‘Our Dreams on Life Support’: Exploring Signs of Integration, Post-Traumatic Growth and Resilience Among Quebec’s Marginalized Immigrants

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ABSTRACT

‘Our Dreams on Life Support’: Exploring Signs of Integration, Post-Traumatic Growth and Resilience Among Quebec’s Immigrants

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This study explores the integration experiences of immigrants who hold intersecting identities—such as being of color, queer, from marginalized ethnic and/or socioeconomic backgrounds. Quebec’s context presents additional challenges compared to other jurisdictions, including non-recognition of foreign credentials and strict secularism and language laws, such as Bill 21 and Bill 96. Through a phenomenological ethnographic research design, this study addresses aspects of sociology, psychology and education and aims to provide insights regarding the subjective experiences of these individuals. The project also allows for a creative output generated by the research itself.

A review of prior research literature addresses linguistic challenges faced by newcomers, the impact of imposed acculturation processes, gender inequality in immigrant integration, and challenges posed by discriminatory policies of the host land.

The study reflects these trends and themes with a focus on ten individual stories that give human voices to the voiceless statistics that underpin the study of immigrant integration.

The research ultimately reveals that true integration is unattainable for many due to factors like race, language fluency, and religious or sexual identity, especially within Quebec’s distinct identity and historical response to immigration. The findings suggest that systemic barriers, integration challenges, inadequate support for trauma and language acquisition hinder newcomers' successful integration. The dissertation presents recommendations for policymakers and educators, including removing systemic barriers to credential recognition, supporting inclusive cultural integration, and enhancing emotional support services for immigrants.

Keywords: Quebec, immigration, integration, francisation, assimilation, acculturation, credential recognition, Bill 21, Bill 96, immigrant trauma, Queer, BIPOC, systemic barriers.

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Dedication

To the voiceless, to the participants who were generous with their time and stories, to the newcomers, to those who just set foot here, to those who have been here for so long making the best of it, to all of you, thank you. This is for you.

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Chapter 1. Introduction: Setting the Context

Canada has a centuries-long history of ongoing immigration, beginning with the arrival of the first European settlers in the 1500s and their brutal decimation of the First Nations who pre-existed them (Dickason, 1992; Lavelle & Poole, 2009). Given that this thesis is about multiple marginalized immigrants and refugees (people of colour, LGBTQIA2S+, cis women, femme-presenting, and/or belonging to a religious minority) who leave their countries and the horrors that cannot be put into words to make new homes in Quebec, I would be remiss not to preface that this dissertation is being written during an exceptionally terrible time in the Global South.

The Sudan 'civil war', triggered by greed and funded by external powers, has caused the death of 14,000 people (Bartlet, 2024) and the largest internally displaced population in the world, with over 11 million people since mid-April 2023 (UNOCHA, n.d.). The silent genocide in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), committed for greed over cobalt and other valuable resources, is a decade-long conflict causing a huge food insecurity (23% of the population), mass displacement (7.2 million people), and sexual violence, which rose 90% in 2024 from 2023, with around 15,000 reported sexual assault incidents this year (Associated Press, 2024). Since October 2023, 1.9 million people (90% of the population) have been displaced in Gaza and about 52,000 people–those are the identified ones, the estimated number is 200,000–have been killed (UNFPA, n.d., The Lancet, 2024) in a genocide motivated by further land theft and a 5-billion-dollar natural gas reserve (TRT World Research Centre, 2024). For similar reasons, Lebanon's entire civil society in the South was targeted and destroyed (Sherlock 2024). At least 29 entire villages were wiped out (Astik, 2024), about 1.2 million displaced, more than 3,000 killed and 13,000 injured (Amnesty International. 2024; Al-Jazeera, 2024). Syria

oscillated from one dictator to another (Beaumont, 2024). The Uyghurs are still fighting for their religious and political freedoms and against forced labour under strict rules and in total, absolute silence and media darkness (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Despite more than a century-long annihilation of local Caribbean and South American banana farmers and meddling in regional politics to build a highly profitable banana industry, Chiquita–the banana brand–has only recently come under fire as it was revealed that the company hired a paramilitary group in 2001 to murder local Colombians to maintain its appropriation of bananas and wealth (Reuters, 2024). To gain its freedom after having been a French slave colony for 13 years, Haiti was decimated and had to pay France the equivalent of $20 billion borrowed from American, German and French banks (Concern USA, 2024). That, combined with the assassination of their president, led to an increase in gang violence, creation of generational poverty and hunger, and the inability to have basic needs for 50% of the population (Concern USA, 2024; UN 2024). Myanmar, Tigray, Yemen and others are all going through wars, crises, ethnic cleansing and catastrophes (Amnesty International, n.d.; Geographical, 2024; UNHCR, 2024).

These are not all of the world's tragic stories, but stories in the current news cycle about people of colour in what is often referred to as the Global South. It is important to remember all these stories when interviewing refugees and immigrants who, after having survived such horrors, come here to start over in a new home that they hope is kinder to them and their families. It is important to bear witness to what they have gone through and barely survived as we begin to examine their current realities and uncover different waves of discrimination in Quebec.

Newcomers' situations navigating policies in Quebec is a subject that has attracted considerable attention. Multicultural[1] and intercultural[2] policies may surreptitiously segregate minorities (Antonius et al., 2013; Mathieu & Hart, 2024; Simpson & Whiteside, 2015). Additionally, numerous studies in the past two decades explore the hardships different immigrants hailing from all around the globe have experienced, trying to integrate into the host society (Grenier & Xue, 2010; Guo, 2015). Few researchers have addressed in an intersectional manner how marginalized and racialized people, especially women and/or people who are Queer, from Africa, SWANA (Southwest Asia and North Africa), also known as the Middle East, and Latin America struggle with Quebec's marginalizing language and religious policies such as Bill 21 and Bill 96[3] as well as the non-recognition of previous work experience as they endeavor to integrate into the Canadian province.

Before delving into the research questions, an account of Quebec's sociopolitical and cultural contexts is essential.

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[1] Multiculturalism refers to a political and social philosophy that recognizes, values, and promotes the coexistence of diverse cultural identities within a single society. It encourages minority communities to retain their languages, religions, and traditions (Kymlicka, 1995).

[2] Interculturalism operates within a duality paradigm, recognizing the dynamic between a cultural majority and minority groups, and seeks to manage this relationship through dialogue and mutual respect—though critics argue that it subtly reinforces assimilation by privileging the norms of the dominant culture (Bouchard, 2012).

[3] Bill 101 or the Charter of the French language, made French the official language of Quebec. Bill 21 is the Act respecting the secularism of the state; hence banning public servants such as teachers, police officers and judges from wearing any religious signs or garb (with proposed amendments through Bill 94). Under Bill 94, the ban already imposed by Bill 21 would apply to all staff and volunteers in public schools and school service centres, and not just teachers and principals. It has not passed yet. Bill 96 is an Act affirming French as the only official language in Quebec and forcing newcomers to learn how to communicate in French in six months after their arrival or leave the province. Bill 96 has more strict requirements for Quebec businesses than previous laws. (*Assemblée Nationale du Québec,* n.d.*)*

Destination : Québec

The Canadian Dream

Québec, *terre d'accueil*. Our home. Also, home to tens of thousands of refugees and immigrants annually. Out of about 1.3 million new immigrants who settled in Canada between 2016 and 2021, about 4.6% did so in Quebec (StatsCan, 2023, 2024). These newcomers arrive in the province with some notion of a Canadian dream: where they are safe from harm and about to embark on a better journey in a country that has accepted them and delivered them from their atrocious conditions in their home countries. According to several studies that delved into newcomers' experiences before arriving in the host society (Denov & Blanchet-Cohen, 2014; Hassan et al., 2013; Nair 2019), newcomers resolve to leave their places of origin due to severe hardships such as poverty, war, famine, persecution, genocide, and other dire circumstances.

Moreover, several studies have explored newcomers' expectations upon arriving in Quebec as they pursue the 'Canadian dream' of a brighter future. However, the literature often suggests these optimistic expectations do not match the real conditions they will likely find once they start integrating into the host society (Khan & Watson, 2005; Lim et al., 2022; Vang & Chang, 2019). While about 60% of 25 to 64-year-olds hold at least a [foreign] Bachelor's degree, over 25% are overqualified for the jobs they have here (StatsCan, 2024).

According to Bourdabat and Grenier (2017), regarding the integration of educated immigrants into Quebec's labour market, they are:

> On average, better educated than non-immigrants; however, this does not work in their favour in the labour market. In Quebec, the unemployment rate among immigrants holding a college diploma or a university degree was nearly 10% in 2011, or twice the rate observed among non-immigrants holding a similar diploma or degree. Immigrants

> with a foreign post secondary diploma had greater difficulty finding a job than those who graduated in Canada. (p. 20)

Racialized Women

Regrettably, this situation critically affects educated immigrant women. Employment rates for newly immigrated, educated women was at 60% in 2019, whereas it was 83.3% for their Canadian-born counterparts (Crossman et al., 2021). Even more troubling is the plight of racialized Muslim women of Arab origin whose quest for a job has been hindered by consistent discrimination and the subtle imposition of acculturation processes that forbid them from wearing hijabs in public spaces (Bakali, 2016; Maxwell, & Hirsch, 2020; Syed, 2013). Similarly, various immigrant Sikh women have declared being rejected by employers who did not appreciate their being of colour and being women, as most low-paid jobs are given to men (Roshan, 2024). In a similar vein, Hasidic immigrant women and Jewish women from various denominations like the Ashkenazi in Quebec have a long history of being discriminated against based on ethnic and physical traits (Eidinger, 2014; Skinazi, 2015).

BIPOC and Queer

Being Queer adds another layer of complications. A qualitative study about racialized, Queer immigrants in Toronto criticized the assumption that immigrants will integrate successfully into Canadian society, arguing that Queer women or femme-presenting members often remain excluded from mainstream and queer spaces due to racism (Pardoe, 2011). Being male and white, even in queer spaces, is more powerful. BIPOC Queer participants struggled to find employment and inclusion (Pardoe, 2011) and struggled to feel heard when they brought up complaints about discrimination. Unfortunately, similar results were echoed in Quebec over the

last decade, specifically about how queerphobia and racism hinder the integration of BIPOC Queer immigrants and refugees in society causing financial, emotional and psychological difficulties (Huang, 2014; Fournier et al., 2017; Roy, 2021; Scott & Bird, 2024).

Layers of Othering

Much of this is complicated and emotionally charged. On the one hand, we have Quebec—the host society, still reeling from decades of prejudice and persecution under English Canadian rule. They hope to thrive with newcomers who embrace their language, culture, and laws. It is vital to remember, however, that Quebec itself is built on stolen, unceded Indigenous lands, and its own nationalism reinforces settler colonial logics that continue to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous Peoples. On the other, we have immigrants and refugees who have been uprooted by war, poverty, homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, and other isms and phobias, seeking a safe new home.

Immigrants, refugees and other newcomers are faced with layers of multiple obstacles, including: cultural and religious differences, conflicting Canadian and Quebec laws on immigration, educational and health sectors that are overwhelmed and need updating, strict identity-affirming laws (like Bill 21 and Bill 96), and non-recognition of foreign credentials.

It is worth noting that Bill 21 is a byproduct of the Quebec Charter of Values, also known as Bill 60, which was introduced (but did not pass) in 2013 by the Quebec government in a staunch move to legislate controversial issues (Dagenais, 2014). I argue in my dissertation that these laws—which were primarily put in place to protect the French language and culture in Quebec—have had an adverse effect on newcomers, simply because of their exclusion criteria and stringency. Maintaining the French language and culture of Quebec is necessary for its people's independence (a nation within a nation, [CBC], 2006). However, when combined with

strict and exclusive rules, the society becomes discriminatory. By not recognizing previous education and professional experience in many fields, limiting access to a long list of occupations, and putting a timer on when they can learn French before being kicked out of the province, the host society and the newcomers lose on emotional, financial and social levels.

Quebec's Political Context

To gain a clearer understanding of the political atmosphere that newcomers to Quebec society face, a historical account of its political transformations is necessary.

After losing a seven-year war to the British in 1760, French Quebec society leaned into Catholicism, as the church seemed to be the only way to maintain Quebec culture by maintaining its language, culture and religion (Micquelon et al., 2006). Up until the 1960s and 1970s, the Catholic church provided a strong pillar to maintain Quebecois culture, language and religion by controlling education, healthcare and entertainment (Warren, 2020). The church instructed farmers to have more children, encouraged women to have children instead of getting an education (AFP, 2024; Warren, 2020), and allowed only a certain number of French Canadians to continue higher education (Pigeon, 2010), while the province's resources continued to be managed by external powers, thereby furthering the economic gap between English and French Canadians (Durocher, 2023).

However, the Catholic Church's influence included significant mental, sexual and physical abuse, affecting both white Catholics and First Nations in different ways (Trothen, 2021). In 2022, 140 survivors launched a class action lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Quebec in Canada for being sexually assaulted by more than 100 priests or diocese staff over the years (AFP, 2024). The Church was also guilty of abusive, and sometimes deadly, behaviour towards Indigenous children (McDougal, 2008; Monpetit & Shingler, 2012). About 2000 Indigenous

children were found buried on residential school grounds in Canada, including about 200 in Quebec, (Wyton, 2023) with a tearful apology from the prime minister at the time (Gilmore, 2021) but no real reparations (Cheng, 2021; Joaquin, 2021).

Since the 1770s and until the Quiet Revolution in 1959, Quebec was essentially a French settlement colony experiencing tension with its British conquerors. It developed a distinct French-Canadian identity with the Catholic Church dominating society. Quebec, alongside the rest of the Canadian provinces, broke free from British rule and asserted its sovereignty through the British North America Act of 1867 in which English and French were recognized as official languages (Richardson, 1997). While this act marked a significant step toward French independence, it did not undermine the great power exerted by the Catholic church over centuries. Indeed, the influence of the church reached its zenith during the period extending from the 1930s to the 1960s, known as The Great Darkness (*La Grande Noirceur*) when Maurice Duplessis entrenched himself as the leader of the Union Nationale, a conservative party (Lammert & Vormann, 2015). The Duplessis era stood out for its notable stagnation in social transformations and unwavering support for the Catholic Church (Lord, 2020). The pervasive social conservatism that characterized this era, coupled with the post WWII industrial developments that rapidly turned Quebec from a rural to an urban society (Rouillard, 1998), paved the way for the non-clerical social reforms of The Quiet Revolution and the emergence of a secular identity rooted in Quebec's cultural and linguistic heritage (Lammert & Vormann, 2015).

The early 1960s was a period of transformation characterized by rapid and radical social, political, and economic change, in which a set of reforms were proposed to dismantle the sovereignty of the Catholic Church (Rouillard, 1998). The Liberal Party, which had won the

elections at that time, embarked on widespread secularization efforts to establish the emergence of several non-clerical reforms. These included the creation of a healthcare system, the ministry of education, nationalization of Hydro-Quebec, the Quebec pension plan, lowering the voting age to 18 years old, and promoting the French language and culture through various initiatives (Durocher & Millette, n.d.; Lord, 2021).

The Quiet Revolution solidified the secularization of the state and an unwavering skepticism toward forms of power rooted in clerical authority, fostering the need to establish a strong sense of national identity based on the French language (Vormann & Lammert, 2014). According to Richardson (1997):

> Nationalist sentiment in Quebec gained momentum throughout the 1960s, with the language issue becoming increasingly prominent. This growing unrest prompted the Canadian government to pass the Official Languages Act of 1969, which reaffirmed the equal status of French and English. Despite these efforts to assuage French-speaking Quebeckers, language and culture continued to be a point of contention in provincial politics. (p. 525)

The emergence of a national identity centered on the French language—which, again, replaced the previous religious identity rooted in Catholic values—cleared the path for immigration policies aimed at facilitating the entry of French-speaking newcomers.

Since 1968, Quebec has had its own immigration department and has invited immigrants to settle within the province, attempting to recruit as many French-speaking immigrants as possible to ensure the ongoing growth of the Francophone community (Proulx-Chénard, 2006). Quebec was the first province to sign a special immigration agreement with the federal government. The 1991 Canada-Quebec Accord covers four main areas, including the selection of

immigrants, the reception and integration of immigrants, the provision of settlement services, and the promotion of immigration (Proulx-Chénard, 2006).

In this sense, Quebec is a special case in Canada with its language and secular laws that have impacted its immigration laws. While most Canadian provinces embraced language policies through Canada's Official Languages Act of 1969 to welcome English-speaking newcomers in its territory, Quebec issued three language policies: Bill 22[4] (1969); Bill 22 (1974); and Bill 101 (1977). This sought to ensure the francization of immigrants and attract French-speaking newcomers (Bouffard, 2015). As Bouffard (2015) puts it:

> In terms of immigrant selection, Quebec recruits its immigrants mainly in French-speaking countries, and the selection process heavily favours knowledge of French. As a result, the proportion of immigrants who claim French as a first language has steadily increased. (p. 58)

This initiative stemmed from Quebec's endeavors to consolidate its emerging identity with the French language, replacing its decaying clerical identity. The identity debates on religion and secularism in Quebec presuppose a negotiation of the principles of multiculturalism with ethnolinguistic and nationalist principles. This negotiation requires consideration of the difficulties of reconciling diverse forms of religious expression with Quebec's collective identity, which is rooted in a rejection of religion.

Certainly, the integration of French-speaking newcomers of various origins has shifted the cultural debate. Initially, blame was placed on Canada's Anglophone culture for putting

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[4] The 1969 version of Bill 22, titled *An Act to promote the French language in Quebec*, laid the groundwork for further language legislation. It was followed in 1974 by a new Bill 22, formally known as *The Official Language Act*, which established French as the only official language of the province. The 1974 Act built on the earlier legislation to strengthen the position of French in Quebec's public and institutional life (Quebec, 1974).

Quebec's Francophone heritage ostensibly at stake by failing to recognize its distinctive traits within the Canadian territory. However, the focus of this debate rapidly shifted towards concerns about the impact of minorities as Quebec witnessed the increase of newcomers after The Quiet Revolution. In this regard, Stasiulis (2013) argues that:

> The focus on the fragility of Quebec's national identity has since shifted from the threat without (Anglo hegemony) to the threat within (unassimilable immigrants and religious minorities), but with the two (external and internal) threats now linked in the popular fantasy of white francophone decline. Quebec's minorities had been blamed in the past for undermining the national project, most famously by then separatist Prime Minister Parizeau who blamed the narrow loss in the 1995 Quebec sovereignty referendum on 'money and the ethnic vote' (CBC Digital Archives n.d.). Thus, the current focus on 'dangerous internal foreigners' with interests and dispositions alien to those of the francophone majority can be said to reflect only the most recent rendition of popular anxiety about internal threats to the Quebec nation. (p. 195)

The separatist movement reborn in the 1960s played a major role in Quebec's endeavor to self-determine as a distinct state within Canada. Since the foundation of the movement, several attempts have been made to reject Canada's reforms that do not protect Quebecers' unique culture as Francophones. Doubtlessly, the rejection of both the 1980 and 1995 referendums that pursued Quebec's independence as a sovereign country sparked the ardent nationalist sentiment of separatist parties such as the Parti Québécois (PQ) and Bloc Québécois (BQ), exacerbating the feeling that Canada's Anglophone culture, coupled with the influx of newcomers to the province, threatened their unique Francophone identity (Des Granges, 2014). Additionally, Quebec's rejection of the 1992 Constitution with the Charlottetown Accord, for not granting them

"sufficient powers to protect their unique culture" (Richardson, 1997, p. 529), is a clear instance of how this debate around language policies has persisted for decades with little consensus between Canada and Quebec. Regrettably, amidst the general expectation for future consensus, political parties such as *Action Démocratique du Québec* (ADQ), which merged into the *Coalition Avenir Québec* (CAQ) in 2012, shifted the discussion toward minorities, spreading narratives that blame them for the decline of Quebec's white francophone identity (Ouimet, 2007, as cited in Gagnon & Larios, 2021).

