Rita were confused with the Congress's surprise over the number of newcomers arriving—speaking to the gaps in perspectives between government and non-profit representatives. Emily and Rita have been working in the non-profit sector for most of their professional career and interact with newcomers arriving in Montreal daily. In turn, they are privy to the inner workings happening within the community. They recognize and encounter the precarious circumstances that refugee claimants are placed in and, in turn, are hesitant to subscribe to the State's narrative of vulnerability. Through observation and communication with the community, they know verbatim the infrastructure of care that is needed to meet the precarious circumstances. However, for the most part, government representatives are not. Rather, governments sit at arm's length of the community and can frame the narrative in any way they see fit. For instance, government officials will often play up the role of integration to fit into their already-

present agenda. This is evident in the Quebec government's push for language laws for newcomers. The difference in perspectives makes crafting partnerships a difficult task, as understandings of community needs, and the availability of resources, varies. Emily nor Rita agreed with the Congress's plea for delegation, or their relying on community volunteer support. Instead, they contended that the Congress needs to see the reality of the problem. The conversation made me wonder, is it possible to make the lived realities of refugee claimant's legible in the eyes of the State' if their agenda is subsumed with the question of individual vulnerability?

Trudeau (2008; 2012) and Lake and Newman (2002) posit that government-non-profit relations serve to challenge a non-profit's level of autonomy. As discussed earlier in this Chapter, autonomy is vital to a non-profit's function. It allows them to stay true to their initial motivations and goals, engage in community advocacy and, above all, directly respond to the needs of the community, as there is no external force working to curtail their operations. Lake and Newman (2002) explore the creation of differential citizenship within the shadow state—whereby non-profits seek to respond to a certain government agenda and neglect their original mandate. The issues arise when one begins to question who benefits from said government agenda, and who is left on the sidelines. For instance, "[I]f non-profit organizations are increasingly assuming functions of the State but access to, and participation in, the shadow start is unevenly distributed, the result may be selective disenfranchisement or differential citizenship" that are likely to disregard those most vulnerable (Lake and Newman 2002: 109).

In my conversations with the Welcome Collective's service providers, concerns of the shadow state, particularly the worry of differentializing, did not arise. However,

that is not to say that those concerns weren't present. Emily spoke of concerns of government funding hindering advocacy under the Harper administration, but not necessarily as a present concern. Relating to the question 'actual work' versus the 'work' desired by the government, in order to receive government funding, non-profits need to ensure that their agenda lines up with the agenda of the State. Under the Harper administration, this concern was more prominent. The issue was not just receiving funding, but receiving societal support, as non-profits could receive government and societal backlash if they went against the government's presupposed norm. Similarly, other service providers envisioned government funding as an inevitable step in the growth of the organization.

While volunteering, I had the opportunity to speak with Rita, the Welcome Collective's Executive Director, who manages and overseas the organization's financial structure and budget. As investigated in the previous Chapter, the Welcome Collective is comparable to a moving company—characterized by a fast-paced, everchanging environment. Analogously, the organization requires stability, particularly supported and paid employees, as it could not function the way it does solely with a volunteer base. The Welcome Collective is made up of ten 'Board of Directors' who are all well-connected in the non-profit and refugee aid sphere. As Emily explained above, the organization has yet to receive a substantial amount of government funding. Rather, they rely mainly on foundations and private donations to function. Rita explained how the Welcome Collective received the status of a 'Registered Charity,' as well as a 'non-profit,' by the Government of Canada. Registered Charity status allows the organization to receive tax exempts from the government, receive further donations from large-scale donors, as well

as produce receipts for said donations. Meanwhile, non-profit status means that an organization's profits are reinvested into the organization. Here, a question arises. Early in this Chapter, I discussed the question of making an organization 'legible' in the eyes of the State and argued that the Welcome Collective's mandate is not legible—hence explaining the difficulty Emily explored in accessing government funding. Yet, the process of becoming a Registered Charity is an important step in increasing an organization's legibility by the State. Seen in this light, the Welcome Collective is legible by the State. For instance, as a recognized Registered Charity, the organization must respect its mission, only delegate a certain percentage of their budget to fundraising, provide detailed financial reports, as well as follow proper accounting and managing practices. Ilcan (2009) explores how, following the neoliberal shift and the offloading of responsibilities to non-profits, government began delegating responsibilities to non-profit organizations, as evident in the amount of refugee care falling on non-profits. In this transfer of responsibility, non-profits became not only accountable to the community they serve, but to the State, particularly through 'benchmarking' (Ilcan 2009:217). Benchmarking speaks to the trend of NGOization, as it follows a businesslike model of tracking and comparing operational processes to other organizations to ensure that each organization is operating to their upmost potential (Ilcan 2009: 218). The objective of benchmarking is to enhance the function of an organization by establishing levels of accountability (Ilcan 2009: 217). Yet, the dangers of corporatization found in NGOization remain present.

Using benchmark tactics, the organization is physically structured to be easily understood by the State, including a set number of paid employees with customary tasks,

a Board of Directors, as well as an overall level of clarity and accountability. Still, the question arises of how the organization's structure, as explained to me by Rita, the Executive Director, can be legible through the eyes of the State, while their mandate remains illegible, as posited by Emily. How does one begin to reconcile this disconnect?