This overview of Quebec is pivotal to understanding the socio-political atmosphere newcomers encounter as they try to integrate into a province that may be unfamiliar to them. By navigating this complex sociopolitical landscape where they ostensibly can be perceived as a threat to a fragile Francophone identity, newcomers who hold optimistic beliefs about Quebec and expect a rapid integration into the province may be sucked into the vortex of disenchantment. It is my contention that legislation that is open to acknowledge newcomers' diverse cultural backgrounds and facilitate their integration in an emerging workforce is essential. The examination of Quebec's history delivered hitherto helps to illustrate the complicated relationship religion and language have had within the province. By recalling its history, I attempted to give an overview of the political discourses and events that ultimately led to the endorsement of Quebec's Charter of Values laws.

It is important to recognize that Quebec's authority over immigration is shared with the federal government. According to the Constitution Act in 1867, both federal and provincial governments have concurrent jurisdiction over immigration, with federal laws prevailing in cases of conflict (Béchard, 2011 as cited in McCallum, 2024). The Canada-Québec Accord of 1991 grants Quebec significant control over selecting immigrants destined for the province, allowing it

to establish its own selection criteria (Béchard, 2011 as cited in McCallum, 2024). However, the federal government retains exclusive authority over admission, including defining admissibility and setting overall immigration levels. This means that while Quebec can select immigrants based on its criteria, it does not unilaterally control the total number of immigrants it receives or when. Therefore, while language issues and employment barriers fall under Quebec's jurisdiction, its capacity to address these challenges is influenced by federal immigration policies. This dynamic differs from those in other sectors like health and education, where provincial responsibilities are only shaped by overarching federal frameworks.

Quebec's Socioeconomic and Cultural Contexts

Political history helps us understand the general undertones of a society, and why things became the way they currently are. However, it is worth looking at Quebec culture as a collective of people that have endured and been changed by political events, and not simply a political entity with rules and laws. Quebec is a cultural enigma with a paradoxical cultural history. It is a settler colony of White, French and Catholic people who came into this land that had Indigenous Peoples on it and had to fight for their existence against the English that settled the rest of Turtle Island[5], and then started welcoming diverse peoples as immigrants and refugees. Despite the fact that the settlers and the Indigenous peoples shared trade and living conditions, many settlers enslaved both Indigenous and African peoples as domestic servants. There were more than 4,000 enslaved people in “New France” or Quebec, between the years 1671 and 1834 (Jaenen, 2007).

[5] Turtle Island is a term used by many Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking Indigenous peoples to refer to North America. It originates from a creation myth in which a turtle carries the world on its back (Robinson, 2018).

Moreover, Indigenous reserves were relocated often to make room for settlers, trade routes and Catholic missionaries (Jaenen, 2007).

The Québécois were poorer and less literate than their Anglophone counterparts, who had control over much of the industry and finances in Quebec, despite being a minority (Gagnon et al., 2023). French-speaking white Canadians, often Catholic, were marginalized and referred to as the *nègres blancs d'Amérique* (white Negroes of America) (Vallières, 2017). They were pressured to "speak white" (English) (Vallières, 2017, p. 37) and faced challenges in having collective agreements translated into French, as their bosses were typically Anglophones. This long-standing marginalization contributed to a separatist movement and significantly influenced Quebec's distinct national and cultural development.

Socioeconomic Landscape of Quebec. Contemporary Quebec society in general is very socialist-leaning and committed to social welfare, public investment, and policies that promote equality and quality of life for its residents. Furthermore, despite perceived internal threats to its national identity and despite the constant political tumultuousness, Quebecers are still more open to immigration and less worried about immigrants than other Canadians (Colpron, 2024). According to a recent survey reported by La Presse, 62% Canadians think there are already too many immigrants, a number that increased from 33% in 2022, compared to 46% of Quebecers who think so in 2024, which increased from 25% in 2022 (Colpron, 2024).

Quebec was the first province to offer subsidized daycare in 1997 and remains the province with the most affordable childcare (MacDonald & Friendly, 2023). Quebec also has one of the most generous parental leave policies in North America, including both maternity and paternity leaves (Régime québécois d'assurance parentale, n.d.). The Quebec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP), a paid leave to both parents, encourages shared parenting responsibilities. Public

education in Quebec is highly subsidized, with low tuition fees for post-secondary education compared to other provinces (Educaloi, n.d.). The government also invests heavily in early childhood education and public schooling (Educaloi, n.d.). Quebec provides a range of social assistance programs to support low-income individuals and families, including welfare payments, housing assistance, and food security initiatives (Gouvernement du Québec, 2024; MMFIM 2022). The province has strong labor laws that protect workers' rights, including minimum wage regulations, workplace safety standards, and robust support for unions. Quebec has a high rate of unionization compared to the rest of Canada (Canadian Labour Congress, 2021; Poirier, 2010; Rouillard, 2006; Montreal Economic Institute, 2005). Hydro-Québec not only ensures affordable electricity rates but also allows the government, its sole shareholder, to reinvest profits into public services (Hydro Quebec, 2024). Despite a 25-million-dollar cut in two years (Saint-Arnaud, 2024), Quebec is also the province with the most investment in public funding for the arts, media, and cultural events, especially promoting both French language and Quebecois identity (Statistics Canada, 2024). The province invests heavily in public transportation infrastructure, including extensive bus and metro systems in Montreal, as well as initiatives to expand regional transportation networks (Government of Canada 2024a). Quebec is also the province with the most grassroots movements and services for women, people of colour, people who are LGBTQIA2S+, immigrants and refugees (Government of Canada, 2024b; Government of Canada, 2024c; Government of Canada, 2024d; Macfarlane & Morris, 2023). Its powerful unions are often aligned with human rights movements as well (Canadian Labour Congress, 2021; Linteau, 2006; Poirier, 2010; Rouillard, 2006).

Quebec's Interculturality. Despite Quebec's reputation as a main destination for immigrants (Government of Canada, 2024c), the recent controversial legislation on

immigration policies, particularly maintaining that French is the exclusive official language (Oakes & Warren, 2011; Reitz, 2023) and the mass media depiction of immigrants as threats to Western values worldwide (Ahmed, 2014) have fostered a hostile attitude toward immigrants, particularly those from what is referred to as third-world countries.

Unlike Canadian provinces that embraced multiculturalism, Quebec has resorted to interculturality in an attempt to preserve its French heritage. The province asserts:

> Quebec cannot function in a system of multiculturalism like the rest of Canada. We must absolutely integrate immigrants into the French- speaking majority [of Quebec]. It is an existential question for the Quebec nation. […] there is no greater duty for a premier of Quebec than to ensure the future of French. (Quebec, 2021; as cited in Mathieu, 2023, p. 49)

In addition to grappling with stereotypical portrayals of newcomers spread by mass media, Quebec is notably concerned with the idea of losing its Francophone values under the flux of newcomers. In this vein, Blad and Couton (2009) define Quebec's intercultural nationalism as "an active political strategy designed to combine relative openness to globalizing social forces, particularly international migration, with a commitment to the maintenance of a coherent national community" (pp. 645-646). In other words, amid the countless challenges posed by globalization worldwide, Quebec determined that the most suitable strategy to integrate newcomers into its society was to selectively welcome those who already resembled its citizens (Blad & Couton, 2009)–particularly, French-speaking newcomers. Doubtlessly, this approach proves that Quebec's fear of potentially losing its identity has its roots in the province's struggle to preserve its Francophone heritage amid the never-ending threat posed by Canadian Anglo hegemony (McAndrew, 2013).

Quebec's concerns about preserving its fragile Francophone identity have led to intercultural policies that significantly impact marginalized newcomers. This raises questions about the province's ability to balance the challenges of integrating these newcomers while navigating its conflicting views on identity. How can Quebec reconcile its nationalistic tendencies with the need to embrace diversity and welcome newcomers eager to contribute to its workforce? Certainly, there is not a straightforward solution to this problem; however, Maclure (2003) suggests that to move beyond this stage, "Quebec must be reconciled with its past by accepting and appropriating a history strewn with pitfalls and defeats" (p. 20). Simply put, Quebec needs to confront its conflicting past with Canadian Anglo hegemony and move past the fear of losing its French heritage by facilitating the integration of newcomers from diverse backgrounds.

Quebec's Contemporary Issues. As per legislation, Quebec can control the number of immigrants it receives; however, it cannot decide when to receive them. At 50,000 newcomers annually, not including non-permanent residents like temporary workers, students, and asylum seekers, Quebec receives the highest number of immigrants of all provinces without any extra governmental support to upgrade or improve the already-cracking system (RCI, 2024). Receiving large waves of newcomers makes for a tougher integration, causing bottlenecks at language schools as well as medical and public service systems. Currently, Francisation or French courses for newcomers and residents have wait times of over a year (personal experience as an adult education and francisation teacher), and the medical system is inundated with more than two million people still on a waiting list for a family doctor (McGill Newsroom, 2024). Other much needed services like speech therapy, mental health therapy or social assistance include wait lists that take months if not years to get through (personal experience as a board

member of community organisations offering these services). Hence, adding considerable amounts of newcomers to this system triggers sentiments of fear, unsafety and discomfort, which later translates to hatred by both the host and the newcomer.

Additionally, as previously mentioned, the French language is essential for social integration as well as for finding jobs in Quebec. With a total migration increase of 218,000 in 2023, a record surpassing the previous record set in 2022 (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2024), there is a substantial demand on the system to educate newcomers via the francisation program, especially to prepare newcomers for Bill 96 regulations. Unfortunately, 113 francisation teachers lost their jobs in October 2024 due to budgetary cuts (Champagne, 2024). With already 35,000 people on waiting lists since June 2023, the number has only increased with the recent closures of the francisation classes (Champagne, 2024). How are newcomers supposed to get over the obstacle of Bill 96, which expects them to speak French fluently enough to be able to communicate with their doctors, the city and other public services or risk being kicked out of the province?

Montreal's population grew by 4.3% between July 2022 and July 2023, while Quebec experienced a 2.3% growth (Statistics Canada, 2024). The highest since 1957 and driven primarily by immigration, this rapid growth has outpaced the economy's ability to absorb the increase, particularly in the housing market. In Montreal and Quebec, population growth has been substantial, largely due to international migration, including non-permanent residents like temporary workers, students, and asylum seekers. This not only acts as obstacles for newcomers to integrate and thrive, but it also puts pressure on the system as well as the host society, which then blames the ripple effect on the newcomers. This influx has contributed to increased housing demand, pushing home prices and rents higher. As of August 2024, Montreal's average home

price was $614,020 (WOWA, n.d.), with a significant rise in home sales. The vacancy rate in Montreal dropped to 1.5%, and rents for two-bedroom apartments increased by 7% (CMHC, 2024). The competition for affordable housing has intensified, particularly for new immigrants and low-income renters, who often struggle to afford rent, with 50% spending over 30% of their income on housing (Lacroix-Couture, 2024).

Another threat that could be a result of lack of integration and financial stability is homelessness. In 2018, Quebec's first provincewide homelessness survey identified 5,789 visibly homeless individuals (CBC, 2023). By 2022, that number had nearly doubled to 10,000, with almost half—4,690—residing in Montreal (CBC, 2023). In Quebec, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals are disproportionately affected by homelessness, with survey data showing that 13% of the homeless population identified as Indigenous, 16% as LGBTQ+, and 11% as immigrants (CBC, 2023; StatCan, 2023).

Furthermore, in the past decade, Canada's real GDP (growth domestic product) per capita has increased by an average of only 0.8% annually, marking the slowest growth rate since the 1930s. While the overall GDP has risen due to population growth, GDP per individual has remained largely unchanged.

Obstacles

Non-Recognition of Credentials. Hailing from all around the world, these immigrants and refugees arrive to reach a standstill when faced with laws that regulate recognition of foreign credentials. Having previous credentials not recognized in Canada forces the newcomers to change their professional paths, which oftentimes necessitates a return to training or education for these already educated professionals to be able to join the workforce (Educaloi, n.d). In

Canada, numerous occupations are subject to regulations, which necessitate individuals to fulfill specific qualifications, obtain licenses, or acquire certifications in order to legally practice. These requirements are typically defined by provincial or territorial regulatory authorities responsible for overseeing and governing various professional fields. With 46 occupations (like teaching, engineering, medicine, nursing and law, among others) regulated in Canada (Educaloi, n.d), many questions emerge on its effect on newcomers' social, emotional and financial integration. Employment means financial security and access to better resources; hence, the inaccessibility to employment robs these newcomers from having a sense of accomplishment or a chance of thriving in their new home.

Discriminatory Policies in Quebec. Certain policies in Quebec currently display a peculiar widespread agitation for traditional Quebecois values. Policies such as Bill 21 and Bill 96 have been issued as a desperate call for autonomous affirmation amid the gradual decay of the French language and Francophone values as a result of globalization that promotes a set of linguistic and cultural values around the English language (Mathiew & Hart, 2024; Rocher & Carpentier, 2022; Simpson & Whiteside, 2015). Statistics show that, while 95.3 % of Quebec's total population speaks French, places such as Montreal Island have undergone more drastic changes, dropping the number of French-speaking citizens to below 50% (Simpson & Whiteside, 2015). Undoubtedly, the potential threat posed by the English language and English-speaking Canadian values has led Quebecers to panic over scenarios in which their Francophone identities gradually fade away.

Bill 21 has received a positive reception from most Quebecers although it has been overtly criticized in the rest of the country (Lord, 2020; Meunier & Legault-Leclair, 2021). Upon analyzing Bill 21, Rocher and Carpentier (2022) argue that this is Quebec's response to Canada's

differentiation mechanisms that seek to marginalize French-speaking Quebecers through misrepresentation in the media. They state that the media has put forward stereotypical representations of Quebecers as “rigid” and “exclusive” (p. 53). The result of media (mis)representation around Quebec is the implementation of legislation such as Bill 21 that seeks to regulate religious symbols in public spaces as a way to address and move beyond Quebec’s historical ties to Catholicism (Mathieu & Hart, 2024). Although the common belief is that these policies aim at asserting the religious neutrality of the state, Bill 21 has raised national alarms among several groups who feel that this bill attacks religious minorities in Quebec, namely Jewish, Sikh and Muslim, while reacting to discriminatory practices that were committed by the Catholic church a long time ago.

The endorsement of Bill 21 may connect with Quebecers’ paradoxical relationship with religion, particularly Roman Catholicism (Lord, 2021; Di Matteo, 2024). Although the Quiet Revolution helped Quebec emancipate from over two centuries of Catholic domination and advance toward secularism (Lord, 2020), some Quebecers continue to regard Catholicism as central to their national and historical identity. Today, more than 50 years later, secularization has eroded Catholic church attendance. In 2021, only 53% of Quebecers identified as Catholic—a 21% decline from 2011 (Di Matteo, 2024). As Nault and Menieur (2017) observe, Catholic Quebecers now show “an attachment to Catholicism which reflects identity more than religiosity” (p. 242), often accompanied by nostalgia promoted by conservative groups.

Under these conditions, Bill 21 is suspected of covertly serving the religious interests of the dominant group under the guise of secularism. Rather than deepening state secularism, the law focuses on banning visible religious symbols, especially those involving face or head coverings. Consequently, it “especially and disproportionately affect[s] Muslim women who

wear head coverings" (Di Matteo, 2024, p. 5). Other religious groups are less targeted, which may explain strong Catholic support for the law. On the surface, one might expect Catholic Quebecers to be equally impacted, yet their muted response raises questions—whether due to religious laxity or the less conspicuous nature of Catholic symbols. This indifference seems linked to broader concerns about Islam (Meunier & Legault-Leclair, 2021), shaped by global patterns of stigmatization. Other groups disproportionately affected include Jewish and Sikh men, whose religious headwear (Kippahs and Pagris/Patkas) carries sacred meaning. Forcing removal of such items is akin to stripping them in public.

Similarly, Bill 96 highlights Quebec's complex stance on language and immigration. Since Bill 101 (the Charter of the French Language) in 1977, Quebec has worked to convince newcomers that French is the path to success (Oakes & Warren, 2011). The Charter represents Francophone Quebec's effort to overcome linguistic subordination under an Anglophone elite prior to the Quiet Revolution (Bernard, 2008). Bill 96 seeks not to replace but to update this charter (Rocher, 2022), reinforcing French as the official language.

Despite its aims, Bill 96 fails to acknowledge other linguistic realities, notably the exclusion of Indigenous languages predating colonization. For Quebec's government, French is more than an official language—it is a unifying metanarrative for Francophone identity. According to Bouffard (2015), this identity, once rooted in clerical nationalism, evolved into one centered around language and secularism after the Quiet Revolution. Francophone Quebecers, still perceiving themselves as a cultural minority, use French to assert national identity (McAndrew, 2013).

This emphasis on French poses challenges for newcomers. They are expected to form an emotional bond with French to foster belonging (Bouffard, 2015; Oakes & Warren, 2011). Yet, as

Hanley (2017) notes, newcomers prioritize employment and social integration over language politics. Policies that hinder these goals create barriers. Guo (2009) critiques integration programs that push newcomers to "think like and act like Canadians" (p. 49), reinforcing French cultural dominance in Quebec (Guo, 2015) and marginalizing ethnic diversity. This mirrors colonial dynamics described by Fanon (1968), where newcomers must "pawn their intellectual possessions" (p. 49) to assimilate. Hence, Quebec's commitment to French as a cultural anchor often masks a deeper drive to assimilate rather than integrate.

Predicaments like these inevitably raise several questions regarding Canada and, more specifically, Quebec's capacity to welcome newcomers and facilitate their integration. How does the lack of recognition of foreign credentials and informal work experience impact inclusive policies in Canada? What is the effect of laws like 21 and 96 on successful integration into Quebec society? What else are we asking these newcomers to take off at our borders besides their cultural identity and religious garb?

Research Problem

This study explores the challenges of immigrants who are of colour, queer, of certain ethnic and/or socioeconomic backgrounds, and/or genders in Montreal as they navigate discriminatory language and religion policies, as well as the non-recognition of previous credentials. I designed a research project that sheds light on newcomer stories, focusing on how they navigate adversity and daily challenges to accomplish their goals amid language and culture discord in Quebec. I hope that these stories will help people transcend the limitations of culture, language, religion, ethnicity, and gender to connect on a human level. Knowing others' points of view, how they persist despite the limitations of language, access to education and the job

market, and listening to their stories about integration and assimilation, can create understanding and empathy that are crucial for community-building.

By not recognizing previous education and professional experience, Quebec is preventing newcomers from obtaining the jobs they were qualified for before arriving in its territory, limiting their options to low-skilled positions where their expertise is downplayed, and their financial security is reduced. Furthermore, the assimilative, intercultural integration strategies in Quebec create additional barriers that increase chances of resentment between the host society and the newcomers, as each side thinks the other is othering them and furthering gaps. This not only has negative effects of the newcomers themselves, but also on the entire society.

Research Objectives

By focusing on the challenges posed by foreign credentials non-recognition and the legislation of strict language laws, such as Bill 21 and 96, I seek to explore how immigrants and/or refugees perceive their integration experiences in Quebec. Particularly, I am interested in exploring newcomers' professional, educational and social situations and decisions in the province amidst the intricate sociopolitical atmosphere they encounter when navigating various policies that reflect Quebec's complex identity issues. My ultimate objective of this study is to raise awareness of Quebec's current policies and cultural traits that hinder marginalized newcomers' integration into its workforce, while recognizing the province's unique identity and distinctive history with language and religion. I hope that this study will provide relevant information for educators and policymakers in Quebec regarding the subjective experiences of refugees and immigrants. The following research questions drive this project:

RQ1: How are refugees and immigrants in Montreal perceiving and navigating (discriminatory) laws like Bill 21 and 96 and the non-recognition of previous credentials?

RQ2: What can we understand about integration, post-traumatic growth and resilience from marginalized participants in Quebec?

Researcher Position

Doubtlessly, the main drive to conduct this study was rooted in my personal identity as a first-generation naturalized citizen, and as a racialized woman in Quebec, who is currently teaching adults who are often newcomers of colour. Having been uprooted before, I aim to play a role in facilitating integration and harmony in Quebec from three points of view: first, as a first-generation Canadian immigrant and naturalized citizen, second, as an adult education teacher and community activist who has worked very closely with immigrant and refugee populations attempting to integrate in Quebec for 16 years, and third, as a researcher whose main goal is to give voice to and empower local marginalized communities. For a more elaborate researcher positionality, please refer to Chapter 5, which is an auto-ethnographical reflection.

Thesis Structure

To properly frame this dissertation:

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework presents two key aspects: first, the research literature on the immigrant experience and the various themes that create barriers to integration and, second, the theory that provides a framework for understanding of these phenomena.

Chapter 3: Methodology presents the chosen methodology and outlines the conceptualization and structure of the thesis.

Chapter 4: Interview Findings presents data and emerging themes.

Chapter 5: An Autobiographical Reflection offers a window into my perspective and experience.

Chapter 6: Discussion offers a synthesis of theory and results.

Chapter 7: Creative Presentation of Research is formed with the substantive phenomenological and constructivist findings. The final product is a video that consists of pictures, videos, sound clips taken by the participants and put together by me. In the video, I read some of the participants' words in the language they were spoken in (English, French, Spanish and Arabic), as a spoken word poem.

Finally, **Chapter 8: Conclusion, Limitations, Implications and Future Directions** presents my closing reflections on the dissertation.

Chapter 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Despite Quebec's endeavor to attract francophone newcomers, an endeavor that stems from the idea that French is a threatened language in Quebec, and its vilification as anti-immigrant (The Canadian Press, 2024), this province still stands out for gathering the most diverse immigrants within its borders (Mathieu & Hart, 2024; Rocher, 2023). This literature review focuses on four major themes that are recurrent across the various studies conducted in Canada on newcomers' experiences in Quebec. The themes are (a) linguistic barriers, (b) religion, (c) immigrant women's experiences with gender inequality, and (d) BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, people of color) Queer folk's experiences. Following the literature review, I present definitions of integration, post-traumatic growth and resilience, and finally, three theories to frame my study on the experiences of racialized and gendered immigrants in Quebec: (a) decolonization, (b) cultural politics of emotion, and (c) *nepantlism* or the feeling of "in-betweenness".

Literature Review

Linguistic Barriers

In 2022, the national government implemented Bill 96 which reaffirmed that: "French is the official language of Quebec [...] French is also the only common language of the Québec nation and constitutes one of the foundations of its identity and distinct culture" (National Assembly of Quebec, 2022, pp. 5-8). While legislating French as the official language of Quebec is not new, Bill 96 provoked an outcry among different groups due to its further strict laws, whereby it mandates newcomers who have been in the province for six months or more to speak only in French at their places of work and when accessing medical or city services. For example,

when they call the city requesting parking stickers or to signal a parking issue or when they speak to their doctor during a medical visit, people will not be allowed to use English, only French to communicate. Moreover, if a newcomer cannot prove fluency in six months, they will be asked to leave the province (Mathieu & Hart, 2024).

Despite its linguistic requirements, Quebec relies heavily on immigration to energize its economy. However, immigrants with different linguistic backgrounds often face numerous challenges that hinder their integration into Quebec society (Bauder, 2003; Girard & Bauder, 2007). Linguistic barriers affect Francophone and non-Francophone immigrants alike. For example, newcomers who speak a language other than French—or English in the rest of Canada—must become proficient in either one of these languages to access the labor market (Frank, 2013). Although a little different, the case of Francophone newcomers is still alarming because of glottophobia, or discrimination based on accents. Even when they meet the language proficiency criterion, they are excluded by employers who consider their accents a potential obstacle in the workplace (Newbold et al., 2013). Guo also explains that some immigrants have been lured into enrolling in accent-neutralization programs because some employers may find foreign accents 'unacceptable.'

Frank (2013) exposed the link between immigrants' language proficiency and the possibility of obtaining a job match. By analyzing three waves of data from Statistics Canada's Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC), she identified that proficient immigrants in either English or French had higher probabilities of obtaining a job match. On the other hand, as could be expected, immigrants with low proficiency levels had much lower probabilities of obtaining the desired job. Similarly, Guo (2015) draws on critical race theory to examine how language plays a significant role in how immigrants' knowledge and skills are valued or

devalued in the labor market. His findings cast a new light on how language proficiency "has been used as a systematic barrier" (p. 245) that has hindered immigrants' labor mobility. Against this backdrop, immigrants with different degrees of language proficiency resort to various methods, such as working under the table or getting low-paying jobs, to improve their job situation in the host country.

Under these circumstances, language proficiency is employed as a gatekeeper, filtering out those newcomers who do not meet the labour market needs in the opinion of potential employers (Chuong & Safdat, 2016). Inevitably, highly skilled newcomers may feel powerless against the systematic devaluation of their foreign credentials (Frank, 2013) that reduces their chances of getting a job that matches their experience before arriving in the host society. To counteract the abuse of prejudiced employers who have hindered newcomers' integration processes, some believe that summoning government participation to guarantee their employment is a matter of utmost importance (Otoo, 2018). In other words, it is suggested by some that Quebec's government oversee hiring processes in the workplace and prevent linguistic prejudice from happening to secure the integration of newcomers into its workforce.

Religion

As noted in the introduction, Quebec wrestled to loosen the control of the Catholic Church. This corresponded to a shift in provincial identity towards secularism or *laïcité*. Throughout the 1990s, Quebec continued to welcome immigrants from French-speaking countries like Algeria and Morocco, which transformed the province's demographics toward a more multiethnic dynamic, infusing more people of colour, many of whom are Muslim, hijab-wearing women. This shift also caused a reaction to hijab-wearing women and triggered the widely-publicized Hérouxville Code in 2007, which made international headlines for passing

into law a values test for all newcomers including bans on stoning women in public and female circumcision—even though Hérouxville is small town of about 1300 inhabitants and hadn't received a single immigrant. More importantly, stoning women and female circumcision are tribal habits of certain regions in SWANA/The Middle East, but not of Muslims. Some towns in Quebec supported Hérouxville and others opposed it. Regardless, this led to a series of events starting with Bill 94, in which the Quebec Liberal Party proposed in 2010 that women cannot cover their faces if they would like to receive services or work in the public sector. Even though the bill failed to pass, Bill 21, which was later proposed by the *CAQ* came into effect in 2019, thereby preventing the wearing of any religious symbol for employees of the public sector.

Several studies found that immigrants are subjected to racial and gender discrimination. For example, racialized immigrant women in Quebec are more likely to suffer from bias, especially if they come from Muslim countries (Boudarbat & Grenier, 2017). Syed (2013) showed that Muslim immigrants must yield to different processes of acculturation that are an overt violation of human rights. Sikh men aren't immune to this prejudice and mistreatment. Brown people wearing turbans or *pagris* are often mistaken for Muslims or Arabs and mistreated as a result (Basu, 2016, Rana et al., 2019). It is also common knowledge that antisemitism is flagrant and rising in Quebec (Martin, 2010; Rabson, 2024). The Jewish community, especially the Orthodox one, has voiced concerns over mistreatment over the decades. This has only gotten worse since the intensification of the Gaza genocide (ICJ, 2024), which started in October 2023, as many people are associating and conflating Zionism with Judaism (Jewish Voice for Peace, n.d.).

Antonius et al.'s (2013) study on multiculturalism and discrimination also identified a series of complications that affect Muslim immigrants' integration processes. They report that

even though Canada has issued policies of multiculturalism to promote social equity, an alarming increase in job discrimination against Muslims stemmed from stigmatization discourses after 9/11. In this regard, Saleh et al. (2023) explain how Muslim women wearing hijabs are immediately associated with violence and terror by some people. The metanarratives that reinforce these erroneous views toward Muslims are an attempt to essentialize Muslims' identities. Regrettably, government efforts to mitigate this situation through equity programs are virtually non-existent and have rendered Canada's multicultural policies ineffective.

One may assume that religious literacy at schools might play a role in counteracting the negative impact discriminatory metanarratives can have on immigrants. However, a case study conducted by Maxwell and Hirsch (2020) has questioned the goals of Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) curriculum, which changed to Culture and Citizenship in Quebec (CCQ) in 2021, because the ruling political party in Quebec, CAQ, said that it focused too much on religion. Maxwell and Hirsch (2020) argued that its (ERC's) lack of sensitivity in understanding cultural diversity has prevented teachers from touching on topics that may reflect world religions. ERC sought to promote three competencies: "(1) reflects on ethical questions, (2) demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion, and (3) engages in dialogue" (Boudreau, 2011, p. 220), and yet, teachers are not expected to explore complex issues involving religious discrimination. This predicament baffled teachers who, in the absence of clear guidelines to address religious diversity, shield away from the possibility of discussing them in class to avoid generating tensions. Now, with CCQ in effect, a variety of topics are covered, including democracy, human rights, critical thinking, ethics, Indigenous issues and sex education (Glorieux-Stryckman, 2024).

Nonetheless, the fact that some teachers felt uncomfortable or under-equipped to discuss

religious discrimination at school did not prevent such discrimination from happening. In the 2000s, after 9/11 set off international warning alarms, debates around the display of religious symbols generated tensions among secondary school students in Quebec (McAndrew, 2010). Through critical ethnography, Bakali (2016) shows in her study about Muslim youth experiences in Quebec secondary schools how 9/11 triggered a series of political discourses that marginalized Muslims and portrayed them as threats. This pushed Muslim secondary students to constantly reconceptualize their identities and notice how other people's perceptions about Islam generated their 'otherness.' Additionally, the study exposed discriminatory practices among teachers who portrayed–as often the news media would–a distorted image of Islam, forcing students to comply with their teachers' views or remain silent to avoid being penalized. Notably, these portrayals frequently conflate Arab identity with Islam, despite the fact that over 80% of the world's Muslims are not Arab (Pew Research Center, 2009), revealing how racialized and reductive assumptions about Muslims circulated unchecked in educational spaces. In this sense, it is astonishing to see how teachers' agency seemed affected by the absence of ERC guidelines and yet, Islamophobic discourses spread by the news media did not prevent teachers from bringing controversial religious stereotypes to the classroom. This further conflates being Muslim or Arab and, as a result, compounds the discrimination.

Sarah Ahmed (2004, 2005, 2014) argues that the racial profiling of ethnic groups like the Muslim community plays a crucial role in the construction of a national identity through the politics of fear. She adroitly explains how rhetorical devices such as metonymy are deployed by mass media to "stick words like 'terrorist' and 'Islam' together" (p. 76). The implications are dire: the use of such rhetoric has a powerful impact on the way Middle Easterners are perceived. Simply by arbitrary association, Muslim people may fall prey to unfair treatment based on the

way they look or their place of origin. These devices constitute the language of pain (Ahmed, 2004a, 2014) conjured up to appeal to national unity in the face of a potential threat. Thus, the simple mention of words such as “terrorism” and “Islam” evokes the collective pain of historical misfortunes by tapping into events such as 9/11 and elicits the support of stereotypes. Pain is conjured up here not just to stir up mournful memories but as an unsettling account of how “forming of subject and nation takes place partly by reading ‘others’ (Ahmed, 2004b, p. 25).

Immigrant Women’s Experiences with Gender Inequality

Discrimination practices particularly affect newcomer women. Using feminist ethnography, Baiden and Evans (2020) explored Black African newcomer women’s social circumstances as recent mothers in Canada. The study showed that, due to ubiquitous patriarchal backgrounds from which Black African newcomer women usually come, many silently complied with their role as mothers while struggling with mental health issues at home. This problem was exacerbated when some of them tried to have access to mental health services but were denied these services due to their immigration status. Healthcare limitations in these circumstances pushed Black African newcomer women to resort to practices such as optimistic meditation, prayers, and faith in God to improve their mental health. Situations like these unveil the subtle practices by which newcomer women who belong to specific ethnic groups are disempowered.

Various forms of gender-based inequality have also been explored by Okeke-Ihejirika, Salami, and Karimi (2019). They employed a postcolonial feminist lens to foreground the importance of African immigrant women as “knowledge keepers and agents of change” (p. 586). The participants in their study were immigrants from Nigeria, Ghana, Rwanda, Sudan, Kenya, and Zimbabwe who lived in Alberta. One of their study's most significant findings was the negotiation of gender roles at home. Most of the participants lamented that, while they were

expected to contribute financially by holding a job (usually, a low-skilled one because employers disregarded their credentials and experience), they were also confronted by their partners if they neglected any of their "duties" as housewives. These women intimated that they were encouraged by their male-dominated communities to embrace their traditional roles instead of trying to redefine their values.

Further linking patriarchal ideologies with immigrant women's perception of gender roles at home, Frank & Hou (2015) explored the influence of cultural values on married immigrant women's integration into the labor market in the new host country. By analyzing the data compiled for immigrant source-country attributes from 1970 to 2005, they identified a gap in the division of household labor, especially in the case of women from West Asia who "ranked the lowest in hours worked for pay and highest in housework hours" (p. 563). Along the same line, Kaida (2015) analyzes the effects that the male breadwinner model has on their probability of success of immigrant wives' in the labor market. Her study concluded that the endorsement of such a model—largely by Arab/West Asian groups—was linked with lower female employment rates when compared with European female spouses. Regrettably, even though the host country usually encourages women to integrate into the labor market, pervasive patriarchal ideologies continue to affect immigrant women who have no choice but to consent to the role of traditional housewives.

Furthermore, several studies prove that racialized immigrant women are liable to undergo deskilling in the Canadian labor market. Creese and Wiebe (2009) reinforce the finding that Canada's job-finding programs fail to acknowledge foreign credentials and downplay any experience they might have acquired outside the country. Immigrant women with foreign degrees are less likely to be employed than uneducated Canadian-borns (Premji & Shakya, 2014).

Similar statistics prove that foreign-born men are more likely to access Canada's workforce than immigrant women (Wilkinson, 2008). Consequently, some immigrant women have enrolled in local post-secondary training to access the labor market through formal education credentials issued in Canada (Creese & Wiebe, 2009). This situation submits evidence of the entrenched discriminatory practices of a gendered and racialized labor market, and the inefficiency of job-finding programs to guarantee a rapid integration of immigrant women into Canada's workforce.

In their study about African immigrants' experiences with deskilling in Toronto, Creese and Wiebe (2009) interviewed 31 women and 30 men from countries in sub-Saharan Africa to explore their economic integration. Participants in this study remarked that, when they did not get a job in the field they were trained in, they had to resort to low-paid survival employment, understood in the study as "jobs that are low-skilled, low-wage, insecure, contingent forms of employment" (p. 62). Three-quarters of the participants touched on the subjects of survival, employment and downward occupational mobility, even though they were well-educated professionals. The situation for women was more complicated since the labor market prevented them from accessing the manual labor industry, often reserved for male workers, and their options were narrowed to cleaning and manufacturing jobs that pay less. The study concludes that deskilling in Toronto was not only evident through the lack of recognition of immigrants' foreign credentials but also discrimination against race, gender, and language proficiency.

Although the host society's continued disregard for their credentials is disheartening, immigrant women persist in striving to overcome these barriers. Studies show that, in some instances, they have gone further in re-training and re-education to increase their chances of integrating into its workforce (Ng & Shan, 2010; Shan, 2009, 2014). Shan (2009) looks into immigrant women's experiences navigating Canada's labor market through a combination of life

history interviews and institutional ethnography. The participants in this study were 21 Chinese immigrant women who had university degrees when they arrived in the host society. Most of them were under 40, married, and had at least one child. All the participants had similar difficulties finding a job matching their credentials, which compelled them to attend Canadian university programs to boost their marketability. In sum, Shan's (2009) findings suggest that there is a "wastage of knowledge and skills" (p. 66) which calls for a re-examination of foreign credentials and their validity in Canada to guarantee that high-skilled immigrant women are not affected by underemployment.

BIPOC Queer Folks' Experiences

While BIPOC women encounter numerous challenges, BIPOC Queer immigrants and refugees of color experience an extra layer of discrimination due to their queerness. This not only reduces their desire to integrate into a society that doesn't accept or welcome them but also affects their confidence and increases dangers of alienation, vulnerability and mental health issues (Nikwivuze, 2018). Additionally, if the cultures in their countries of origin are not accepting of their sexual or gender identities, Queer immigrants and refugees are forced to hide their identities from their own families and friends in the new home. Thus, individuals further face risks of internalizing pain, which is often associated with mental health issues, loneliness and loss of social network (Nikwivuze, 2018).

Research shows that lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals are more likely to earn lower incomes, experience discrimination on the job, and encounter barriers in finding and advancing in employment, relative to their heterosexual counterparts (Statistics Canada, 2022). Although education levels for this group are high, employment levels are low, decreasing earning power and increasing chances of homelessness. Income, education and employment, as well as

challenges stemming from financial hardship (such as food insecurity), are key social determinants affecting the health and quality of life of individuals (Statistics Canada, 2022).

There remains a notable scarcity of research addressing labor statistics for Trans individuals in Quebec and Canada (Badgett et al., 2021; Denier & Waite, 2017). This is partly due to the absence of nationwide data regarding gender identity and expression until 2021, when Statistics Canada introduced changes to the Census that allowed individuals to indicate sex at birth so that cisgender, transgender and non-binary individuals could report their gender. From an Ontario study in 2019 that surveyed 2000 Trans individuals, 70% of respondents reported earning less than 50 000$ annually and 50% reported residing in low-income neighborhoods (Kinitet al., 2023). Trans people are also about 2.3 times more likely to experience discrimination and workplace harassment than their cisgender male coworkers (Waite, 2021). Further barriers such as having their educational or professional credentials containing their previous names (also referred to as dead names) prevent them from finding employment that recognizes their previous accomplishments (Waite, 2021). These experiences incur financial instability, increase threats of homelessness and mental health issues, and reduce the likelihood of integration in society.

Definitions

The present study focused on three key terms: integration, post-traumatic growth and resilience. Below are definitions according to the top researchers in each field.

Integration. In defining integration, I was trying to focus on ways to understand it by looking at what an immigrant is doing at the time of an interview. Are they continuing their education? Are they working? Is it something they like doing? Are they able to sustain themselves and their families? How is their mental health and do they have good social circles and communities around them? Do they feel supported? The works of Portes, Rumbaut, Alba and

Schiller spoke the most to me and it created an amalgam to define non-assimilative integration, which maintains the identity of the immigrant, but allows for the ability to live with dignity and stability in their new home.

Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut (2001) focused on what they call "segmented assimilation," which is how immigrants are incorporated into different aspects of mainstream society, including education, employment, healthcare and participation in civic life (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Segmented assimilation ensures the successful integration of the second generation, if the first generation is integrated. Richard Alba (2005) worked on "assimilation and its discontents," which highlights the complexities of cultural integration.

Schiller et al.'s (1995) work on transnationalism and how immigrants maintain connections with their home countries while integrating into new societies reminded me very much of Anzaldúa's (1993) work on *nepantlism* or 'in-betweenness,' described in theoretical framework.

Post-traumatic Growth. Post-traumatic growth (PTG) is a psychological theory that describes the positive changes individuals can experience after going through adversity. Originating in the mid-1990s, it was developed by psychologists Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). PTG suggests that individuals who face significant psychological challenges following trauma frequently undergo subsequent personal growth, involving increased resilience, new perspectives, and a deeper appreciation of life. Kanako Taku and Crystal L. Park provided measurement methods and involved spiritual, religious and community involvement as factors in the promotion of PTG (Park et al., 2010; Taku et al., 2007, 2021). The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) was developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun and refined by Crystal Park to include personal strength, new possibilities, relating to others, spiritual

change, and appreciation of life (Park et al., 2010). The Cultural and Spiritual Growth Scale (CSGS) was developed by Kanako Taku (2021). This scale specifically incorporates cultural and spiritual dimensions into the assessment of PTG, measuring growth in areas such as cultural appreciation, religious/spiritual change, and positive changes in worldview.

While there is no quantitative measurement of post-traumatic growth in this study, it is worthwhile to keep in mind the ways it is defined and measured by researchers while interpreting the responses from the participants.

Resilience. Despite some immigrants refusing to be labeled resilient, as it "covers systemic racism" (Srivastava, 2021, para. 1), resilience remains an important phenomenon that describes people who have gone through traumatic experiences and survived.

Norman Garmezy, George Bonanno, Suniya Luthar and Gabor Maté are among the top researchers on resilience. Garmezy (1991) is a pioneer researcher on resilience, particularly in children facing adversity. Of Jewish background, he had encountered antisemitism growing up in the States, which gave him firsthand experience with resilience (Garmezy, 1991). Bonanno (2021) is responsible for introducing the controversial idea of resilience to the study of loss and trauma, asserting that not all people undergoing trauma show grief. Luthar (2000) had done her early research in India, working with poor youth surrounded by trauma and mental health issues. Maté (2003), my personal favorite, is a Hungarian American physician, researcher and Holocaust survivor who looks at trauma and resilience holistically (Rike et al., 2022).

Resilience, according to Norman Garmezy (1991) is not an inherent trait, but the capacity to maintain or regain psychological well-being in the face of adversity, stress, or trauma. Garmezy (1991) also emphasized the importance of protective factors in promoting resilience, such as supportive relationships, family environments and other social contexts. George

Bonanno (2021) considers resilience as a common and normal response to adversity and defines it as the ability to maintain stable and healthy levels of psychological and physical functioning after experiencing traumatic events. How individuals demonstrate flexible adaptation and positive emotions is how they show their resilience. Bonanno (2021) also outlines a list of protective factors that promote resilience, such as: personality traits, social support, and situational context.

Gabor Maté (2003) defines resilience as the capacity to recover and flourish in the face of adversity, emphasizing the holistic interconnectedness of the mind, body, and environment. He underscores the significant role of early childhood experiences and trauma in shaping an individual's resilience. For Maté, resilience goes beyond mere recovery; it involves acknowledging and integrating emotional wounds to promote personal growth and overall well-being. He stresses the importance of cultivating compassionate self-awareness, building meaningful connections with others, and addressing underlying emotional and psychological issues as essential elements in developing resilience (Rike et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

Against the backdrop of this literature review, the present study will combine three theories to frame the convoluted situation of racialized and gendered immigrants in Quebec: (a) decolonization, (b) cultural politics of emotion, and (c) *nepantlism* or the feeling of "in-betweenness". By applying these theories, I aim to touch on the themes reviewed in the literature with a focus on the lack of recognition of foreign credentials and strict language laws. As noted, many of our recent immigrants and refugees are previously educated and had professions before they sought refuge from catastrophes back home. Language laws, instead of facilitating newcomers' integration into Quebec's society, have become an obstacle that conceals numerous

discriminatory practices. These impediments of non-recognition of credentials and language laws are not only thwarting social integration, but also financial and professional independence and emancipation, which are the foundation of a thriving society in Quebec.

Decolonization: The Wretched Who Scattered All Over the Earth

While Frantz Fanon's seminal works (1952, 1959, 1961) are rooted in the historical and socio-political contexts of mid-20th-century colonialism and its aftermath, their insights into the psychological and structural impacts of colonization continue to resonate. Although some aspects of Fanon's theory may not fully account for the complexities of contemporary immigration and globalization, his framework remains profoundly relevant. It provides a critical lens to examine the unfair dynamics of colonization that affect immigrants in their native and host societies. At the core of his theory, one can find bitter truths: the economic success of the European nations can only be sustained through imperialism and the oppression of developing countries. This study adapts Fanon's ideas to address these modern contexts, recognizing the enduring relevance of his critique of systemic oppression and identity formation.

It is through oppression that settlers around the world have been able to exploit natives' assets while suppressing their cultural identities. Colonialism springs up from the rejection of colonials to accept the humanity in other ethnic groups which gives way to colonial racism and serves imperial goals (Fanon, 1952). The colonial entity's enterprises are justified through the dehumanization of the other who is categorically described as 'uncivil' and 'savage.' The ultimate goal is the imposition of one's values on the colonized being who, it's believed, must let go of their 'backward' values for the sake of progress. According to Fanon (1961), the colonized native must overcome this colonial condition by undergoing a process of decolonization—a set of purposeful practices that seek to change the world order through human beings who actively

and continuously call oppression into question.

Consequently, the colonized being must radically subvert their ‘wretched’ conditions through decoloniality. Although the word ‘wretched’ is loaded with negative connotations, Ahmed (2010) reminds us of its genealogy, pointing out that it has been commonly used to refer to “a stranger, exile, or banished person” (p. 17), who have scattered all over the earth due to circumstances that prevailed over them. Immigrants escape horrors of poverty, famine and war from their home countries hoping for a stable new home, only to be greeted by systems that have oppressive practices of controlling language, religion and cultural integration. In a similar transmutation whereby the “settler has brought the native into existence” (Fanon, 1961, p. 36), the local brings the immigrant into existence. Oppressive practices affect colonized people’s access to employment and financial growth, which in turn, affects housing, cultural integration and mental wellbeing. Even though the situation of the immigrant is not exactly that of the colonized native, it borrows its uncanny resemblance from the oppressive mechanisms exerted by a dominant majority over an oppressed minority.

Another important contribution I would like to borrow from Fanon’s work is his examination of colonization's psychological effects on colonized people. Colonized beings are not in the capacity to self-assert their cultural identities as these are determined by the settlers through discursive practices. This contribution is important to this study because it allows us to understand that “The Other must be seen as the necessary negation of a primordial identity” (1952, p. xviii), which is the same dialectical relationship underlying migration integration processes. In this regard, Fanon (1952) claims that colonized beings are subjected to a distorted image of themselves fostered by racist discursive practices shared by the colonizers. These practices circulate among colonized beings, engendering and nurturing in them a sense of

inferiority against the supercilious confidence of the colonizer. For Fanon, the ultimate defeat befalls colonized beings when they replace their own cultural normativity with the colonizer's.

Fanon (1952) explains that the colonizer inoculates the colonized with the inferiority complex through economic power and internalization. The colonizer brandishes the flag of white civilization at the colonized to assert his superiority and thus brings forth a sense of inferiority among the colonized. In this internalization, language plays a crucial role. Fanon (1952) illustrates the criticality of language using the example of Black people of the Antilles who could attain a status closer to the one flaunted by the whites depending on their "mastery of the French language" (p. 18). By becoming adept in the French language, the Black Antillean who has been in contact with European civilization—especially if he has been to France—starts displaying symptoms of superiority in front of their fellow citizens. This contact with civilization has made them aware of the numerous stereotypes in European circles around their community. Consequently, the Black Antillean feels a compelling necessity to get rid of the "savage" tag associated with this community and the means is through the French language.

Under these circumstances, however, overthrowing the colonizer's regime would not suffice to decolonize the minds of the oppressed fully. In this regard, Paolo Freire (2005) warns us that, "conditioned by the myths of the old order" (p. 46), the oppressed might be lured into maintaining the deep-rooted dynamics of colonization and oppression, even in cases where they expel the oppressors. Freire (2005) calls this the "fear of freedom" (p. 36), a phenomenon that affects the oppressed people who cannot dispense with the oppressor's image. Instead of taking up the challenge of moving toward a new society, some of the oppressed may feel inclined to fill in the vacant role formerly held by the oppressor, thus depriving their fellow citizens of the possibility of genuinely casting away the mechanisms that dehumanized them. On this point,

Freire (2005) asserts that “to surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes” (p. 47). For Freire, language and education should be the weapons of choice to undertake the decolonization of the oppressed mind.

Both the wretched in Fanon (1961) and the oppressed in Freire (2005) have been ~~victims~~ survivors of hegemonic forces that seek to wipe out their cultural identities; they need to bring to light such forces to apprehend the forms in which they have been othered by dominant groups. The pedagogy of the oppressed is Freire's answer to counteract the abhorrent effects of a pedagogy concocted by dominant groups. Pedagogy of the dominant group, “begins with the egoistic interest of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism)” (2005, p. 54). Pedagogy of the oppressed springs up from the collective effort of the oppressed to "unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation" (2005, p. 54). For Freire, attaining *conscientização*—critical awareness of how one is subdued through oppression—is a fundamental principle in becoming human. Through *conscientização,* the oppressed is closer to dismantling the mechanisms that the oppressor exerted to dehumanize them.

Cultural Politics of Emotion under Neoliberalism

Ahmed’s (2014a) definition of cultural politics of emotion is key to the aims of this study, given its emphasis on “how emotions work to shape the ‘surfaces’ of individual and collective bodies” (p. 1). A cultural politics of emotion gives an account of how emotions can shape the very surface of our bodies (Ahmed, 2004a, 2014a), that is, political power can orient people’s feelings toward individual and collective identity construction. Exploring the cultural politics of emotion will help me have a better grasp on how governments employ multicultural policies to accelerate the integration of immigrants into the host society while fostering feelings and public

moods against immigration among locals (Ahmed, 2014b). Through national feelings, the government, in conjunction with mass media, can engender a nationalistic identity that is constantly being shaped by exploiting locals' feelings toward the foreign other. This is particularly true of countries populated by a majority of white people who feel that "softness" (Ahmed, 2014a, p. 2) displayed by the government is ruining their countries' values by allowing the unknown others to "invade" (p. 2) their nations.

Drawing on locals' fear, Ahmed (2004b) asserts that 'Ayrian' governments are conscious of how "the affectivity of pain is crucial to the forming of the body as both a material and lived entity" (p. 28). The dialectical (re)construction of the relationship between the local and the foreign "other" is profoundly mediated by emotions, especially those that evoke feelings of hate. The narratives of hate put out by the media seek to draw white subjects' attention to the "vulnerability of the white nation" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 2), and set forth a political agenda to try their 'hardness' against the invasion of the 'other' that constitutes a potential risk to their families, jobs, national security, religion, etc. Following the logic of this narrative, Ahmed (2014) adds that the idea of the white nation has deeply gendered connotations: the nation is portrayed as a "feminised body [that] is 'penetrated' or invaded' by others" (p. 2). The metaphor of 'hardness' seems to tap into white peoples' subconscious to sustain the idea that the opposition of a 'masculine' nationalistic body becomes essential to defend the vulnerable feminized nation from the threatening other.

Ahmed (2003) argues that it is precisely through these gendered metaphors that Western epistemology sets out a hierarchy of truth. On the one hand, reason is commonly attributed to masculinity whereas emotions are associated with the feminine. However, this hierarchy artfully ignores the role of emotions in the construction of truth and how "they move [...] and attach

subjects together" (p. 383). This gendered epistemological approach to truth legitimizes the narratives of hate aforementioned by encouraging white citizens, who perceive themselves as the bulwarks of rational Western civilization and thought, to believe that they are the real victims (Ahmed, 2004a) of "irrational" multiculturalism. In this example, the force that binds white subjects together as a nation and calls into question the other is not rational but emotional: "[F]ear speaks the language of "floods" and "swamps," of being invaded by inappropriate others, against whom the nation must defend itself" (Ahmed, 2003, p. 132).

By borrowing the concept of "the economic" from Marxist theory, Ahmed (2003) sets out to explain affective emotions as a theory that suggests that "emotions circulate and are distributed across a social as well as psychic field" (p. 120). Emotions cannot and should not be understood in the abstract as they are deeply embedded in sociopolitical contexts. In this sense, Ahmed (2003) remarks that "while emotions involve subjects, they do not inhabit them as a form of residence or dwelling" (p. 386). Emotions circulate and affect our very bodies as we interact with others across concrete economic and social backgrounds. Interestingly, the unrestricted circulation of emotions greatly impacts economic indicators. A clear example is the way fear stimulated the U.S. economy after 9/11. While mass media news spread fear in the form of potential new terrorist attacks, the government encouraged U.S. citizens to overcome their fear by traveling and consuming (Ahmed, 2014). In this example, fear circulates affecting white bodies who fear the downfall of their nation, and Arab bodies who become targets of unfair treatment by arbitrary association with terrorist groups differently.

The circumstances in which racialized and gendered immigrants are deskilled and dehumanized through the circulation of emotions such as fear are particularly advantageous for the dynamics of neoliberalism in host societies. Neoliberalism thrives on social inequity and

"vilifies, mocks, and disposes of those in need" (McClennen, 2012, p. 643). Neoliberalism erodes working conditions to maximize profit, which gives way to numerous ruthless forms of exploitation that notably affect immigrants. In this regard, Harvey (2007) explains that illegal immigration operates covertly in countries like the U.S. as it "creates an easily exploitable labor force" (p. 169). Low-skilled immigrants in North America are prone to exploitative jobs where regulations are often bypassed (Carpenter, 2018), hence host societies can make profits out of immigrants' precarious working conditions while paradoxically encouraging locals to be wary of the perils of immigration.

Although illegal immigrants are more likely to be exploited than other immigrants, legal and documented immigrants can also fall prey to exploitation. In this regard, Carpenter (2018) argues that social division in places such as Canada "has been organized through the racialized and gendered hierarchies endemic to settlement colonialism and imperialist modes of capitalist expansion" (pp. 245-246). Social division can turn immigrants, even those with a work permit, into subjects of exploitative jobs: "the disposable worker" who is exposed to "short-term contracts, chronic job insecurities, lost social protections, and often debilitating labour" (Harvey, 2007, p. 170). Fussell (as cited in Carpenter, 2018) explains that immigrants are less likely to complain about precarious work conditions due to the "deportation thread dynamic," that is, "the fear of reprisal from the state disciplines migrant workers into not reporting violations of workplace standards and practices" (p. 247). Under neoliberalism, the particular status of immigrants in host societies like Canada encourages employers to take advantage of these fears to exploit racialized and gendered immigrants who desperately need to provide for their families.

Nepantlism: Feeling the "In-Betweenness"

Nepantlism is an important construct from Aztec philosophy to advance the

understanding of belongingness amongst immigrant women. Anzaldúa defined *nepantla* as "the site of transformation, that place where different perspectives come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, tenets, and identities inherited from your family, your education, and your different cultures" (2002, pp. 548–549)**.** *Nepantlism* refers to a state of in-betweenness or the space between different cultures. It describes the struggle of immigrants in their identity construction, exposing the fluid nature of identities and the highly ambivalent shapes they may borrow from the clash between cultures. In *nepantla*, identities undergo a never-ending "disintegration and reconstruction" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 75), a process that engages our understanding to unveil the mutability of race, gender, sexuality, and more (Scott & Tuana, 2017). Having the right apprehension of this mutability is crucial to alleviate the distressing notions of identity that arise from the feeling of in-betweenness.

Anzaldúa (1987) explains that this identity crisis, although it may affect any racialized immigrant, is particularly acute in racialized immigrant women. For them, this identity crisis is exacerbated as they grapple with their sense of "otherness" in geographical and psychological terms. Anzaldúa (1987) argues that in her culture, "selfishness is condemned, especially in women" (p. 18) as they are expected to exclusively fit in with the roles of good wives, mothers, housekeepers, etc. Being both a *Chicana* and a lesbian, she illustrates from her vantage point how dominant culture alienates women of color. On this point, she argues that a "[w]oman does not feel safe when her own culture, and White culture, are critical of her; when the males of all races hunt her as prey" (p 20). Indubitably, the fact that the dominant culture is riddled with myths that glorify men and relegate women to meek, submissive roles begets *nepantlism* or the state of in-betweenness.

Nepantleras, women who struggle with this in-betweenness, are "a product of the transfer

of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to another" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 78). They live in a liminal space where their identities try to thrive among opposites (Eufracio, 2022). Amid this identity crisis, Nepantleras yearn for the possibility of finding a safe place, geographically and psychologically speaking, where they can escape the oppressive reach of the dominant culture. Due to the cultural opposites that Nepantleras face daily, they have become "the ones that unite two cultures but at the same time, they struggle with their realities" (Eufracio, 2022, p. 51), that is, Nepantleras cannot elude the ways in which two cultures or more have informed their identities. The clash between these the Nepantleras' opposing cultural traits often set out to gain mastery over the other.

Rather than overcoming their state, as is the case of the wretched in Fanon (1961) or the oppressed in Freire (2005), Nepantleras must fully embrace their *nepantlism* "to see through the fiction of monoculture" (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 49). In this sense, Anzaldúa (2002) asserts that Nepantleras can take advantage of their in-betweenness by being "open to the other perspectives" as these will allow them to "examine the way [they] construct knowledge, identity, and reality […]" (p. 544). Nepantleras should use their *conocimiento* (knowledge/awareness) to free the oppressed, unite their voices, and encourage them to question those in power (Eufracio, 2022). The notion of *conocimiento* echoes the ideas of liberation promulgated by Fanon and Freire and it is inscribed in the decolonial tradition as a project that sets out to free immigrant women and queers.

The Present Study

Racialized and gendered newcomers' hardships when navigating the host society can be attributed to different factors such as language proficiency (Frank, 2013; Mathieu & Hart, 2024; Rocher, 2023), racial discrimination (Frank, 2013; Mathieu & Hart, 2024; Rocher, 2023), gender

and sexuality inequality (Creese & Wiebe, 2009; Premji & Shakya, 2014; Shan, 2010), and deskilling policies (Lord, 2020; Mathieu & Hart, 2024; Oakes & Warren, 201; Rocher, 2022). By reviewing the literature, we can see how these factors intersect and generate tensions among newcomers, especially those who have been stereotypically othered by White dominant groups. Clearly, Quebec's policies like Bill 21 and Bill 96 impact newcomers' integration processes.

The purpose of this phenomenological study revolves around newcomers' experiences with systematic oppression in Quebec, the host society, and how they construct their realities around such experiences. It also seeks to explore the influence of their experiences in shaping their attitudes toward educational and professional decisions. In addition to producing knowledge for academic circles, this study aims to give participants a voice to express their responses to Quebec policies.

Research Questions

The research questions for this dissertation are:

RQ1: How are refugees and immigrants in Quebec perceiving and navigating (discriminatory) laws like Bill 21 and 96 and the non-recognition of previous credentials?