Rita and I were sure to also discuss the problems associated with a lack of government funding. Not only are refugee claimants in a state of precarity, but refugee aid organizations are as well. They are relying on limited resources, including material (i.e., staffing) and immaterial (i.e., funding). Rita explained that, since its inception four years ago, the organization has been in a state of precarity, as they have had to rely on strictly private donations and fundraising is, which is not sustainable to meet the organizations long-term goals. Instead, Rita posed that, "[W]e need to bridge the two. You cannot stay grassroots because then you may deny yourself opportunities and funding." It is important to highlight that Rita's comment does create a tension for the organization's non-hierarchal structure. It was clear to the service providers that the organization's structure would need to be fluid in order to ensure growth. While this may see counter intuitive, in order to support Montreal's refugee claimant population in an efficient manner, the bridge is necessary. Kate spoke to this concern. She said that, while the organization will grow and expand, they will "always return to their roots," as evident in their Vision and Values Statement to, above all, "provide immediate help to the city's most precarious refugee claimants."

The 'bridge' Rita suggested speaks to the question legible versus illegible. In follow IE, the Welcome Collective sits on a pendulum between the two. For the organization's long-term goals, they hope to receive government funding. Yet, they also

must remain true to their mandate. Therefore, they must remain accountable to the

community they're serving and the State. Kate, the Communications Coordinator,

explained to me that the organization has already begun this process of applying for

government funding. For instance, they must be "recognized as an organization that has

the track record, the impact, the stature that they (the State) are looking for. […] Then, a

year later, you can apply for grants." It is a lengthy process, but one that is necessary to

allow for the growth of the organization. Currently, the Welcome Collective's funding

structure is quite precarious—to use Rita's term. Rita, as the Executive Director, manages

the organizations long-term financial goals and budgets concerns. Meanwhile, Kate, as

the Communications Coordinator, manages the organizations short-term financial goals

through facilitating fundraising campaigns. The Welcome Collective's strategy to meet

short-term goals has shifted since last Fall, as evident in my conversation with Kate.

> **Kate**: Before last Fall, our strategy looked like never asking people for money and
> sometimes getting donations. In the Fall, we held our first fundraising campaign. […] We
> announced a goal, and we did a lot of social media posts on what impact donations would
> make, testimonials from clients, and stats about how many donations we give, […] how
> many clients we serve to make the argument for *why* the Welcome Collective needs
> community support.

The Welcome Collective's first fundraising campaign was a success, and it is

something that they will continue to hold every year around that time. However, relying

on fundraising and the donations of others does not produce a sustainable long-term

budget, nor is it necessarily easier to predict how much money will be donated at a given

period. Rather, it promotes a level of instability, and the organization must rely on the

fluctuations of people's generosity. For instance, Kate explained to me that the Welcome

Collective receives most of its donations in the wintertime, as people are more giving

during the holiday season. Additionally, Kate furthered, "[W]e noticed a bump on the

30th and 31st of donations people make donations with the thought of having a certain

amount donated in a tax year for tax reductions." Not only does fundraising force the

organization to rely on people's rather unpredictable generosity, but it also takes a large

amount of an organization resources and time. For example, fundraising campaigns

involve paying employees to facilitate and carry-out the work, hiring a videographer to

create a video advertisement promoting the campaign, as well as sending out thank you

cards to those who donated—to name simply a few. To refer to a previous point, the

fundraising campaign raises concerns of 'NGOization.' Instead of using their resources to

support their community, the emphasis turns to hiring staff. In order to conduct their day-

to-day operations, the Welcome Collective is in danger of becoming "disconnected" from

their Vision and Values. Rather than prioritizing advocacy and community

empowerment, they risk being subsumed by maintaining the structure of organization and

their external relationships to funders (Choudry and Kapoor 2013: 6). This is a concern

that any community-based organization ought to be mindful of.

     The Welcome Collective's funding process is not a rapid process, nor a stable

one. Rather, it is chocked-full of unpredictability, instability and, above all, precarity.

Aside from qualifying for and receiving government funding, Kate also stated that

recruiting monthly donors would help to subside some of their current financial concerns.

Monthly donors, along the lines of government funding, would provide the organizations

with a level of financial stability and predictability. Yet, I would like to refer to Rita's

notion of a 'bridge,' as it is emblematic of the Welcome Collective's unique position. The

service providers did not recommend relying solely on the stability of government

funding, but to engage with both to allow for the continuation and growth of their work,

while also remaining true to their community motivations. For instance, Kate posited

that, "[W]ithout large donations, we don't exist, but without small donations and

community support, we also don't exist." Nevertheless, the question remains, is it

possible to create a bridge that allows for a healthy and sustainable government-non-

profit relation that serves to support the community? I posed this question, or one similar,

to Rita:

> **Emma**: Do you have any recommendations for staying true to the organization's statement?
>
> **Rita**: I think it is about if we show the urgency of it […] and document the realities and
> leverage partnerships, then I think that should help us stay on course. […] We must
> demonstrate growth and show how the service can apply to the community at large.

To meet their long-term goals, the Welcome Collective recognizes that their next

step must be to obtain government funding. Putting aside questions of power imbalances

and concerns of the shadow state, government funding would provide the organization

with the financial stability needed to continue their crucial work. Irene Bloemraad (2005)

argues "that government support, including funding, technical assistance and normative

encouragement, plays an important role in building immigrant communities'

organisational capacity" (Bloemraad 2005: 867). Her analysis focuses on the notion of

adaption within newcomer communities and how government policy can serve to foster

adaption and 'Canadian multiculturalism'—whereby governments strive to empower newcomer communities through their initiatives. However, the service providers I spoke with were hesitant to believe the government's push towards integration and multiculturalism. They saw the endeavours as further the State's vulnerability narrative, limiting refugee identity and seeking to fit refugee claimants into predetermined molds, rather than empowering. Bloemraad's (2005) analysis demonstrates the power that can also accompany government support. For instance, government support reversed a policy in Boston that initially held back the Vietnamese newcomer community through discouraging Indigenous leadership. It prompted officials to recognize "the importance of promoting Mutual Assistance Associations to serve and speak for the rapidly-expanding Vietnamese communities," as the problems under the current system became increasingly evident (Bloemraad 2005: 872). These Associations gave the community a voice to not only directly speak their needs, but also combat societal racism and discrimination (Bloemraad 2005: 873). It allowed the community to develop their own organization, Vietnamese Civic Association (VACA)—supplying language training, health care and economic programs directly focused on the communities'' needs (Bloemraad 2005: 873). The problem, however, is that the government focuses on the community they identify as most in-need of support, as well as who they see benefitting and supporting the neoliberal capitalist economy.