RQ2: What can we understand about integration, post-traumatic growth and resilience from marginalized participants in Quebec?

Chapter 3. Methodology

To explore how immigrants, refugees and newcomers to Quebec construct meaning around their identities while navigating various social spaces shaped by Quebec's policies, I designed an interpretive phenomenological study that integrates elements of constructivism. This chapter presents the study's a) research design; b) sampling method and ethical issues; c) data collection and phenomenological outputs (interviews, autobiography, research-creation); d) data management and analysis; and e) credibility.

Research Design

Interpretive Queer Phenomenology with Elements of Constructivism

This study sought to augment traditional phenomenology with tools to foreground the experiences of newcomers shaped within various gendered spaces in the host society. By adopting queer phenomenology, I sought to understand how gendered, sexualized, and racialized spaces affect newcomers' orientation toward phenomena. Queer phenomenology, unlike traditional strains of phenomenology, critiques the universality of Merleau-Ponty's model of sexuality (Ahmed, 2006; Butler, 1989) and rejects essentialist notions of sexuality.

Interpretive phenomenology, rooted in Heidegger's work, seeks to uncover the deeper meanings of participants' lived experiences rather than merely describing them. This approach values context and nuance in providing a more profound comprehension of phenomena.

Similarly, constructivism posits that individuals actively shape their understanding of the world through their experiences and interactions within social contexts (Fosnot, 1995; Gergen, 1996; Murphy, 1997). This combined framework emphasizes that knowledge acquisition is inherently dynamic and subjective, highlighting how context-specific language and complex

sociocultural factors shape newcomers' perceptions of their experiences in Quebec (Fosnot, 1995).

Phenomenology, a philosophy centered on experience, offers a framework for examining individuals' unique perspectives and their engagement with the world. Moran (2000) argues that phenomenology is an "attempt to provide a rigorous defense of the fundamental and inextricable role of subjectivity and consciousness in all knowledge and in descriptions of the world" (p. 15). While phenomenology values subjectivity, it does not disregard objectivity. Husserl, considered to be the father of phenomenology, developed phenomenology as a philosophy and rigorous science that focused on "the things themselves," (Rawat, 2014, p. 6) not as empirical facts but as phenomena that provide a basis for knowledge (Armstrong, 2005). Berghofer (2018) clarifies this point, arguing that evidence depends on how something is presented in experience, rather than subjective feelings or some mysterious index that is attached to certain judgments: "Justificatory force depends only on how something is given to me, not on how I feel about what is given to me." (p. 7)

Phenomenology refrains from objectifying theories and instead emphasizes trying to 'grasp' the world through practice (van Manen, 2007). In this sense, knowledge is regarded as 'phatic' rather than 'cognitive,' a corporeal, relational, temporal, situational, and actional understanding rooted in lived experiences. Van Manen (2007) highlights that this form of knowledge cannot necessarily be translated or captured in theoretical representations. There are modes of knowing that inhere so immediately in our lived practices, in our body, in our relations, and in the things around us (p. 22). Knowledge isn't just cerebral; it is physical. This aligns with Sara Ahmed's (2004) *Affective Economies*, which frames emotions as circulating between people, objects and social contexts. Moreover, like economies, these feelings that attach to

people or objects assign certain values to them, that over time sustain associations. For example, a value of love towards a certain object or person will create a positive association leading to harmony, whereas a fearful one would create a negative association leading to otherness.

This study's epistemological perspective prioritizes non-cognitive forms of knowledge to uncover the complexities of lived experiences. By adhering to Husserl's dictum of "going back to the things in themselves" (Rawat, 2014, p. 6), I privilege individual stories over positivist approaches to understanding social phenomena, emphasizing a holistic exploration of newcomers' individual experiences. Phenomenology's ontology also underscores the significance of "corporeality" in experiences. Merleau-Ponty (2005) argues that perception is grounded in one's embodied point of view, which opens onto a broader world:

> [T]he system of experience is not arrayed before me as if I were God, it is lived by me from a certain point of view; I am not the spectator, I am involved, and it is my involvement in a point of view which makes possible both the finiteness of my perception and its opening out upon the complete world as a horizon of every perception." (p. 354)

Building on this, van Manen (1997) identifies four major dimensions of lifeworlds: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality). These dimensions connect researchers with the concrete realities of human experience and pave the way for a more humane methodological study of newcomers' experiences with policies in the host society.

Ahmed (2006), drawing on Husserl's famous example of the 'table' to explain the underlying structures of consciousness, argues that queer phenomenology aspires to apprehend what is behind the 'table,' to peek into the background behind the philosopher's toil. Husserl uses the example of a table to illustrate how consciousness perceives an object as a whole, even

though only one side of it is visible at a time. When we look at a table, we only see a certain side of it, we never see all of it simultaneously, yet we still understand it as a unified object. This is possible because of what Husserl calls **"**intentionality" (2012, p. 67): the structure of consciousness that always directs itself toward something, and "horizons" (2012, p. 77): the unseen sides or possibilities that our mind anticipates. In this way, perception is not just passive reception, but an active structuring of experience (Husserl, 2012). Ahmed (2006) explains:

> [T]he things that are behind Husserl are also behind the table that he faces: it is "self-evident" that he has his back to what is behind him. We might even say that it is the behind that converts "the back" into the background. A queer phenomenology, I wonder, might be one that faces the back, which looks "behind" phenomenology, which hesitates at the sight of the philosopher's back. (p. 29)

Husserl's example of viewing the table from different angles and setting aside preconceived ideas leads us to see such an object in a new light, exemplifying the philosopher's toil in doing philosophy, in this case, phenomenology. However, as Ahmed (2006) critiques, Husserl's exemplification fails to address "the contingent world of social matter" (p. 33), that is, the material conditions in which the practice of doing philosophy thrives. Ahmed (2006) elaborates:

> [W]hat is behind Husserl's back, what he does not face, might be the back of the house—the feminine space dedicated to the work of care, cleaning, and reproduction. Such work is often experienced as "the lack of spare time" (Davies 2001: 141); for example, the lack of time for oneself or for contemplation. To what extent does philosophy depend on the concealment of domestic labor and of the labor time that it takes to reproduce the very "materials" of home? (p. 31)

Adopting queer phenomenology enabled me to delve into the experiences of Queer, racialized and marginalized newcomers as they navigate the gendered spaces that constitute their usual destinations in the host society. This approach allowed me to investigate how these spaces influence their identities and intersect with various dimensions of their identities (i.e., sexuality, race, class, etc.).

The study was designed with three phenomenological approaches: interviews, autoethnography and research-creation—with a main focus on gathering and interpreting information from a sample of newcomers from different backgrounds regarding their experiences with Quebec's policies.

Phenomenological Approach 1: Interviews

Interview methods

The interview methods included place-based methodologies (Massey, 1994), photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1994) and soundwalking (Schafer, 1977). The phenomenological interviews positioned participants as storytellers, and the researcher as a companion and co-participant, creating a mutually rewarding experience (Bochner & Riggs, 2013; Smith & Sparkes, 2009). This approach immerses the researcher in the process alongside the participants and eliminates the danger of the researcher leading the process, and thereby colonizing, censoring or altering what the participants would like to say, record, or film.

Place-Based Methodology. Conducting interviews in meaningful locations acts as a sensory trigger, prompting participants to share vivid and detailed experiences. Familiar surroundings often help participants feel more comfortable and engaged, reducing power dynamics and fostering trust, which leads to richer, more authentic data (Evans & Jones, 2001;

Hubbard et al. 2004; Seamon, 2013). Place-based methodology is particularly effective for studying immigrants in their new country as it uncovers the nuanced ways they engage with and adapt to their new environments, fostering rich, contextualized insights into their journeys of settlement and identity formation (Cresswell, 2015; Pink 2015). Place-based interviews can reveal broader social, cultural, and environmental themes that might remain hidden in neutral settings.

Photovoice. Wang and Buris (1997) coined the term photovoice, a method that uses pictures to tell stories and connect with people. Photovoice differentiates itself from other methods of taking photographs via three points: 1) it enables people who are often voiceless to record, reflect and discuss their community's strengths and obstacles; 2) it promotes critical dialogue in a fairly accessible manner; and 3) it provides a creative way to reach policy makers (Wang & Burris, 1997). The essence of photovoice lies in its capacity to educate and empower community members or culturally diverse groups to engage in social action, raising awareness and opening dialogue with policymakers in a collective endeavor for change (Hergenrather et al., 2009; Johnston, 2016; Wang & Burris, 1994; Wang et al., 2000).

I expanded the photovoice in this study to include video-taking and audio-recording. To ensure accessibility, I provided a charged device with enough memory for the participants to use, in case they could not use their own or didn't have one. Given the adaptability and flexibility of the photovoice technique (Wang & Burris, 1997), participants did not need to receive any training or further instructions, even though I had prepared a document about ethical picture taking.

Soundwalking. Incorporating a walking methodology fosters deeper connections with participants while empowering them in the process (Buregeya, n.d.). This method offers many

advantages: it strengthens interpersonal bonds between participants and researcher, promotes participant well-being, and immerses the researcher in the process to better understand participants' lived experiences, aligning with principles of participatory action research (PAR). Moreover, walking interviews can make the process feel less formal than traditional interviews, and lead to deeper conversations and longer meetings than online or sedentary ones. Soundwalking involves participants or researchers walking through particular environments while actively listening to the sounds in their surroundings. This approach focuses on the auditory aspects of a space, emphasizing how individuals perceive and engage with the soundscape. The process can be documented through various means, such as written observations, audio recordings, or reflective conversations (Schafer, 1977). By integrating soundwalking with walking interviews and photovoice, researchers gain a richer, more layered understanding of participants' experiences. This approach highlights the interplay between sensory perceptions, personal narratives, and the social or cultural meanings embedded in specific environments (Pink, 2008, 2015).

Phenomenological Approach 2: Autoethnography

As the researcher for this study, and as a first-generation immigrant and naturalized Canadian citizen like many of the participants, I found it impossible to stay unbiased and detached from their stories. Despite this research's aims to examine lived experiences while refraining from producing objectifying theories, and as per constructivism, one's knowledge is constructed through our experiences and interactions with others and continuously evolving with new experiences and interactions (Allen, 2022). As Piaget (1964) notes, "Knowledge is not a copy of reality" (p. 176); rather, to know something is to act on it, to modify it and to understand the transformation process. Acknowledging this interplay between the objective and subjective, I

deemed it necessary to write an autoethnographic chapter (Chapter 5). This chapter not only presents my researcher positionality, it also demonstrates how my knowledge, as a PAR, evolved with every story I witnessed. By transparently positioning my lived experiences, I aim to allow the reader to engage with the data without being unduly influenced by hidden biases. Instead of allowing my researcher biases to be interwoven insidiously in the analysis, the autoethnography aims to compartmentalize my reflections. In this chapter, I process what I have interpreted and learned from both the experiences of the participants in my study and my own experiences that have resurfaced from my memory. My hope is that readers will go through a similar reflection while reading this study.

Phenomenological Approach 3: Creative Presentation of Research

Inspired by my passion for writing and consuming original content poetry and spoken word, as well as Saldaña's (2018) presentation of poetry as an evocative way of presenting and representing qualitative research, I decided to include a creative component into this project in the form of a poem.

Since I am a storyteller and a spoken word poet, I decided to combine both. What I love the most about art and research-creation is that there are no rules in them. Only the artist's truth. My truth. Their truth. Nonconforming truth.

Creative presentation of research is a method that challenges the primacy of conventional academic genres by rendering research findings in aesthetic, affective, and multimodal forms (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012). The creative presentation in this thesis uses verbatim poetic transcription and montage to center the lived experiences and affective truths of participants (Saldaña, 2016). Poetry, as both form and method, allows for an articulation of memory, trauma, and resilience that exceeds the explanatory power of traditional qualitative reporting

(Richardson, 2000). Through this form, participants' words remain textured, intimate, and alive. This is particularly important when addressing the systemic violences that operate through erasure and misrepresentation.

Drawing on Laurel Richardson's (2000) *Writing: A method of inquiry*, I approach poetic montage as a post-analytical, direct representation of this study's participants' emotions, words and experiences. The video performs the data rather than explaining it, echoing Richardson's belief that knowledge emerges not only in content but in form. This resonates with Chapman and Sawchuk's (2012) suggestion to enact "a methodological and epistemological challenge to the argumentative forms that have typified much academic scholarship" (p. 7). My creative representation is thus a political and theoretical intervention that responds to state-sanctioned narratives of integration and resilience by centering subjugated voices and collaborative storytelling.

The project also answers the call for alternatives to the normative "regime of truth" within the academy (Foucault, 1980, as cited in Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012), by using artistic form not only to convey, but to *produce* knowledge. This work, while resonant with poetic inquiry (Saldaña, 2016) and decolonial aesthetics (Simpson, 2017), is deeply informed by the idea that creative presentations of research can engage wider publics, amplify marginal voices, and trouble dominant paradigms of knowledge production and legitimacy.

Using the participants' words without any modifications, I combined words and phrases in different languages from different participants to create a poem presented from the perspective of a mosaic of people. Then, I combined the pictures, videos and sounds that the participants supplied, and made a video presentation while reading the poem aloud. Putting the artistic aspect

aside, the presentation of a multitude of voices using one voice provided a constructivist culmination product that seemed fitting for this study.

Participants and Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations were paramount to this study from its inception to its culmination. Following ethical research standards involving human subjects, I secured approval from the Tri-Council Research Ethics Board (REB) Office at Concordia University before starting the data collection process. The approval was granted for a year, from June 2024 to June 2025 (please refer to Appendix P, for the ethics certificate).

The primary data source for this phenomenological study consisted of 10 participants residing in Quebec. The sample size was determined based on Polkinghorne's (1989) recommendation of five to 25 participants with firsthand experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Participants were selected using Patton's (1999) purposeful sampling approach. Patton's 'criterion sampling' ensures the selection of participants who meet predefined criteria from "a diverse pool of possible participants from which those to be interviewed were purposely selected" (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 141). The participant selection criteria required participants to: a) have immigrated to Quebec within the past 3 to 10 years; b) be over 18 years old; c) reside in Quebec cities; and d) have been affected by Bill 21, Bill 96, or the non-recognition of previous credentials.

Potential participants were invited via QR codes on invitation letters distributed online and at community centres in Montreal (see Appendices A and B). When prospective participants contacted me, I invited them to an online meeting to confirm eligibility and respond to questions regarding the study. Out of 27 people who contacted me, 10 met all criteria. During the screening

meetings, oral consent was obtained, and participants received a copy of the Participant Consent Form (see Appendices E and F). The consent form described the study's purpose and participation requirements, serving as a reference point for participants throughout the process. I reviewed the form with each participant to ensure a clear understanding of the research and their role in it. The consent form addressed ethical issues, potential risks and benefits of participation, assurances of privacy and confidentiality, and the freedom for participants to withdraw from the study at any point and for any reason without any consequences. Once participants returned signed consent forms, I sent them a document outlining ethical behaviour during data collection (see Appendices G and H). Participants were reminded to photograph public spaces, like streets and parks, and not people or private spaces.

In some cases, participants referred friends in similar situations to participate in the study. These referrals, handled through snowball sampling (Creswell, 2012), required the individuals to meet the inclusion criteria independently. Two participants were selected through referrals. Due to the closeness between the friends who introduced these new participants, snowball sampling helped the participants develop trust in me as a researcher. Yet, confidentiality was maintained by not disclosing whether referred individuals were accepted.

Confidentiality of all participants was safeguarded by omitting all identifiable data and using pseudonyms from the outset of data collection to analysis, a practice I will maintain in all written reports, presentations, and future publications. I omitted any details that could reveal participants' specific locations except for the general provinces of residence. During the data analysis and onwards, any personal information obtained from participants was securely stored to uphold privacy and confidentiality, reducing the risk of disclosure of information. Additionally, I created an anonymization log that was encrypted and password protected to keep

track of names and pseudonyms. All audio-recorded interviews, photo discussions, transcriptions, and participant photographs were securely stored on my password-protected personal laptop. There were no identifiable data collected. Scanned consent forms were likewise encrypted for secure storage.

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Participants were explicitly informed that refusal or withdrawal would not influence the nature of ongoing relationships with the researcher or Concordia University, present or future. Each participant received 30$ in cash as thanks for participation, regardless of whether they completed the study. No participants opted to withdraw.

Fortunately, translation of documents into Arabic or Spanish, the native languages of some participants, was not necessary. All documents were carefully designed to describe the research and data collection processes in clear and precise style in both French and English. That said, sharing the same native language and cultural background with a few participants facilitated two distinct advantages: it enhanced the interpretation of my methodology (Gilbert et al., 1998) and allowed me to draw on cultural familiarity to "develop intuitions about participants" (Gilbert et al., 1998, p. 1426) which ensured that my research remained culturally informed.

The final sample consisted of 10 immigrants from North Africa, Levant, South America and West Africa. This group included six women (one trans), three men, and one nonbinary person, aged 18 to 36. All participants except the trans woman held foreign-acquired Bachelor's and/or Master's degrees and arrived with considerable professional experience. Their length of residence in Canada spanned from three to 10 years.

Table 1 provides a description of the participants, with care taken to avoid any

identification. Participants asked me to reveal the countries they are from, so the context of their experiences and what they shared in this study makes sense for the reader. The pseudonyms chosen are not close to the participants' names but are culturally representative of them.

Table 1

Participants' Profiles

Profiles	Pseudonyms	Profile
	Muna	Tunisian French woman, who arrived in Canada alone as a graduate student. Speaks English and French and has a master's degree. Age range 18-28 years old.
	Layla	Palestinian woman who arrived here as a refugee with her children and husband. Speaks English and French and has a master's degree. Age range 29-39 years old.
	Lucia	French Portuguese woman, who arrived alone as a worker having received a job offer. Speaks English and French and has a bachelor's degree. Age range 29-39 years old.
	Sameh	Lebanese man who arrived as a refugee with his family. Speaks English and low-level French and has a bachelor's degree. Age range 29-39 years old.
	Joseph	West African man, who arrived alone as an undergraduate student. Speaks English and French and has a bachelor's degree. Age range 18-28 years old.
	Hind	French Moroccan woman who came alone as undergraduate student. Speaks English and French and has a master's degree. Age range 18-28 years old.
	Sara	Moroccan Trans woman who arrived with her family as an immigrant at 8 years old. Speaks English and French, pursuing a bachelor's degree. Age range 18-28 years old.
	Carlos	Chilean man who arrived here alone as a graduate student. Speaks English and French and has a

	PhD. Age range 29-39 years old.
Charlie	Israeli nonbinary person who arrived alone as an undergraduate student. Speaks English and low-level French, has a bachelor's degree as well as a trade degree. Age range 40-50 years old.
Maria	Colombian woman who arrived here as an immigrant with her family. Speaks English and French and has a bachelor's degree. Age range 18-28 years old.

Data Collection

The principal data of the study involved the perspectives of immigrants to Quebec. Data collection was conducted in Spanish, English, French and Arabic in July 2024, without translation needed. To accommodate participants' schedules, they were free to choose the date, time, and public setting for these interviews (King & Horrocks, 2010). Locations were mutually agreed upon, with careful consideration given to ensure safety, comfort, and privacy. These interviews were conducted in different neighborhoods such as Montreal Nord, Ahuntsic, Verdun, Lasalle, and downtown Montreal. Although the interview suggested time was between 30 minutes and 45 minutes, all interviews were longer, with some taking between two and two and a half hours. Participation incentives were not offered, however, a token of appreciation of $30 in cash was provided to express gratitude without influencing their contributions.

To ensure the high quality of the data collected, I employed the three-part interview protocol advocated by Seidman (2013), involving three separate interactions with each participant: an introductory zoom conversation to establish context, followed by interviews at a location of their choice, collection of pictures, videos and sound clips and concluding with participants reconstructing experience within context.

In all ten interviews, the participants' choice of location–and the corresponding photos–provided a natural segue into discussions about the participants' stories tied to each location and image. Participants contextualized their photographs and explained critically through dialogue how the images addressed the research questions in connection with common issues faced by immigrants in Quebec. Drawing on Hergenrather et al.'s (2009) approach, I facilitated the discussion by asking the following questions:

1. Why did you choose this location?
2. Why did you choose to take this picture in this context?

When prospective participants expressed interest in participating in this project, I asked them to choose a place that reminded them of their early days in the city or of a place that they would like to walk in and take pictures/film at. Having the participants choose the place for the in-person interview evoked emotions and early memories of their arrival in Quebec, which triggered deeper conversations about their experiences in the province and led to engaging, fruitful interviews. During that walk, I asked them to talk about their experiences with integrating in Quebec society.

Ahead of the interviews, an interview guide (see Appendices H and I) with sample questions was developed to facilitate the process, ensuring that all relevant topics were explored with each participant. Open-ended questions were employed to engage participants in reflective responses that valued their perspectives (Richie et al., 2013). Additionally, once all the interviews were transcribed and coded, I reached out to the participants to minimize misinterpretations during translation and transcription (Turner, 2010).

Building rapport with participants and demonstrating ongoing appreciation for the trust vested in sharing their insights is crucial in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Hence, I was

mindful of being attentive, compassionate and engaging, ensuring that my interactions with the participants did not attempt to influence their thoughts. I aimed to demonstrated ethical sensitivity by showing respect, understanding, and empathy (Thompson, 2000). While maintaining a compassionate and empathic stance, I refrained from giving any advice or judgment, instead encouraging participants to elaborate freely without fear of bias (Mack et al., 2005).

Data Analysis

Once the data collection process ended, I translated and transcribed interviews into English. I used an app called Recorder to record the interviews. I used the application's transcription tool, and then I re-listened to each interview many times to add or edit words and expressions to correct errors, and familiarize myself with the data (Morehouse, 2012). Becoming familiar with the data made retrieving parts of the transcript easier and more efficient (Rapley, 2007).

Interpretive phenomenology goes further than descriptive phenomenology, in that it *interprets* participants' experiences it describes using the researcher's analysis. While it is a rich, holistic approach that provides context and history, it does include the researcher's position. Constructivism also describes knowledge as a result of experiences and interactions. Bearing in mind that I had chosen interpretive phenomenology and constructivism for my research design, I chose In Vivo, a coding method that remains faithful to the participants and only uses the literal words of each participant to give rise to categories, which then give rise to major themes. In Vivo coding captures the authentic language and expressions of participants, preserving their voice and perspective. This is crucial for representing the lived experiences of individuals. In Vivo coding was conducted twice as recommended in Saldaña (2021) to clean up the data and

get very familiar with it before proceeding to a different second cycle coding.

I employed an inductive approach to theme identification (Braun & Clarke, 2006), ensuring a close connection between the raw data and the analysis (Patton, 1990). I coded the interview transcripts to give rise to categories and themes, which I then used to answer my research questions. It is important to note that since these themes are data-driven, they did not always address the exact questions I asked participants as they could veer off-topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, the inductive analysis becomes "a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 12). It was important to first listen to the participants, and then eventually tell *their* stories. This qualitative approach helped me adequately represent an understudied group of immigrants and shed light on participants' views on integration (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Credibility

There are various methods researchers employ to ensure validity in qualitative inquiry; unanimously, these methods likely include terms such as authenticity, verisimilitude, trustworthiness, and credibility (Creswell & Miller, 2000). However, the essence remains the same: qualitative studies must demonstrate the credibility and quality of their findings to accurately reflect participants' realities and experiences with the phenomena studied (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Rooted in narrative inquiry within the interpretive phenomenology-constructivist paradigm, my objective as a researcher was not merely to collect data but to interpret it in a way that persuades readers to picture events from participants' perspectives (Riessman, 2008). To ensure credibility, I applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria and techniques, including checking understanding, triangulation and descriptions of participants and themes

(Shenton, 2004).

Member checking involves validating participants' perceptions, impressions, and reflections. Through this technique, participants confirm my understanding of their experiences as represented in the transcriptions (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). To ensure this, I employed a three-part interview design over time which helped me enhance the trustworthiness of my study. This involved first, meeting with participants to discuss the project, the desired outcomes, expectations, and limitations; second, conducting the interviews and collecting pictures/videos/sound clips; and third, checking-in after the interviews to verify the accuracy of transcriptions and interpretations (Butler-Kisber, 2010). This approach fostered a prolonged engagement with participants that facilitated trust-building (Shenton, 2004).

Triangulation is a qualitative strategy recognized for its potential to deepen understanding of phenomena by incorporating multiple methods or data sources (Patton, 1999). Morrow (2005) suggests obtaining diverse data that ensures the study's validity through triangulation procedures (Carter et al., 2014). This criterion pursues disconfirmation, countering researchers' tendency to seek confirmation of initial findings (Carter et al., 2014). To provide a holistic understanding of the phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2012 as cited in Carter et al., 2014), I applied a triangulation method to the data-gathering instruments (photovoice, walking methodology, sound walk, place-based methodology as well as in-depth interviews) to enhance the persuasiveness and trustworthiness of this study (Charmaz, 2006). In addition, I applied data source triangulation (Carter et al., 2014) by collecting data through in-depth interviews from 10 immigrant participants of different origins and professions who lived in Quebec. Moreover, I argue that the credibility of my study lies in the authenticity of participants' perceptions, impressions, and reflections on their experiences, grounding my interpretations firmly in their narratives.

Finally, as an Arabic native speaker, a first-generation Quebecer/Canadian/immigrant, and as an adult education teacher, I felt a connection to most of my participants' cultural backgrounds and experiences. Having been able to speak to some of them in their native language, even when the interview was done in English or French, enriched my understanding of the subtleties and nuances of their experiences, enhancing the credibility of the study (Ritchie et al., 2013).

Phenomenological Outputs

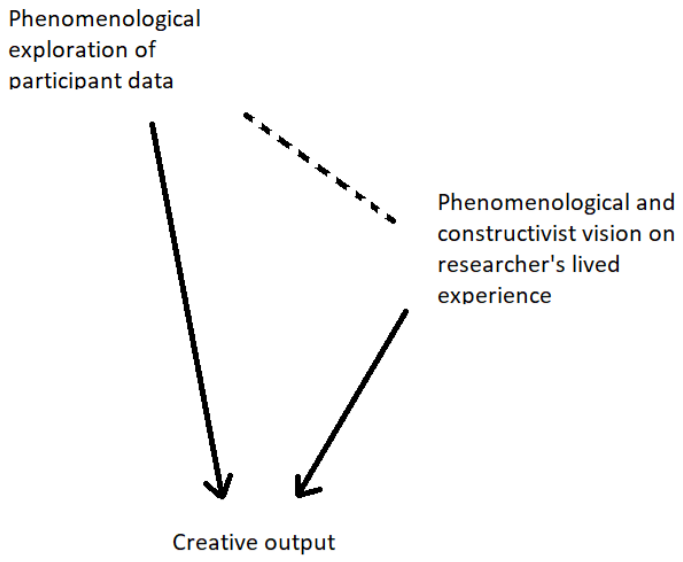
The following three chapters report the phenomenological outputs that anchor the study's discussion and conclusion:

- Chapter 4. Interview Findings: This describes the coded data from the ten participants I interviewed.
- Chapter 5. An Autobiographical Reflection: In this chapter, I delve into my researcher positionality viz the study's topic.
- Chapter 7. Creative Presentation of Research: This presents a creative output using the words, pictures, videos and sounds provided by the participants.

Figure 5 gives a visual representation of the relationship between the different phenomenological aspects of the study

Figure 5

The Relationship Between the Different Phenomenological Aspects of the Study



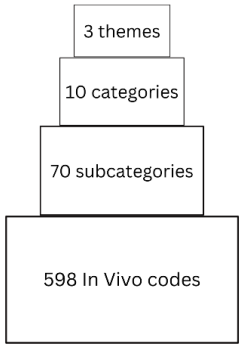
Note. The straight lines show a direct, causational relationship, where the phenomenological exploration of participant data was the source of the creative output, because it was using exact words from the participants. The shorter straight line is there because the researcher chose the participant words, photos, sound clips and video clips to use. The dotted line, however, shows a less direct relationship, because the phenomenological exploration of participant data informed the researcher's phenomenological and constructivist lenses which were used to interpret the data.

Chapter 4. Interview Findings

The interviews generated 130 pages of transcripts and 598 first cycle In Vivo codes (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2021). These were grouped into 70 second cycle codes or subcategories that we grouped into 10 overarching categories, which gave rise to three major themes. A summary is represented in Figure 1. This chapter presents a summary of how the coding was conducted, as well as the data that constituted the three themes.

Figure 1

The General Organizational Structure of Coding for This Study

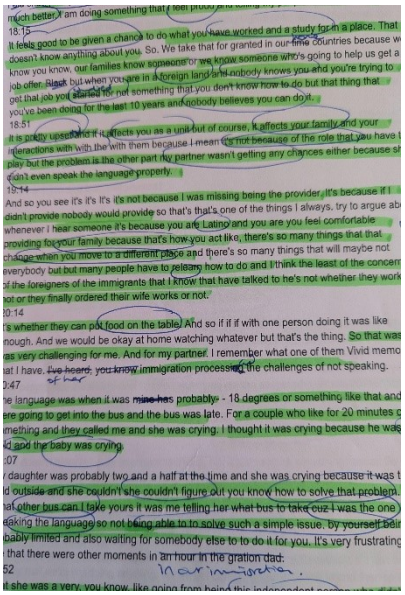


Coding

An illustration of first and second cycle In Vivo coding is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Coded Interview Transcript



Note. Example of a transcript having undergone first and second cycle In Vivo coding. The green highlights were the first cycle and the circling and underlining in pen was the second cycle In Vivo. The 598 first cycle In Vivo codes were grouped to create 70 subcategories, illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Codes

participant code	phrases from transcriptions	in vivo first cycle	in vivo second cycle	subcategory
A1	je me rappelle de certaines parties mais au fur et au mesure ca va faire du sens	certaines parties, faire du sens	faire du sens	loss
A1	j'ai choisi l'école la Dauversière parce que c'est mon école d'accueil	école d'accueil	école d'accueil	community
A1	mes connaissances en français n'étaient pas assez fortes pour que genre dans une école normale.	connaissances		
A1	je suis né en Algérie, ca me manque atrocement	Algérie, atrocement	Algérie, atrocement	missing home
A1	là a 7 ans, j'allais presque pas avoir mon 8eme anniversaire là-bas, on a déménagé	déménagé	déménagé	moving to new plac
A1	c'est la première fois que c'était pendant l'hiver donc j'ai j'avais jamais vu la neige	j'avais jamais vu la neige	jamais vu	new experience
A1	blanc partout	blanc partout	blanc partout	new experience
A1	Il faisait froid	froid	froid	new experience
A1	Juste à côté de l'école et pendant 1 ans, j'ai vécu ma vie	j'ai vécu ma vie	ma vie	community
A1	J'étais pas capable de parler	pas capable de parler	pas capable de parler	learning new things
A1	j'ai vraiment fait beaucoup d'effort	fait beaucoup d'effort	beaucoup d'effort	working hard
A1	J'ai pas d'amis	J'ai pas d'amis	J'ai pas d'amis	loneliness
A1	j'ai toujours été un kid un peu privé	un kid un peu privé	un kid un peu privé	loneliness
A1	avec l'aide de ma professeur de français Madame Daphné	ma professeur de français	ma professeur de français	community

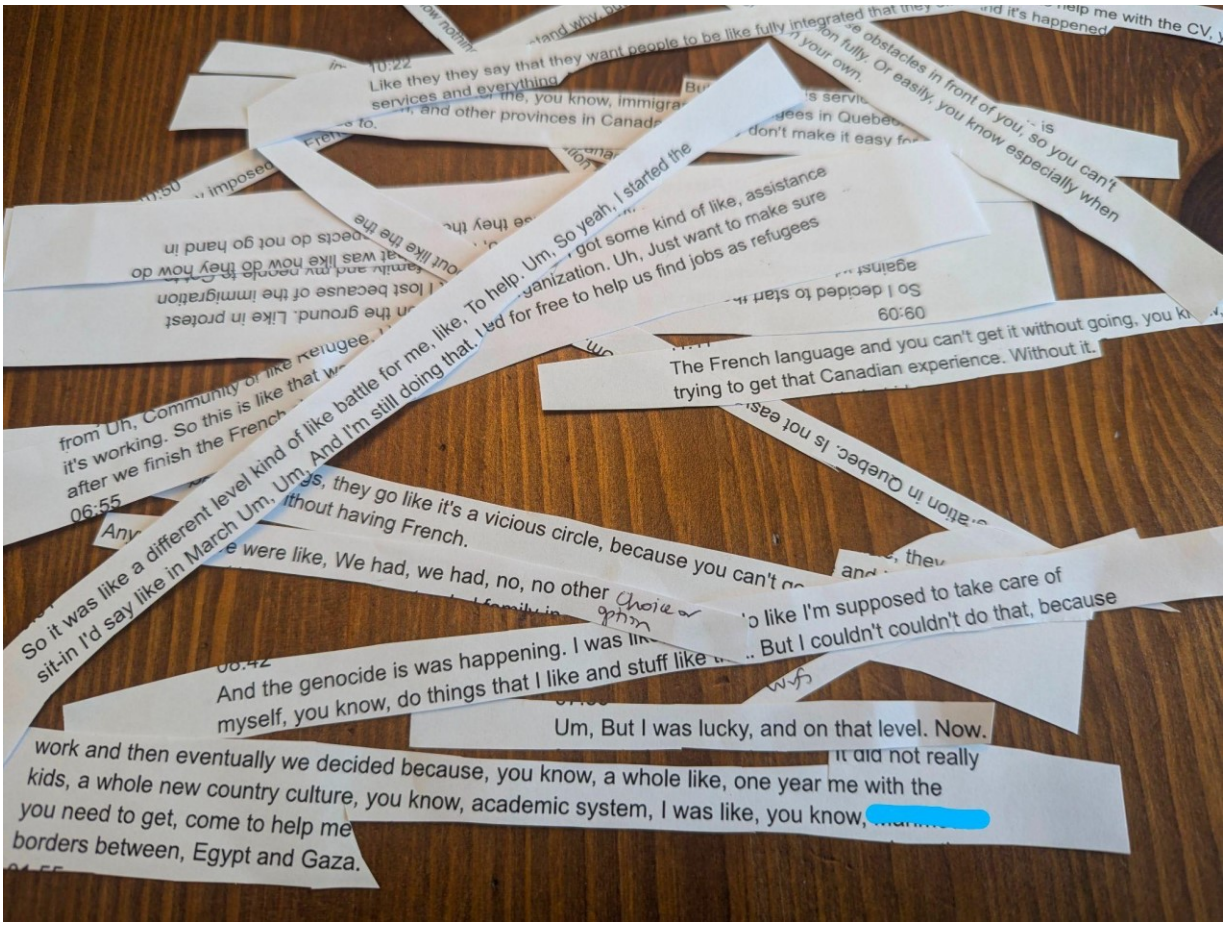
Note. Coding Example in excel sheet

After the data was copied into an excel sheet, a third cycle of Focused Coding was conducted. Then, each coded idea in the data was cut into paper slips to create 70 piles of subcategories, as illustrated in Figure 4. Each paper slip had a code in the back referring to the

participant's pseudonym as well as the In Vivo subcategory code. I used this method to increase my own accessibility, as I am a neurodivergent, visual-tactile learner. Furthermore, physically touching the data added meaning to my process of sitting with the data.

Figure 4

Coding Process



Note. Coding example showing each idea or sentence cut up into a small piece of paper

The 70 piles of subcategories, as listed below in Table 2, were then re-grouped into ten major categories. The numeration is only used for listing and not for any hierarchical or sequential reasons.

Table 2

70 Subcategories Grouped Into 10 Categories and then into Three Main Themes

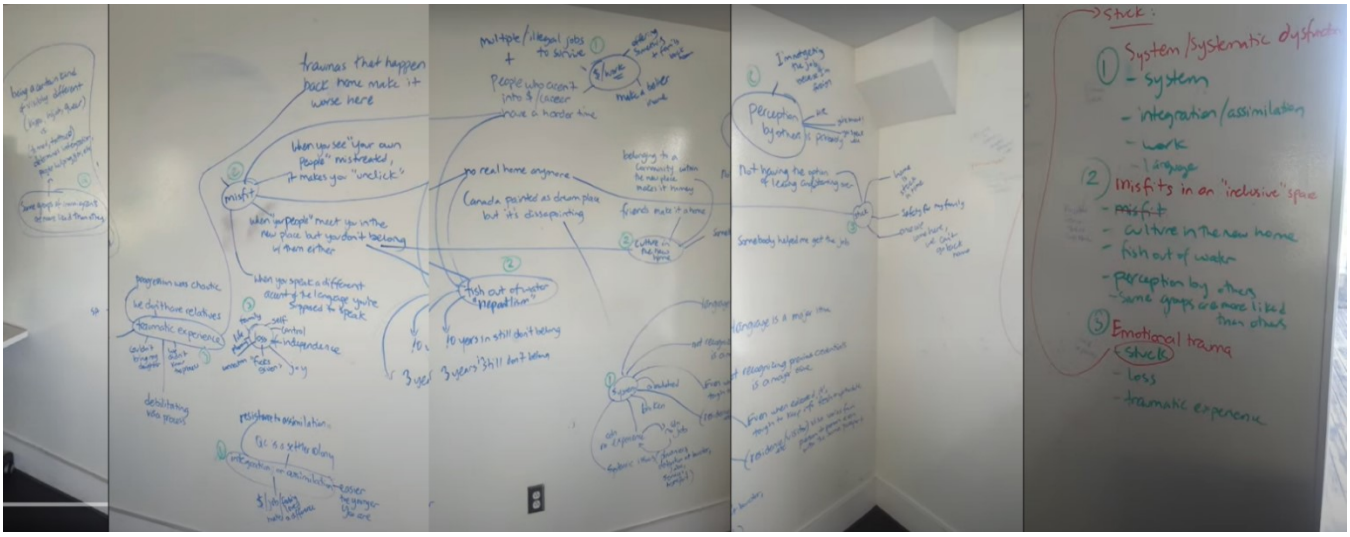
Subcategory	Category	Theme
1. Canada painted as a dream place, but it's disappointing	System	Systemic dysfunction
2. System is broken		
3. Moving to a new place		
4. New experiences		
5. Learn new things		
6. No Canadian experience		
7. No Canadian job		
8. System is inundated		
9. Border issues		
10. Border discrimination		
11. Not recognizing previous credentials is bullshit		
12. Not recognizing previous credentials is another layer of colonization		
13. Even when educated, it's tough to keep knowledge while out of a job		
14. Same visa processes are so different for different people		
15. Quebec is a settler colony, so why so exclusive about language and culture anyway?	Integration or assimilation	
16. Easier the younger you are		
17. Resistance to assimilation		
18. Feeling loved makes a difference		
19. I can make some money	Work	
20. Getting job makes it better		
21. I can help my family from far		
22. People who aren't into money or career-driven have a hard time		
23. People who are career-driven have a hard time		
24. Multiple or illegal jobs needed to survive		
25. Working hard		
26. Offering something to my family		
27. Make better income		
28. Language is a major thing	Language	
29. When you speak a different		

accent of an official language		
30. When “your people” meet you in the new place but you don’t belong to them either 31. Community is good 32. Belonging to a community in the new home makes it homey 33. Friends make it a home 34. Somebody helped me get the job 35. I don’t have the option to leave or start over	Culture in the new home	Misfits in an “inclusive” place
36. Three years here, I don’t belong 37. Ten years here, I still don’t belong 38. Traumas that happen back home get worse here 39. When you see your people mistreated, it makes you unclick 40. When “your people” meet you in the new place but you don’t belong to them either 41. Fish out of water 42. No real home anymore 43. Home is stuck in time 44. Missing home 45. I’m stuck 46. Safety for my family 47. We get here, then we can’t go back home 48. We die to live and never find home again 49. loneliness	Fish out of water	
50. I’m not getting the job because I am foreign 51. HR hates my name 52. You’re smart! 53. You speak well	Self perception by others	
54. Being a certain kind of visibly different 55. My looks determine if I can integrate or not	Some groups are more liked than others	
56. Loss of family	Loss	Emotional trauma

57. Loss of planning	
58. Loss of self	
59. Loss of control	
60. Loss of independence	
61. Loss of joy	
62. Loss of fucks given	
63. Loss of connection	
64. Progression was chaotic	Traumatic experiences
65. We don't have relatives	
66. We didn't know the process	
67. Debilitating visa process	
68. We don't have relatives	
69. Couldn't bring my daughter	
70. Sexual assault	

Figure 6 illustrates a different visual example of Table 2 contents.