Throughout my conversation with Emily, as well as her fellow service providers, tensions between the Welcome Collective and the government continued to arise—vis-à-vis integration versus fostering differences, as well as questions of government-supposed needs versus '*actual*' needs and focusing on precarity rather than vulnerability. It was

apparent that there was a vast disconnect between what the Welcome Collective saw happening on-the-ground and what the government envisioned. Through following an IE perspective, the Welcome Collective's relationship between the local, the community, as well as to the trans-local, governing officials becomes apparent. It is their *relationships*, rather than the individual community, that is important to this analysis. The objective of this thesis is not to use the experiences of refugee claimants to argue that they are in precarious circumstances and that the lack of government acknowledgement and support adds to this. Rather, the objective is to highlight the 'work' done by service providers to follow their mandate (Smith 2005: 125). The 'work' services providers engage in involves a balancing act: meeting the needs of the community, while also making their operations legible in the eyes of the State. As Smith highlights, "work is intentional: it is done in some actual place under definitive conditions and with definitive resources, and it takes time" (Smith 2005: 154). The notion of intentionality is important, and it addresses the Welcome Collective ongoing endeavour to work as a way of serving their community through constructing an infrastructure of care that challenges the State's vulnerability narrative.

It is not just about supporting the community today but finding ways that they can allow for ongoing support into the future. This involves working with those who have differing perspectives. For instance, it was evident that the Congress was aware of the precariousness of the situation in the Ukraine and genuinely wants to help. It was also clear that they were not engaging in a balancing act in their work. Rather, they have a positive perspective on government support and have yet to encounter where the real change occurs. Simply put, it is often not government support that facilitates change.

Emily explained to me that, "[Y]ou talk to any level of government, and they all understand. 'Yeah, yeah, we know. This is a tragedy.' […] But it took some nobody from some small organization to get the ball rolling and that is just crazy." Yet, where lasting change can occur is in fostering working relationships that are accountable to community needs and government commitments and allow for the construction of an infrastructure of care that meets the actual needs of refugee claimants.

Chapter Three: *Looking 'At' Documents in the Refugee Claimant Process*

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Fieldnotes from Friday, March 25, 2022: Today, I was asked by Jane, the Welcome Collective's Director of Social Initiatives, to help facilitate an immigration form workshop. When I got to the warehouse that morning, I went straight to the Social Initiatives Room. This was new for me, as my time volunteering typically involved unpacking and sorting through donations and placing them in their proper spot. Yet, I was eager to discover a different component of the organization. I was tasked, along with Jane, Malak, the Welcome Collective's Community Worker, as well as two fellow volunteers to run the workshop. A week prior, Jane had reached out to families to see if anyone would be interested in attending the workshop. To no one's surprise, the response was largely affirmative. It is crucial to recognize that the refugee claimant process is not only long and daunting, but deeply complicated involving many intricate documents requiring high levels of detail. Hence, the support provided by the Welcome Collective is a necessity.

Sitting around the table in the Social Initiatives Room were three refugee claimants, one volunteer, with a background as a legal clerk, and the two service providers. Various documents were scattered around the table. Each claimant came carrying a folder with their personal information, as well as that of their families, including but not limited to passports, their various addresses, and national identity cards. Pens and white-out were also placed around the table. I sat with Malak, and she began explaining the Annex A and Annex 12 forms to me and how she would like me to help. Malak was assisting a claimant who was at the 'Address' section of the form—whereby it asks one to provide where they have lived over the last ten years. For many, filling out this section is difficult. It involves many addresses due to the lengthy and non-linear nature of the migratory process. I found the forms to be quiet intimidating, partly because they were in French. As explained earlier, I am far from fluent. I can order a glass of red wine or a cup of black coffee. However, ask me to understand and interpret government immigration forms, that's a whole different story. Nevertheless, I was met with patience. I was grateful for this, as well as for the 'Google translate' app on my phone. I did my best to use the French I did know, while also referring to those around me when I needed extra assistance and support. Throughout the workshop, the importance of detail became apparent to me. When reviewing the forms, we needed to make sure that there were no

'holes' in the story—addresses needed to line up to the exact day, spelling needed to be correct, and postal codes needed to line up with the addresses provided. To reiterate, the non-linear nature of the migratory process makes this quite difficult. There were moments of stress and tension throughout the morning, as individuals struggled to remember where they lived in the past or the month that they moved ten years prior. Yet, the details were deemed necessary in the forms and led us to run out of white-out twice. We also needed to make sure that the 'Occupation' timetable lined up and that any 'gaps' within that could be explained. It is important to recognize that these forms were *personal. The forms took on a different persona. They were held close to the individuals' chest—becoming not simply pieces of paper, but gateways.* There was a sense of reverence for the documents. They exemplified steps towards a new home, a new life. I, along with fellow facilitators, did not fill out the forms directly. Instead, we kept a sheet of paper beside us where we could put notes to assist those filling out their documents. It was important that we did not take over the situation.

The attendees assisted one another through comparing forms. In one scenario, I was trying to garner the proper timeline of an individual's arrival in Montreal and an attendee even became a translator for me. While the workshop was overwhelming, there was a sense of calm that pervaded the space. It was clear that the attendees were grateful for the Welcome Collective for providing support, as a safe space to meet to fill out their forms in the company of others—including a pizza lunch break provided by the Welcome Collective. Occasionally, an attendee would bring up an anecdote about their family or something going on in their life at that time. Completing the forms became not just a bureaucratic endeavour, but a friendly coming together filled with conversation, laughter, and smiles—all emblematic of the Welcome Collective's approach to refugee aid.

Prior to commencing my fieldwork at the Welcome Collective, I had a rather simplistic view of documents. Far from seeing them as important, they represented headaches, confusion, and an utter nuisance. I did not see how they infiltrate everyday lives. Max Weber (1978) explores the role of documents in the making of the modern 'bureau.' He posits that "[T]he management of the modern office is based upon written

documents (the "files"), which are preserved in their original or draught form" (Weber, 1978: 957). It is the documents, along with the public officials, that create the bureau. The intrinsic work done by both service providers, as well as documents is evident. Both are working in tandem to make refugee claimant's 'legible' in the eyes of the State, and it is through exploring the role of government documents that the characteristics of legibility are revealed. Smith (2005) highlights the importance of documents as *mechanics* within the ruling relations. For Smith (2005), the ruling relations include both the State and non-governmental organizations. It speaks to the ways in which organization and order is facilitated. It is through documents that the State dictates and manages the refugee claimant process by translating refugee claimants lived actualities into rhetoric that is legible by the State. Smith (2005) defines ruling relations as the institutional processes that "coordinate the everyday work of administration and the lives of those subject to administrative regimes" (Smith 2005). The coordination is done largely through the use of documents. Documents take on their own persona and become akin to public officials. Matthew Hull (2012) puts forward three reasons why documents have traditionally been ignored by anthropologists. First, they are better left to those in sociology, political science, and economics, as it is their work that deals directly with the question and use of documents. Second, the use of documents in various cultures and societies is not seen as colloquially different from 'us' (vis-à-vis anthropologists)—rather "we produce and use documents in much the way the people we study do" (Hull 2012: 12). Traditionally speaking, anthropology has been seen as the study of differences and not of similarities. Lastly, like my original perspective on documents, they are not seen as important. Instead, they are seen as barriers to the "things that really matter" (Hull 2012:

12). In the migratory process, the 'things' that matter include gaining access to a given country (i.e., green card, brown paper for employment), accessing services and support within said county, and, eventually, embarking on the process of acquiring citizenship. Similarly, Oliver Bakewell (2007) determines that this omission is surprising in contemporary society, as documents continuously play key role "in the modern state in the implementation of a wide range of policies ranging from national security to social welfare, education and health" (Bakewell 2007: 3). In lieu of this lapse of judgement, Hull (2012) calls for documents to be looked "*at* rather than *through*" (Hull, 2012: 13 emphasis added).

What does it mean to look '*at*' documents, particularly within the migratory process? First and foremost, making use of Hull's analysis, it involves recognizing that documents are not only produced and used within society, but that they are experienced (Hull 2012: 5). Documents are not operating independently of State operations but are working in tandem. The experience of documents is unclear, like the experience of myths and rituals, and it changes depending on the person and context. Depending on the document's nature and the support provided, the experience can be smooth or fraught with turmoil. Hull emphasises that, akin to any relation, the relation between individuals and documents is characterized by power imbalances, as documents often become a method of instilling State control and regulation (Hull 2012: 9). Referring to my previous Chapter, documents filter who is 'legible' in the eyes of the State and who is left behind. Within the migratory process, individuals begin experiencing the sway of documents the moment they leave their home country and embark on the migratory journey.

Akin to the discussion on individual vulnerability, the quest of proving one's legibility falls on the individual. George Smith's (1988; 1990) work becomes useful in understanding this endeavour. Smith explores the physical work that individuals living with AIDs must do, including but not limited to applying for unemployment and government support, as well as the daily barriers. The process of 'becoming' and 'being' a refugee is more than just making the initial claim. Rather, 'being' a refugee takes *work*—anywhere from navigating societal barriers to completing and submitting lengthy government documentation. It involves submitting to a state of vulnerability that neglects to recognize the precarity of one's environment, including but not limited to a lack of government support, difficulties adjusting to a new home, as well as facing societal discrimination. The amount of 'lifework' a refugee claimant is required to endure entails support from both government and non-profits. As was explored in the previous Chapter, due to the lack of government support, non-profits often take on the role of providing the necessary resources and support to assist refugee claimants. Non-profits engage in 'life-work' with refugee claimants to both recognize the precarious state refugee claimants find themselves, as well as make their identities legible in the eyes of the State.

Throughout my conversations with service provides, there were select documents that came up repeatedly: the Basis of Claim, VISA Application, Annex A and Annex 12 Forms, as explored in the opening vignette, as well as the paperwork needed to acquire one's Brown Paper. All documents are necessary when one is applying to become a permanent resident in Canada. The Basis of Claim is often seen as the most important legal document a refugee claimant must complete. It is where a refugee claimant explains why they should be allowed into the country and provide 'proof' for their fear of

persecution. Although the Basis of Claim is important, there is a limited amount of line space to respond—requiring one to be clear and concise. Oftentimes, this can be quite difficult when one is met with the stress and turmoil of migration. The Annex A form is a detailed background check. It requires one to provide their current address, past addresses within the last ten years, educational history, past and present political and military affiliations, as well as past and present employment history. Annex 12 asks for the information of the family members who are also requesting permanent residency, as well those who assisted in the process (i.e., travel agents, sponsorships). Annex 12 also asks for criminal history. Akin to the Basis of Claim, each question only has a limited amount of space for answers. Looking 'at' rather than 'through' the documents, as Hull posits, requires one to recognize that each individual document represents not just pieces of information, but meaningful steps towards a new home. It also probes one to recognize that documents do not exist independent of society but are tangled within societal relations and power relations that serve to reduce individuals to single vulnerability and neglect to not only acknowledge the precarious nature of the refugee claimant process, but to provide the necessary support.