Figure 6 *Summary of 70 Subcategories being Grouped into 10 Major Categories*



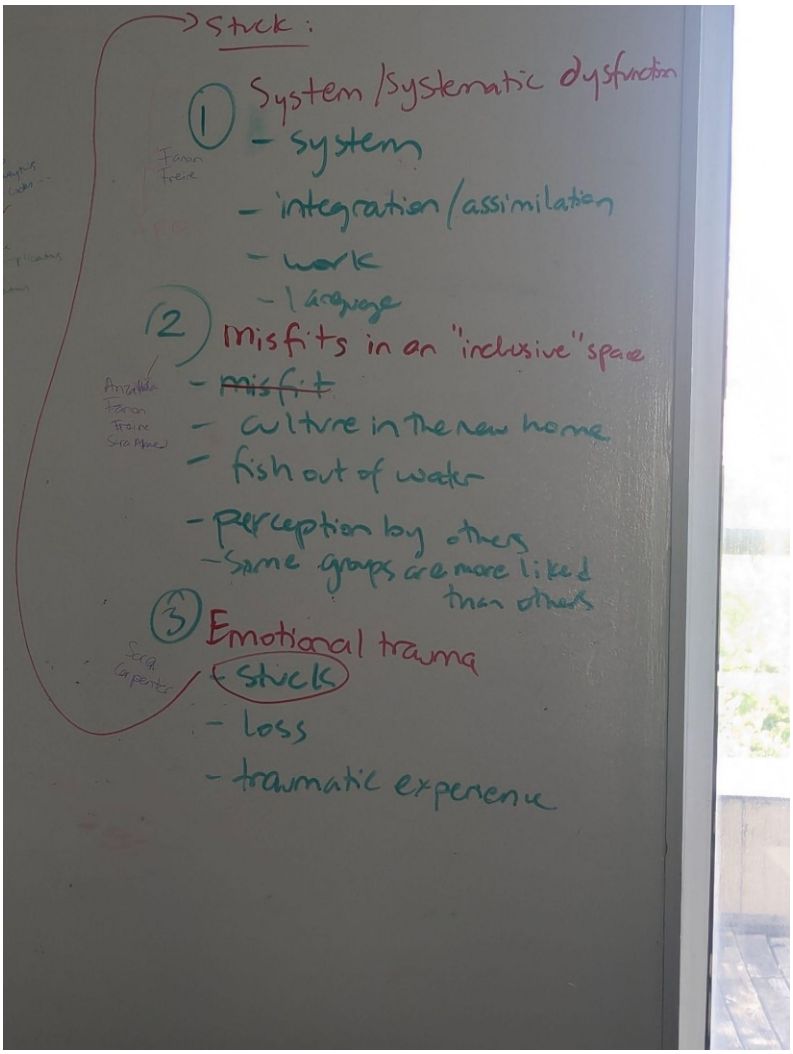
The video of category grouping can be accessed as well. Harb, R. (2024, July 30). *Category grouping* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtube.com/shorts/P3MUiFO6Ykc

Ten major categories were ultimately distilled into these three major themes (a) systemic dysfunction; (b) misfits in an "inclusive" space; and (c) emotional trauma as shown in Table 2 above and Figure 7. An overarching umbrella of *feeling stuck* was expressed by the participants:

stuck in Quebec, stuck without a job, stuck without feeling integrated, just stuck in general. It was felt by all, and it seemed to be a feeling that included all themes.

Figure 7

Themes and Subthemes



Note. These are the major themes and their subthemes that came up from the codes of all transcripts. There was an overarching feeling of being stuck described by all participants.

Themes

In this section, the three main themes will be presented, along with illustrating quotes by

the participants. Table 3 provides a summary of the three main themes as well as the subcategories discussed earlier, that will now be presented as subthemes. Following the table, each theme and its subthemes will be presented in detail, each with its own table providing excerpts and sample codes. Please refer to Table 2 for details on subcategories, categories and themes.

Table 3

Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Systemic dysfunction	Misfits in an "inclusive" space	Emotional trauma
Subtheme 1	System	Culture in the new home	Loss
Subtheme 2	Integration/assimilation	Fish out of water	Traumatic experiences
Subtheme 3	Work	Perception by others	
Subtheme 4	Language	Some groups are liked more than others	

Theme 1- Systemic Dysfunction

The theme of systemic dysfunction included four subthemes: (a) the systemic issues these immigrants faced; (b) undergoing integration versus assimilation; (c) work-related issues; (d) language-related issues.

A. System.

Systemic issues were the longest list of issues presented by the participants. Each participant had at least a few examples referring to how the system is overloaded and/or broken and/or prejudicial. Table 4 presents a few excerpts of participant data that gave rise to the subtheme:

Table 4

Excerpts and Codes for System

Subtheme: System

Excerpts	In Vivo codes
They claim that they don't have enough employees to do the job or treat the files at the immigration department	don't have enough employees to do the job
...what happened to my child, to my daughter that I lost because of the immigration process that doesn't make any sense	the immigration process that doesn't make any sense
parce que j'ai dit visa et pas permit de travail (because I said visa and not work permit)	*parce que j'ai dit visa* (because I said visa)
Très restreint. Pas de téléphone, silence, pas de ci, pas de ça. Douanes canadiennes horribles. On sait que ça doit être des personnes d'autorité, mais on ne te demande pas d'être une personne ignoble. Je suis humain. J'ai une dignité (Very restrictive. No phone, silence, no this or that. Horrible Canadian customs. We know that you have to have authority, but not be a horrible person. I am human. I have dignity).	*Je suis humain. J'ai une dignité* (I am human. I have dignity).
I don't know why I'm not getting the jobs. The more I stay away from the market, the less I will remember, the less good I will be, the less employable I become.	the less employable I become

B. Integration or Assimilation.

As shown in Table 5, this subtheme focused on whether it is integration or assimilation that immigrants, refugees, students and workers must go through to become part of Quebec society.

Table 5

Excerpts and Codes for Integration or Assimilation

Subtheme: Integration or Assimilation

Excerpts	In Vivo codes
If you accept all they impose as they try to assimilate you, where is your dignity?	they try to assimilate you
They don't let you get fully integrated, so why should we work hard to be fully integrated?	They don't let you get fully integrated

Canada claims to have a beautiful image of promoting human rights, equality, equity, diversity, accepting people, accepting refugees	Canada claims to have a beautiful image
They say that they want people to be fully integrated that they offer them classes, services and everything, but they also impose all these obstacles in front of them	but they also impose all these obstacles
It's never integration; it's assimilation	It's never integration; it's assimilation

C. Work.

This subtheme presents work-related issues that were brought up by the participants who were trying to integrate and work in Quebec. Table 6 presents a few examples.

Table 6

Excerpts and Codes for Work

Subtheme: Work

Excerpts	In Vivo codes
when you don't work in it all the time, you really have to keep the information fresh. I tried a little bit but it really feels like you have to constantly do the work	you have to constantly do the work
I have experience and I'm not getting the job	I have experience and I'm not getting the job
even though highly educated, experienced and pursuing higher education, was not getting calls back for interviews.	highly educated, experienced and pursuing higher education, was not getting calls
So I worked as a bagger at an IGA store	bagger at an IGA
Je faisais le ménage le matin. Je me suis levée à 4h du matin pour aller faire le ménage avant d'aller au laboratoire ou je travaillais (I cleaned in the morning. I woke up at 4am to go clean [the store] before going to the lab where I worked)	*pour aller faire le ménage avant d'aller au laboratoire* (to go clean [the store] before going to the lab)
This is a place where I can think about working and where I offer [something to] my family	think about working, offer [something to] my family

D. Language.

This subtheme includes the issues that participants brought up that involved language. A couple of examples are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Excerpts and Codes for Language

Subtheme: Language

Excerpts	In Vivo codes
si je sais parler, c'est juste qu'on a des accents différents (yes, I know how to speak [French], we just have different accents)	*des accents différents* (different accents)
Even if you speak French, if you speak a different accent, you're "wrong"	different accent, you're "wrong".

Theme 2- Misfits in an 'Inclusive' Place

This theme subsumes four major subthemes: (a) culture in the new home; (b) fish out of water; (c) self-perception of what others think about me; and (d) some groups are more liked than others.

A. Culture in The New Home.

This subtheme is about the relationships that participants encountered and the culture that they perceive. It included all positive and negative cultural aspects. Therefore, some are about positive relationships that led to work opportunities or community connections, and some are about feeling disconnected in a non-inclusive culture. Table 8 presents excerpts and codes for this subtheme.

Table 8

Excerpts and Codes for Culture in The New Home

Subtheme: Culture in The New Home

Excerpts	In Vivo codes
I got my current job by meeting my future boss in a class	current job

C'est comme vivre dans une bulle dans une autre bulle (It's like living in a bubble inside another bubble)	*dans une bulle dans une autre bulle* (in a bubble inside another bubble)
I didn't meet a lot of Jewish people and certainly not Israelis. I didn't necessarily want to meet them, but when I did meet people who had any connection to it, they would often kind of give off weird stereotypes.	weird stereotypes
they would assume that applied to me even though it's culturally very different	culturally very different
ca [home country] *me manque, atrocement, mais je me sens soutenue par ma* [Queer] *communauté ici* (I miss my home country terribly but I feel supported by my [Queer] community here)	*soutenue par ma* [Queer] *communauté* (supported by my [Queer] community

B. Fish out of Water.

This subtheme is about the feelings of isolation and nonbelonging that participants brought up. Table 9 presents a few examples of feeling like a fish out of water.

Table 9

Excerpts and Codes for Fish out of Water

Subtheme: Fish out of Water

Excerpts	In Vivo codes
It was a very isolating experience moving here by myself	isolating experience
they would assume that applied to me even though it's culturally very different	culturally very different
I just want to be myself. This is not what I planned for or dreamed of	not what I planned for or dreamed of
Je ne peux pas retourner, je ne peux pas être moi même ici non plus (I can't return, nor can I be myself here)	*je ne peux pas être moi même ici* (I can't be myself here)
No es fácil llegamos (It's not easy to get there)	*No es fácil llegamos* (It's not easy to get there)
there is a sense that, you know, also like being an immigrant in a way, I feel a lot more solidarity with immigrants from other places and like we kind of have a lot in common	solidarity with immigrants from other places
Ce n'est pas ce que j'ai pensé, mais pour le moment, ça marche (It's not what I thought it would be, but it'll do for now)	*Ce n'est pas ce que j'ai pensé* (It's not what I thought)

C. Self-Perception of What Others Think About Me.

This subtheme included examples brought up by the participants about perceived misconceptions, discrimination and denigration. Table 10 presents a few examples.

Table 10

Excerpts and Codes for Self-Perception of What Others Think About Me

Subtheme: Self Perception of What Others Think About Me

Excerpts	In Vivo codes
Seinfeld, bagels and a New York Jewish accent that are not representative	are not representative
I'm not getting the job because I'm foreign	because I'm foreign
HR people, they just probably read your names and they think "oh the person with an immigrant name doesn't probably speak the language, and it's going to be a problem to adapt to our environment or whatever	doesn't probably speak the language
They are surprised I am capable	They are surprised I am capable
"You're smart!"	"You're smart!"

D. Some Groups Are More Liked Than Others.

This subtheme includes the participants' experiences that referred to being part of group that is better and/or less liked. For example, a hijab-wearing participant talked about terrible experiences crossing the Canada-U.S. border, a nonbinary person talked about how they were treated because their official name is different from their chosen name, and an attractive young woman talked about positive experiences at work and in society. Table 11 presents a few more examples.

Table 11

Excerpts and Codes for Some Groups Are More Liked Than Others

Subtheme: Some Groups Are More Liked Than Others

Excerpts	In Vivo codes
My name on my official records is not the name that I use	not the name I use
Très restreint. Pas de téléphone, silence, pas de ci, pas de ca. Douanes canadiennes horribles (Very restrictive. No phone, silence, no this or that. Horrible Canadia customs)	*Très restreint* (Very restrictive)
No issues	No issues
Just wait	Just wait
We also need to fight for keeping our own values and culture and language	our own values and culture and language

Theme 3- Emotional Trauma

Emotional trauma was experienced in myriad ways and resembled an iceberg. Participants first expressed feeling loss: of control, of family members, of independence, of the ability to plan, and as they talked, darker memories, like sexual assault, came to surface. This theme had two main subthemes (a) loss and (b) traumatic experiences.

A. Loss

This subtheme dealt particularly with any kind of loss related to moving to Quebec, be it of family connections, independence, jobs, and so on. Table 12 presents a few excerpts and codes.

Table 12

Excerpts and Codes for Loss

Subtheme: Loss

Excerpts	In Vivo codes
ómalo como si fuera un Renacer relación y eso hoy me quedo marcado y si eso es volverán a	*desde cero* (from zero)

tomar un nuevo rumbo de vida, es empezar desde cero es empezar a construir muchas cosas desde cero hasta nuestra relación empezó desde cero. (Take it as if it were a rebirth in the relationship, and that really left a mark on me today. If that's the case, then they will take a new direction in life—it's about starting from scratch, rebuilding many things from the ground up, even our relationship started from zero.)	
J'ai vraiment pas le choix. J'ai fui une France raciste et sans espoir pour moi mais ça veut dire que j'ai pas ma famille autour de moi. (I really don't have a choice. I fled a racist France with no hope for me, but that means I don't have my family around me.)	*j'ai pas ma famille* (I don't have my family)
I had my car, I had my house, I had everything. And I left all of that, not only that, I left my family, my friends, my country. So, to sacrifice all of that and live in this black hole here, that has no future, no present, no past, no history	I had everything
We tried anyway, but we couldn't find jobs. It was covid at the time. People were losing their jobs at the time	People were losing their jobs
We also need to fight for keeping our own values and culture and language. So, the label "integration" depends. it's more assimilation than I would need to be able to live here, to get a job and live in dignity and happiness.	it's more assimilation than I would need to be able to live here

B. Traumatic Experiences.

This subtheme dealt with traumatic experiences. Trigger warning: traumatic experiences of participants included losing a child, and being sexually assaulted, after moving to Quebec. Table 13 presents a few examples and codes for this subtheme.

Table 13

Excerpts and Codes for Traumatic Experiences

Subtheme: Traumatic Experiences

Excerpts	In Vivo codes

We didn't have any relatives at the moment and that our family is thousands of kilometers away from us and we didn't know if they were going to be okay	we didn't know if they were going to be okay
elle se permettait de toucher et de m'embrasser etc	*elle se permettait de toucher et de m'embrasser*
Il m'a dit que si j'enlève mon pantalon, il me montrera des diamants (he told me that if I take off my pants, he would show me diamonds)	*si j'enlève mon pantalon* (if I take o ff my pants)
il est venu derrière moi, m'a tenu les mains au-dessus de la tête, m'a serré les mains et a essayé de m'embrasser (He came from behind me, held my hands above my head, held them tightly and tried to kiss me)	*il est venu derrière moi* (He came from behind me)
Can't sponsor family members	Can't sponsor family
I need to be rich, basically, which is impossible. So now, I feel guilty that I made it	I feel guilty that I made it
We arrived and it hit us in the face. It was like running from a fire, but then you discover the extent of your loss when you survive the first escape, and you regret having survived	you regret having survived
...what happened to my child, to my daughter that I lost because of the immigration process that doesn't make any sense	my daughter that I lost

Chapter 5. An Autobiographical Reflection

It is impossible to listen to people and witness their stories without self-reflection. How can I advocate for constructivism and phenomenology and not be witness to the changes in myself as a human, a vessel of knowledge and a researcher? Impossible. In this chapter, I open my heart as I share my feelings about the interviews, my reflections, and how they changed me. I discuss too how they led me to the research-creation aspect of the project. Finally, I discuss my own immigration experience and how being affected by the participants' stories colours my own story.

Being the researcher, hence, in a position of power with respect to this project, it is important to not 'colonize' the participants' voices while I analyze the data and write using my own voice. The goal of this reflective chapter is to unweave the researcher from the research *for a moment*, to set aside bias and preconceptions with respect to the research as well as the research questions. The information in this chapter will not be included in the discussion chapter, as its purpose is to position myself as the researcher. Additionally, I thought it would be an interesting experience for the reader to trade places with the researcher during this chapter. Please keep an open mind and an open heart as you read my life story, as I did when listening to the participants. To emulate the experience I had with my participants, I also orally recorded myself reading the last section of this chapter, entitled "my story with *ghurbeh* (diaspora)," so you can listen to it on Dropbox. The music in the background is called Ghurbeh by Ahmad Al Khatib.

Harb, R. (2025, May 2). *My Story with Ghurbeh (Diaspora)* [Audio]. Dropbox. https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/sh8qxb0o3slui4xbezms2/My-story-with-Diaspora.m4a?rlkey=wpmh4cjpx7hoei2osibr3umxn&st=xw9ie3q3&dl=0

The Interviews

I still remember every interview like it was yesterday, and it has been a few months now. I remember our meeting places and walks. I remember the initial social awkwardness, politeness and smiles that were there to hide nervousness. I remember feeling incredibly lucky. I had just gotten my ethics approval from the university to conduct these interviews, and I did not think it was going to happen very quickly. I was amazed at the number of people who responded. I even had to filter out a few who did not fit all the criteria that I had listed. Some interviews stopped at the vetting meeting. Others took hours. Each interview was supposed to be between 30 and 45 minutes.

Some people talked for more than two hours! They poured their hearts out. I could not believe that that could happen. Meeting a stranger somewhere on some street, taking pictures, recording sounds, and talking about your experience as an immigrant or refugee and you open up that much? I knew the multiple methods were helpful in improving engagement, but I did not expect that much success in gathering personal information from people I did not know. These were not my friends. To say I felt honoured with them telling me all their deeply moving experiences is an understatement. I can never explain the feelings that that created in me.