In my conversation with Rita, the Welcome Collective's Executive Director, she discussed how her perspective on documents has shifted since she started working at the Welcome Collective. Before, she had a simplistic view and often looked 'through' documents. She thought that a claimant got an application, filled it out, and were supported along the way. This is the understanding that most Canadians have. Yet, it is not the case. It is only once experiencing the refugee claimant process firsthand, or

speaking to those who have, that one comes to recognize the complexity of the work

involved.

    Emma: Has your perspective on the refugee claimant process changed since you started
    working at the Welcome Collective?

    Rita: I understand now what a machine this is for claimants. […] Having
    to navigate all the different steps: […] whether they got their Brown Paper, their work
    permit, how long before they have their hearing, what they must prepare, their story. It is
    a very multi-pronged process that they must juggle to get from A to Z.

    The analogy Rita makes between the refugee claimant process as a 'machine' is

thought-provoking. It connects to the amount of work involved in the process, as well as

to its mechanic and regulatory nature. As stated, the objective of the documentation is to

act akin to a machine, to *filter* out those who are 'worthy' and 'legible' in the eyes of the

State and those who are not. In doing so, it seeks to objectify and prioritize individual

vulnerability. In lieu of this, one's relation to documents becomes a process of

'dehistorization' whereby one's migration story marked by instability and precarity is

disregarded to suit the State's agenda. Lissa Malkki (1996) utilized the term

dehistorization to explain the dominant societal perspectives on refugees and the

tendency towards objectification and victimhood within both media sources and society

more-broadly. Under dehistorization, one's previous history is disregarded, and a refugee

is seen solely as a victim and not a person with "a name, opinions, relatives, and

histories" (Malkki, 1996: 387). Hence, dehistorization serves to further the vulnerability

narrative of the State and erase the previous identities of refugees and craft "a context in

which it is difficult for people in the refugee category to be approached as historical

actors rather than simply mute victims" (Malkki, 1996: 378). Throughout the process of

legibility, one is forced to condense themselves and their stories to fit small, predetermined boxes in hopes of reaching a new home, and documents tend to further this process.

Completing lifework to become legible in the eyes of the State becomes further complicated when language barriers arise. For instance, Jane, the Welcome Collective's Director of Social Initiatives, worked in a Montreal-based shelter for newly arrived refugees before starting at the Welcome Collective. There, she discovered that there is no service for claimants who cannot read or write and, hence, they are left unable to complete their Basis of Claim satisfactorily. In my conversation with Jane, I saw the process of dehistorization come into fruition, as denying one the resources to tell their story renders it invisible. This is not a new occurrence. For instance, Edward Said argues that Palestinians were denied the opportunity to tell their story of the Arab Conflict in dominant media outlets, as well as to the society more-broadly. Rather, "[T]he Palestinian narrative has *never* been officially admitted to Israeli history, except as that of 'non-Jews,' whose inert presence in Palestine was a nuisance to be ignored or expelled" (Said 1984: 33 emphasis added). He posits that stories do not exist independent of society but are imbued within societal power dynamics—consequently explaining the omission. If one's story goes against the 'dominant' narrative, it will be rendered concealed, as "[F]acts do not at all speak for themselves, but require a socially acceptable narrative to absorb, sustain, and circulate them" (Said 1984: 34). Although within the Palestinian context the barrier was not necessarily language, the relationship does connect to the experience of refugee claimants in Canada. For instance, both are looking for a mold to fit a certain archetype—in the context of my research being the 'ideal refugee'

and potential citizen. Within the North America, this is led by neoliberal imperatives of proper education and employment experience allowing for self-sufficiency and the subsequent contribution to the capitalist economy (Ong 2003: 12). This is evident in the government's tendency to fund non-profits that focus on language training, as well as employment support, while neglecting the meeting the material needs that serve to confront the precarity of the refugee claimant process. This also evident in government policy, including the Quebec government's push to have newcomers speak French within six months of entering Canada. Nicholas Martin (2014) posits that political patronage, and the subsequent use of documents, often favours those in power and becomes "integral to processes that dispossess people of their rights"—speaking to the question of *who* defines the societal norm put forward (Martin 2014: 419). In the context of Martin's work in Tamil Nadu, India, those 'in charge' are particularly male-dominated and higher caste bureaucratic elites. Meanwhile, for the purpose of my research, those in charge are capitalist elites and government officials. Looking 'at' documents, rather than 'through' them, and acknowledging the work involved, the role of power imbalances becomes evident. One can point to the ways documents work to *reproduce* the power of the State, while looking past one's own personal narrative, prompting individual refugee claimants to engage in further work to make their claims heard.

The Welcome Collective, along with other non-profit organizations, recognize the state of precarity that refugee claimants are in. Moreover, they recognize the amount of lifework required and strive to *accompany* them in the process. The notion of accompanying is important to Rita, and it was a key question in our conversation. She wondered, "How can we accompany them in these obstacles?" By unpacking the notion

of accompanying, the Welcome Collective makes use of their knowledge capacity to work alongside refugee claimants, such as in the immigration form workshop organized by Jane and Malak. The service providers also acknowledged that the Welcome Collective is not a Legal Aid organization and are limited to the amount of legal support they can provide to aid in the lifework of refugee claimants. They can, however, make use of their existing resources and refer their clients to local Legal Clinics for support.

Laura Smith-Khan (2020) explores the role of Registered Migration Agents (RMAs) in accompanying refugee claimants in Australia, particularly in shaping credible refugee claims in line with State aims. The work done RMAs provide an interesting comparison to the Welcome Collective's work. For instance, RMAs often (but not all the time) come from a legal background and are educated in Australian Migration Law and Practice. Along with a claimant's own summary of persecution required in the VISA application, RMAs will often provide a subsequent form providing "greater detail and explicitly linking the applicant's experiences with relevant law, and third-party country information" (Smith-Khan 2020: 121). Those at the Welcome Collective do not come from a legal background. Yet, both have a level of social capital that can be of great use for claimants. Pierre Bourdieu (1992) defines social capital as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu 1992: 119). For RMAs, their social capital is their legal expertise. Meanwhile, for the Welcome Collective, it is their experience working within the refugee claimant process either themselves or supporting other clients, as well as their

connections to other organizations, including government bureaus and community based social services.

Both the Welcome Collective and the RMAs help to make refugee claimants legible in the eyes of the State through their social capital. For instance, perhaps a representative has connections to the government and know verbatim what they are looking for in immigration applications and can implement legal language into the claim (Smith-Khan 2020: 122). Smith-Khan (2020) classifies the role of RMAs as a 'mediating role'—service providers working to filter what is said into a way that is legible in the eyes of the State (Smith-Khan 2020: 121). The Welcome Collective also take on a mediating role. However, the Welcome Collective has not only become a mediator within the refugee claimant process, but a key actor in the system. Their work serves to not only provide documentary support to refugee claimants, but to confront the state of precarity that refugee claimants are forced into. They advocate for refugee rights and provide social support, as evident in their 'Welcome Group' initiative and connections to various community resources.

Smith-Khan (2020) also identifies the dangers of gatekeeping in RMAs' operations. RMAs can take away a claimant's agency and ability to tell their own story, as they write the narrative themselves using language that will be legible to the State. Rather than challenging the State's narrative of vulnerability and objectivity, they become 'immigration gatekeepers' who are at risk of falling trap to the hierarchy that pervades the migration process and marginalizes claimants (Smith-Khan 2021: 3718-3720). While helping to facilitate the immigration form workshop at the Welcome Collective, I realized that the worry of gatekeeping was evident. Those at the Welcome

Collective recognized their role in the refugee claimant process as not simply mediators

providing support, but key actors that are at risk of reflecting the power imbalances of the

State. This recognition is crucial. It speaks to the importance of differentiating between

vulnerability and precarity and, above all, ensuring that their work be focused on

confronting precarity. Keeping this in mind, the workshop facilitators did not want to

follow the vulnerability narrative and dominate those attending. For instance, as a

facilitator, I did not complete the forms myself directly or speak over refugee claimants

when trying to understand information, including accurate dates and locations. Instead of

writing directly on the forms, I kept sheets of paper beside me where I could make notes

and comments for the claimant to read and perhaps add to their application. I also sat

beside the individual while they completed their forms, answered any questions that

arose, and read over the forms upon completion with patience, encouragement, and

attention. This speaks to the intent of challenging the State's vulnerability narrative, as

well as confronting the worry of NGOization and the professionalization of one's identity

that creates a sense of superiority over claimants. The Welcome Collective understands

that the work needed to put their 'Value and Vision' into practice requires ongoing work

and reflection. Like the refugee claimant process, their work is lengthy and exhausting,

and involving many documents but necessary given the precarious nature.

       Government documents are not the only documents that refugee claimants and

service providers interact with within the refugee claimant process. Ilana Feldman (2008)

also notes the importance of ration cards and other humanitarian-centered forms as key to

supporting refugees. They are the forms that one must complete to get support for their

immediate needs, including housing, food, health care and proper clothing (Feldman

2008: 513). Humanitarian support forms are important in the Welcome Collective's

operations and their work to accompany refugee claimants in Montreal. In order to access

the Welcome Collectives resources, including 'Welcome Group' support, furniture,

clothing, and household appliances—to name a few, refugee claimants must also

complete forms. For instance, there is the 'Family Form' which must be filled out when

applying to receive the Welcome Collective's services. As explored earlier, the Welcome

Collective is a powerful, yet small, organization. They are not able to meet the needs of

every refugee claimant in Montreal. Emily explained to me that, on average, there are

2,000 refugee claimants arriving in Montreal per month and the Welcome Collective has

the capacity to serve a maximum of 10 families per week—or one-tenth of those arriving.

They focus particularly on supporting families and single mothers. To ensure that they

are meeting the needs of those most vulnerable, the Welcome Collective requires that

individual's fill out the 'Family Form' when applying to receive their services. They

contain information on one's background and members of their family that have arrived

with them. The members of the Social Initiatives Team read over the 'Family Forms' to

determine who is most in need. It is important to note that deciding who is most 'in need'

is a difficult task, and something that the service providers I spoke to do not enjoy.

However, due to the precarious nature of the Welcome Collective's operations and the

vast number of those in need, it is a necessity to ensure the efficiency of the organization.

Those who the Welcome Collective are unable to support are referred to other

community-based organizations via the accessible 'Welcome Guide' found on their

website.

As a volunteer with the 'Welcome Group,' an initiative that partners volunteers with refugee claimants in Montreal to direct them to community resources and provide any necessary support, I learned that the Welcome Collective's work is divided into three phases once an individual's application is approved. First, they receive their furniture and household items from the Movers. Second, they become connected with someone at the 'Welcome Group' to provide social support and answer any questions that arise. Third, once the stable base is secure, the focus shifts to community-building, as evident in their lively events and educational workshops that discuss refugee claimant needs and rights. Like the refugee claimant process, the Welcome Collective's work is complex and, hence, involves the use of documentation to ensure organization and efficiency. While at the Welcome Collective, I had the opportunity to sit down with Alexis, the Logistics Coordinator. One of Alexis's roles involves managing and scheduling deliveries of household items. She explained to me that a refugee claimant will fill out the 'Family Form' found on their website to request the service. They are also asked to provide photos and information on what they need most in their home, such as specific furniture items and kitchen appliances. As discussed, those at the Welcome Collective recognize that the migration process is lengthy, complicated, and overwhelming—particularly the amount of paperwork required. They do not want to add additional stress to the precarious situation and, instead, work to ensure that their forms are concise, clear and, above all, accessible to the claimant's needs. The service providers are within reach to answer any question that may arise. Jane, the Director of Social Initiatives, explained to me that following the completion of their request, potential acceptance, and receival of furniture, the refugee claimant is also required to do a 'Social Interview' with the

members of the Social Initiative Team. This is meant to resemble a casual conversation where the Team can check-in with the individual. It does not require paperwork on behalf of the refugee claimant. However, as a 'Welcome Group' Volunteer, I was also required to complete paperwork following my weekly conversations with the family I was partnered with. In the form, I had to state what topics were discussed, any issues that arose, as well as any services and organizations that I referred the family to. The forms were a way to hold myself accountable to the family, as well as to those at the Welcome Collective, and demonstrate my contribution to the organization. The forms allowed me to recognize the precarious nature the refugee claimant family was in and provide services to face it.

Oliver Bakewell (2007) explores the discrepancies found in conceptualizing documents. On the one hand, they are empowering and signify a new home, a new beginning (see Carswell & De Neve 2020 and Feldman 2008). Yet, on the other hand, as explored above, the work involved in the documentation process serves to hinder newcomer identity and focus on individual vulnerability. Yet, Bakewell (2008) explores a new dimension to the argument. He posits that nationality as a form of legal recognition and documentation stands in contrast to how people *chose* to identify, including one's affection draw to an identity (Bakewell 2007: 10). One may not be concerned with their identity on paper, but more concerned with how they present themselves internally with respect to their life-history. Yet, individuals are still forced to subscribe to state legibility by making their identity legally legible to the State. For Bakewell's research, the context was the borderland between North-West Zambia and Angola where individuals often struggle to come to terms with their national identity and feel a connection to 'home'

identity. He demonstrates how the question of identity goes beyond legal and bureaucratic documentation. For instance, "Zambian law makes no allowance for dual citizenship, in the villages things are not so simple," as evident in people holding more than one identity paper and internally recognizing themselves as part of two nationalities (Bakewell 2007: 11). In studies like Bakewell's, one can recognize the complexity of nationality, as well as identity more-broadly, and how efforts to circumvent State-led categories prove to be mistaken.

Non-profits as not only mediators, but also actors. State-led categorization erases past identities. The Welcome Collective uses their resources to make space for both: creating a new home and remaining connected to one's old home. This is evident in the Welcome Collective's hesitancy to resort to integration rhetoric in their 'Value and Visions' statement. Earlier I discussed Emily's reluctance towards the government's use of integration. She stated, "[T]here is a sense of loss when you integrate. That is the whole reason for why Canada tries to differentiate itself from the U.S.—the melting pot versus multiculturalism—you know? That difference is supposed to highlight differences. […] When we talk integration, we talk the opposite." Talk of 'integration' and 'multiculturalism' is prominent throughout Canada, and it relates to the documentation process of *becoming* a Canadian citizen. The definition of multiculturalism as celebratory and all-encompassing becomes tampered in practice, particularly under the pervasive gaze of neoliberalism and the state-centric documentation framework that neglects to reflect on the precarious nature of refugee experience.

To conclude, I would like to return to the Welcome Collective's 'Value and Visions' statement. Unlike the State's agenda, there is no evidence of multiculturalism. Instead, the focus is on inclusivity and empowerment. They state that:

> "As an organization, we must speak out against and address the systems of racism, white supremacy, and patriarchy and the colonial reflexes that prevent our societies from welcoming and valuing all those who come to us for shelter. We must also address the root causes of oppression, both here and globally, which drive people to leave their homes.
>
> We strive for a world of fair, inclusive and caring societies, where racism and patriarchy are things of the past and where people can live free from the legacies of colonialism, exploitation, and inequality in all of its forms."

The documentation process of becoming/being a refugee claimant is not 'good' or 'bad.' One's identity is complex and does not fit into the predetermined molds of documentation. We can look beyond the individual and explore the relationships and questions of power that influence the process. Government documents focus on the question of vulnerability and of manipulating one's story to be legible by the State. If we look 'at' rather than 'through' documents, steps can be taken to acknowledge the complexity and make society attentive to the narratives that challenge norms (Hull, 2012: 13). The Welcome Collective provides an infrastructure of care. In addition to the physical space, the Welcome Collective provides care and support through their engagement with documents. While documents found in the refugee claimant process often are disempowering and demanding, community-centered organizations like the Welcome Collective bring a sense of humanity into the documents. They provide

resources to refugee claimants to assist them in completing the forms and achieving

citizenship without losing sight of their own identity and life-story in the process.

Concluding Remarks

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In this thesis, I have explored the role of the Welcome Collective, a Montreal-based non-profit refugee aid organization, in supporting refugee claimants throughout the claimant process. I have argued that their role is complex, involving many different factors to ensure its function to meet the precarious nature of the claimant process. The precarious nature is evident in the relationality of the claimant process. It is chocked full of barriers that connect to one another, such as the lack of translators that make it difficult for an individual to complete the necessary forms to access services. I have explored the role of physical space in creating a sense of 'home,' the role of government-non-profit relations and how they can serve to strengthen or hinder a non-profit's operations, as well as the materiality of the refugee claimant process and the crucial task that physical documents have in every level of the process. I have demonstrated how all these elements work together to allow the Welcome Collective to face the precarious nature of the refugee claimant process, rather than following the government's agenda and focusing on refugee identity as a question of individual vulnerability. The elements I explored are what permit the Welcome Collective to structure an infrastructure of care that meets the precarious nature and *work* to confront it. I have also argued that non-profits are necessary in the refugee claimant process. Not only is the process daunting, confusing, and demanding of life-work on behalf of the individual, but it is also lacking in adequate support from government officials. In lieu of this, non-profits step in to fill the cracks that are left. Many barriers serve to hinder refugee claimants' mobility, as well as in society more-broadly, including language difficulties, societal racism and discrimination (as evident in media outlets), and a lack of accessibility to services. The Welcome Collective has an empowering role in challenging the hierarchical structure of the refugee claimant

process by *accompanying* refugee claimants, rather than dominating and dictating the situation. The results of my investigation contribute to other findings about the importance of non-profits in the refugee claimant process.

This investigation asks one to consider the wealth of knowledge provided by service providers in the non-profit sector both at a local and trans-local level— particularly their interactions with the refugee claimant community within Montreal, as well as their connections to other non-profit organizations and the governing system more-broadly. In this study, I looked at the interaction between the individual refugee claimant accessing services and the State at both the Provincial and Federal levels, as well as connections to other non-profit organizations to explore not just the refugee claimant process, but the ruling relations embedded in the process (Smith 2005). In this study I explore the varying degrees of 'work' undertaken on behalf of service providers and refugee claimants and how individual identity is transformed into a 'legible' case file through specific institutional practices. The Welcome Collective is a key actor in the system—not only *mediating* but embedded themselves. Although my study began from an interest in understanding how individuals access services within the refugee claimant process, refugee claimants were not the object of inquiry. Instead, the operations of the Welcome Collective and the many service providers I had the opportunity to speak to and work alongside were the focus of investigation. Service providers are key in this conversation, as they sit on the frontline of the operations daily. For instance, local service providers are often among the first individuals a refugee claimant will interact with upon arrival in Montreal. They come to represent the primary source of support, including but not limited to social, emotional, and physical, for refugee claimants. They

are the ones who help to create feelings of home and belonging for refugee claimants and remind them that they are not alone in the process. It is the service providers' *own* lived experience, as well as familiarity with the refugee claimant process, that is vital in this investigation and allows for insight to be drawn on the innerworkings of the process.

Additionally, this investigation speaks to an important question: how service provider's work within the non-profit sector informs society and governing officials on changes required within the refugee claimant process. The objective of this study was to provide a platform for alternative ways of thinking and knowing concerning the refugee claimant process—particularly ideas that serve to challenge the dominant stream of thought. Both Alexis and Kate spoke to the importance of humanizing policies through developing policies that respond to the communities' actual needs. This would involve policy makers speaking to refugee claimants, as well as service providers, to get a sense of what services are most needed. Similarly, Emily discussed developing policies that challenge 'newcomer stigma' and the tendency towards dehumanizing and dehistorizing newcomer identities to develop a holistic and human-centred approach to policy development that empowers, rather than inhibiting mobility. Rita spoke to developing policy that is forward thinking, but not neglectful of the past: "[A]s a refugee, you leave because you feel that living there is a threat to your existence. […] We need a system that is made for individuals to help settle as quick as they can."

One thing remained clear throughout my conversations: the importance of policy changes cannot be underestimated. The need within the community continues to grow and the burden is falling on non-profit organizations. Although the Welcome Collective

is powerful force within society, they do not have the capacity to support all refugee claimants in need. Jane disclosed to me that "[H]elp should not only come from social workers, but from a solidarity network that goes beyond." While the Welcome Collective makes use of community referrals and does have a 'solidarity network,' policy changes that support refugee claimants would enhance this process. The 'need' is hidden beneath a gaze of multiculturalism and neoliberalism. Under this gaze, the focus rests on one's ability to be a 'productive' member of the capitalist system and fit into a designated role of 'Canadian citizen.' Yet, as was made evident, initiatives like this are harmful not only to refugee identity, as they serve to erase past experiences and life stories, but to Canadian society, as society is deprived of the experience and strength from refugee claimants themselves. It is only once one comes to recognize the problems that arise with this dominant way of thinking, including the ongoing exclusion and discrimination, that real change can occur. Therefore, it is not only necessary that policy be changed towards a community-based, human-centric approach, but that society becomes community focused. There is key obstacle that stands in this change of perspective. Specifically, what does this change look like in reality? I cannot answer that. Yet, I can say that speaking with service providers on their own experiences and perspectives and incorporating those into policy through equal partnerships is a great first step.

There are several limitations to this investigation and its findings. First, the sample size for interviews was limited to service providers within the Welcome Collective. Although this limited sample size allowed for detailed and in-depth personal conversations, it did not allow me to garner the perspectives of refugee claimants themselves. Yet, it did allow me to foster meaningful relationships with those at the

Welcome Collective. Due to ethical consideration and the timeline of my research, I did not have the capacity to extend my research participants to include refugee claimants. It is important to highlight that further research on what the future of the refugee claimant process ought to look like would not be possible without the addition of refugee claimants themselves, as they are the individuals who have been through the process first-hand. Second, my research was limited to the service providers and volunteers at the Welcome Collective. While I am confident that this was not a limitation per-se to my research, as each service provider I spoke with was eager and grateful to provide me with helpful and meaningful insight, it would be interesting to explore the role of other non-profit organizations within Montreal and throughout Canada and their experience navigating the refugee claimant process. In terms of policy changes, it would also be advantageous to speak to governing representatives, as they would be able to provide insight how to go about enhancing the refugee claimant process within government operations. Yet, due to the timeline of my research, this was not possible. Investigating other perspectives, from refugee claimants to governing officials, would be a noteworthy step to further unpacking the refugee claimant process and the changes that need to occur for both the refugee community, as well as society at large.

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