I cried with them. I smiled with them. I remember thinking at the time, when I was showing my emotions, “Oh no. Am I supposed to act like a psychologist and just take notes and have a poker face?” Then I remember feeling even more conflicted, because I never had a poker face.

It was a very difficult experience to be the researcher but also a human whose heart was really going out to these people with such difficult experiences, such heart-wrenching stories. I remember feeling rude that I wanted to take notes, so I did not. I remember feeling cold by not

reaching out to hug them as they were talking about very difficult things. I still did not to respect their boundaries. Many offered me food and drinks on our meetings, and I was conflicted about accepting because they spent money that was probably scarce already, and how their families were better recipients, while at the same time, not wanting to insult them and their generosity. I remember being conflicted about myriad aspects, that in hindsight, seem so unimportant right now. Wonderful humans who have been through horrendous things. How did they manage to keep their transparency, their vulnerability, and their kindness with a stranger, despite having gone through so much hate, death, fear, loneliness, poverty, hunger, othering and discrimination?

I imagined I would be triggered by a lot of their stories, that it would bring up my past as an immigrant who had gone through similar experiences. That was not the case. Somehow all that happened was that I listened, and I became so invested in them, in their stories. I asked a lot more questions than I had intended to because I wanted to know more. I wanted to connect further. I wanted further understanding, not just for the research, but really to make sure that they were okay, to know what happened in that story, what happened towards the end of the story, and how they were doing at that time.

How was I to not know more about Layla, after she shared with me the story of her daughter being killed during the Gaza genocide that her parents are still trying to survive? How was I not going to send an article about Godspeed You! Black Emperor's Toronto concert to Charlie and discuss how a band they loved for over a decade remains ethically relevant to them as an Antizionist Israeli Jewish person today? How was I not going to congratulate Carlos on his graduation, or check in on Joseph's project or connect with Hind who said she was "living in a bubble, in another bubble?" (personal communication, July 23, 2024). Was I really going to parachute in and out to collect data and then move on? No. Unfortunately, this is often the

concern of many communities involved in research. Despite many promises and sensitivity training, researchers are often guilty of parasitic research, where they helicopter in and out of communities to collect data, and despite all the acknowledgments, there is a disconnect, a lack of connection, a perceived lack of care by the participants. Researchers get close to participants and get their stories for a publication, and after having been vulnerable and feeling close, the participants feel the coldness of the distance after the research is done. Furthermore, in many cases, the communities aren't put in the spotlight, the researcher is. I am proud to say that I have connected deeply with most participants, not only by being moved by them during the interviews, but by checking the transcripts and analyses with them afterwards, and by checking in as a human, not a researcher who was starving for more data. I have been in touch with all of them after the analysis was done, and I am honoured to say that I am building friendships with them now. It was non-negotiable for me to centre them throughout the project, and to make sure that even though I am writing, that I am a tool for their voices in the results and the discussion. My voice can come out in this chapter, and it can be used to carry theirs in the research-creation, but it can never replace theirs. This project is about them, not about me. The fact that this my dissertation means it must carry my voice and explain my position, but only as an interesting spin or point of view.

I could not and still cannot put into words my amazement and adoration of such people who are still able to build communities around them and build [metaphorical] fires with stories and connections. Their continuous warmth envelopes even strangers who go in wearing researcher hats and come out better humans.

Witness

I'm a storyteller by nature. I have always loved telling stories, reading them, hearing them, dissolving my ego to be a part of them. Stories are eternal, they are raw truth from a witness's point of view. I can never talk about storytelling and not reference Samantha Nock's (2014) article entitled "Being a Witness." Nock emphasizes the importance of *being a witness* and not merely listening to a story. That story needs to become a part of you, which to me, means to be changed by it. You carry it, and from that moment, your steps carry more weight, your words have an extra colour, you have a bigger purpose. In research terms, this is constructivism; you are affected by the new knowledge you have received and that in turn, affects your future actions.

This point of view removes the worry about changing the story. Of course you will. Stories are perspectives. They are somebody else's truth. So, when you tell it, it will have aspects of your voice, of you as a storyteller and no longer a mere bystander. Do not actively change the story, but you can never tell it the same way that the person to whom it happened tells it. So instead of some fake attempt to keep the story in the words and tone of the original version, tell it as faithfully as you can, but be cognizant that you are telling it your way. Understand what that means. When you transmit the story, even if it is not exactly in the same voice, that is okay, because you are storytelling as a witness. Your heart, soul and tears have mixed with somebody else's facts. Your existence intersected with somebody else's. What is more moving than that?

Still, these stories demanded something stronger. I felt it. Something stronger than descriptive phenomenology, something stronger than In Vivo. What could it be? What was stronger than research? It was research-creation.

My Story with Ghurbeh (Diaspora)

I recommend that this section be listened to, and the text be used as a transcription if needed. The audio can be found here Harb, R. (2025, May 2). *My Story with Ghurbeh (Diaspora)* [Audio]. Dropbox. https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/sh8qxb0o3slui4xbezms2/My-story-with-Diaspora.m4a?rlkey=wpmh4cjpx7hoei2osibr3umxn&st=xw9ie3q3&dl=0

Being chained to diaspora since birth, the following excerpt from a poem by the late Mahmoud Darwish (2003) has always spoken to me:

أَنا من هناك. أَنا من هنا

ولستُ هناك، ولستُ هنا

لِيِ اسمانِ يلتقيان ويفترقان

ولي لُغتان, نسيت بأيَّهما

كنتُ أَحلُمُ،

لي لُغَةٌ إنجليزيَّةٌ للكتابة،

طبِّعةُ المفردات,

ولي لغةٌ من حوار السماء مع

القدس، فضيَّةُ النَّبْرِ، لكنها

!لا تُطيعُ مخيّلتي

والهويَّةُ؟

دفاعٌ عن الذات

(Darwish, 2003, para. 9)

(I am from there. I am from here.

And I am not there, and I am not here.

I have two names that meet and part.

And I have two languages, and I forgot

in which of them I used to dream.

I have an English language for writing,

pliant in its vocabulary.

And I have a language born of heaven's dialogue

with Jerusalem—silvery in tone—

but it does not obey my imagination!

And [my] identity?

A defense of the self)

When I arrived as an immigrant. I was younger than most of the current study's participants, and I did not speak French. Bear in mind, today's laws were not all there 20 years ago. I was almost 18 years old and ended up here because I was granted a scholarship to attend university. I went to school full-time, had a part-time job, and decided to enroll in French classes.

Upon my arrival, I saw a lot of hate messages to immigrants on bus shelters, metro walls, and random buildings around the city. "*Les ostis d'immigrants*" (The ~~fucking~~ immigrants) was on a wall next to where I lived. Immigrants were blamed for the failure of the referendum. In the mid to late 90s, a couple of years before I arrived in Quebec, there was a huge vote in the province to decide whether Quebec would separate from the rest of Canada (Elections Quebec, n.d.). The vote did not pass by a very narrow margin, 50.58%, which was largely blamed on immigrants.

This may have been partially true, because as you understand more about immigrants and minorities in general, you understand that the thing we desire the most is stability. Having already run away from war, famine, poverty, persecution, sexual assault and all sorts of traumas,

you go to a country that receives you as an immigrant, and hope that you have run away from that horrendous, scary past once and for all. To never see it again. Such a vote from minorities could have come from fear of instability and possible poverty in Quebec and a failure of a system. In a Freirean reality, as much as systems have failed us and oppressed us, we still maintain systems, because of our deathly fear of the chaos that otherwise invades everything. We are so scared.

When I came here, I learned quickly that I needed to fit into the society, and that the way to fit—for somebody who looked like me and had a name like mine—was to learn French and to have an impeccable accent when speaking English. No ethnic accents allowed. I did not know much about Quebec's history, but the cultural climate at the time of my arrival was clear: French was important. The multilayer of the Montreal society with its "*couches*" (layers) of Indigenous, French, English and Immigrant aspects brought a richness, both in terms of community and racism.

I am a Palestinian Lebanese cis woman. I am a fair-skinned woman, and I pass for a Latina, Italian or Greek; in terms of intersections of culture and gender, I did not encounter as much automatic, 'stranger' racism as many with my background did. That said, when I got to know people or when they found out my name and background, I had my fair share of racism. I was told to go back home on multiple occasions, some asked me if I went to school on a camel in my home country, or how many camels my dad would have to trade when I got married (they were not highly creative at all in their insults).

Regardless, I spent a better part of the last 20 years, trying to really, really integrate. I worked on my accent ridiculously hard, so that it would not have traces of my origins. I speak English like an anglophone, and I speak French like a francophone. Over time, I became

integrated in society socially, professionally, educationally and financially. I am a ‘perfect’ image of the colonized, integrated person.

I was so integrated that I married a white person with a different cultural and religious background. I wanted truly mixed kids as a desire for and belief in integration. I believed so hard that I switched careers in my thirties to work with immigrants and refugees integrating into our society. I moved away from the for-profit pharmaceutical world, in which I was a scientist, towards helping communities. I switched domains and workplaces. I volunteer. A lot. I work with communities of colour, Queer youth, immigrants and refugees, and minorities in need. Besides my full-time, paid job, my nonpaid jobs are many and rewarding. I do translations, act as accompaniments to hospitals and appointments, engage in ombudsmanship at schools for children, provide emotional support, and fundraise for those who are in need. I have organized events with multiple organizations and created content online and offline. I also decided to continue my graduate education on a decolonial quest for equity, diversity and inclusion, a true rejection of discrimination in all forms.

For the better part of 20 years, I was this somewhat exotic girl that worked hard enough and spoke well enough to fit in, almost. I can not list the number of names people give me because they cannot pronounce my name: Rwanda, to Rhonda, to Randa, to Rowda, to Radha, to Ray. For the most part, I never corrected people; I thought it was rude. So, I let them call me whatever they wanted. I was happy to be invited to the party. My nickname in university completely obliterated my origins from my name: Ray. I went by the name Ray for many people in university. I still have friends who call me Ray today.

Over the last year, I have grown to despise that name.

I was a young woman who believed in international communities that can build and move beyond war, fake colonial separations, homophobia, xenophobia, hatred, sexism, racism and other sorts of isms and phobias. Sadly, my world was shattered in 2024. I have become a woman who witnessed the dehumanization of many peoples and is still witnessing sanctioned murder, an ethnic cleansing of millions of people who look like me. I am witnessing the erasure of my own kin. While the world tells me that I am welcome here, they kill my family. Most of my family is displaced. I still do not have news about at least 50 members of my family. Not one home of our family homes is still standing. My childhood friends had to be displaced, many other friends are freezing and starving in tents on random streets. Over two million people are still displaced and trying to shelter from the cold, babies are freezing to death, while the mainstream media tell us that an occupation of the land of my ancestors is just a nation fighting to defend itself? This is not a statement against religion or immigration; this is a statement against ethnic cleansing, genocide and colonization.

After learning about the ethnic cleansing of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island, slavery, the millions killed in Congo under Leopold, the Holocaust, the massacre of Vietnam civilians, the Bosnian genocide, the Armenian genocide, and the list goes on—how can we justify and sanction the killing of any people? Regardless of what your political views may be, how can we, today, with access to information, with social movements across the planet, justify the genocide of any people? Never again, clearly, was not for everyone.

Over the last 20 years. I hid my origins quite well. I repeat. I am Palestinian Lebanese. My Palestinian mother grew up in a refugee camp in Lebanon and my father grew up in the South of Lebanon. While one was a refugee and one was a citizen in Lebanon, neither had much electricity, access to wealth, nor access to rights. Life was very difficult. Life IS very difficult,

still. I knew the word ‘Palestinian’ causes contention in almost every society I lived in, from SWANA to North America. So, I had chosen for the better part of 20 years to say I am Lebanese, because, well, it is easier than explaining the conundrum. It is not more my fault that I was born part Palestinian than it is the fault of any Jewish Israeli settler child to be born. I do not care what political name that land has, or who was there first. Every form of life deserves to live in freedom and dignity, there and everywhere.

True to my people’s diversity and indigeneity, I can proudly tell you that my family has Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Atheist members. We also have many Queer members. The fact of the matter is, while I conveniently made my way here, and remain to have access to privilege that I am eternally grateful for, the bare minimum I had to do was bear witness. To everything around me. After all, “with great power comes great responsibility” (Lee, 1962).

And so, I am here to tell you, I am changed.

After over a year and a half, watching multiple genocides. I am changed forever.

And I feel very triggered.

I can feel my nerves.

Crackling.

Like fireworks sometimes.

And I can assure you that I am unfortunately de-integrated after more than 20 years in Quebec. I feel hated. I feel scared. I feel persecuted. Not personally, you understand. But how can I separate myself from my people? From all the people? All children are our children.

Many immigrant communities are similar to Indigenous communities on this land, in that whether we are one or many, we are all the same. Like seawater all coming from the same sea. You could take some parts of it in buckets and bottles and some still part of the body of water,

but it is all from the same place. It all has the same levels of salt and other minerals. It all has the same cravings and issues.

You need to understand that while I am doing well here, my family, my friends, my blood relatives are not. They are in tents. Many are dead. Many are sick. Despite all the integration, I am powerless to change it.

It is extremely difficult for me to exist as anything but a vessel of knowledge that has been changed, moved, altered, after the experiences and the knowledge I have come across. I am a reaction to what I went through.

Constructivism has destroyed me, the previous version of me.

I feel like I have lost my own sovereignty, over my own body and feelings, and emotions, and existence.

On the one hand, I feel like I have become a tool that works and earns to fund further imperialism. On the other hand, I am also a tool to represent my people and others who have tasked me with their stories.

I can tell you, it is not a great feeling to be that way. The constant is conflict.

I had to re-examine my values, my thoughts, and my belief systems. I had to shuffle through ‘friends,’ to see who can stay in my life and who cannot.

It was difficult but not complicated. If you can not sit down with me at dinner, maybe drink too much, definitely cry too hard over the death of humanity, then you simply cannot be my friend anymore.

I somehow still believe that this is resilience.

There are many definitions of resilience, and I still believe that these examples are representations of resilience, because I wake up every day and I do it repeatedly with some refinements. But I persist.

If I had to answer my own research questions, this is how I would do it. I have been affected by the laws as I studied, worked hard, and tried to exist in a version that is honest and humanistic. I really tried to integrate. I had integrated. I really believed. Despite my best efforts, I am de-integrated right now and I feel like I am vulnerable, exposed, angry, hurt and scared.

But above all, I am hopeful.

I know Truth will prevail.

I know communities will come together. The local Indigenous communities across Turtle Island, people of every faith and colour, people who are Queer, old and young, with access needs, with disabilities and fully abled.

No matter the color, the religion, the number of piercings—we are all coming together.

This gives me more hope than anything else. Hope is a dangerous thing, because it makes you go after the change you want in the world.

Without hope, what is the point of life?

Chapter 6. Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative study is to respond to the following research questions:

- RQ1: How are refugees and immigrants in Montreal perceiving and navigating (discriminatory) laws like Bill 21 and 96 and the non-recognition of previous credentials? (What are they going through?)
- RQ2: What can we understand about integration, post-traumatic growth and resilience from marginalized participants in Quebec?

Through connecting the analysis of participants' voices with theories by Ahmed, Anzaldua, Freire, and Fanon as well as some relevant studies on the topics of BIPOC and/or Queer newcomers to Quebec I discuss three main themes: systemic dysfunction, misfits in an 'inclusive' place, and emotional trauma, and their subthemes. I present these themes in light of the research questions. Moreover, we get an understanding that not only do newcomers arrive with traumas, but they endure new ones here as well, many of which are caused by our systemic issues, policies and societal norms. How they handle these traumas and persist despite them every day is proof of their resilience and post-traumatic growth.

Interpretation of the Findings: Research Question 1

The first research question is, how are refugees and immigrants in Montreal perceiving and navigating (discriminatory) laws like Bill 21 and 96 and the non-recognition of previous credentials? Different subthemes of Theme 1, entitled systemic dysfunction, respond to this question (see Table 15).

Table 15

Subthemes Responding to RQ1

Theme	Systemic dysfunction
Subtheme 1	Systemic barriers
Subtheme 2	Employment discrimination and credential non-recognition
Subtheme 3	Language as a tool of oppression

Note. The names of the subthemes of theme 1 are slightly modified in the discussion to flow better with the subject and excerpts used. For example, the subtheme entitled system in chapter 4 is changed to systemic barriers in discussion, as it weaves theory and analysis with the participant data.

Systemic Dysfunction

The findings in this study, as well as the existing literature, indicate that systemic dysfunction remains a significant barrier to the successful integration of newcomers into society. This aligns with the work of Paulo Freire, particularly his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), which provides profound insights into the ways in which oppression is perpetuated within educational systems and societal structures. Freire argues that oppression is not only a force exerted by the dominant group but also one that is internalized by the oppressed. In this dynamic, those who are disenfranchised can become complicit in their own subjugation, often adopting the beliefs, values, and behaviors that reinforce their position of powerlessness. This concept of 'internalized oppression' is crucial for understanding how certain individuals or groups may accept their marginalization without challenging the systems that perpetuate it.

Freire's pedagogical framework emphasizes the necessity of critical consciousness (also known as *conscientização*)—the process by which individuals recognize and understand the social, political, and economic contradictions that impact their lives. Through this awakening, individuals can begin to see how they are subjected to oppressive forces and work toward transforming their reality. In the context of Canada, a nation characterized by increasing

diversity and a significant population of immigrants and refugees, Freire's insights remain exceptionally pertinent. The challenges these newcomers face—such as discrimination, cultural alienation, and exclusion from key societal resources—are reflective of larger systemic issues that prevent equitable integration and participation. In this regard, Freire's analysis serves as a powerful lens through which the ongoing struggles of marginalized communities can be better understood and addressed.

By applying Freire's ideas to the integration of newcomers, it becomes clear that the process of inclusion cannot be solely focused on assimilation into existing societal norms. Instead, it must involve challenging and deconstructing the systems of power and privilege that perpetuate inequality. As Freire advocates, true liberation comes through education and collective action aimed at dismantling these oppressive structures. Therefore, Freire's work offers not only a critical framework for understanding the dynamics of oppression but also a call to action for those who wish to create more just and inclusive societies.

The data collected showed that all participants shared a common dissatisfaction with Quebec's system when it comes to integrating non-francophone, racialized and/or visibly Queer newcomers into its society. In the data, participants recurrently refer to this problem as a 'systemic dysfunction,' which encompasses major drawbacks experienced concerning (a) systemic barriers, (b) employment discrimination and credential nonrecognition, and (c) language as a tool of oppression.

It is worth reiterating that while Quebec selects immigrants under the Canada-Québec Accord (1991), the federal government controls overall immigration levels, admissibility, volume of immigrants and time of admission into Quebec. This shared jurisdiction, established by the Constitution Act, 1867, means Quebec must address integration challenges like

discrimination in language and employment while operating within federal constraints. Unlike health and education, immigration policy remains a federal responsibility, limiting Quebec's full autonomy. However, integration policies ultimately reside under provincial responsibility.

Systemic Barriers

Most of this study's participants touched on how they felt their integration into the host society was hindered by various external factors, with the system not facilitating their integration being one of the most recurring beliefs. Most of the participants recurrently expressed how the system did not enable them to easily integrate into Quebec's community, forcing them to resort to different means to survive while trying to resolve their immigration status in the province. Even though they were highly qualified and well-educated newcomers, they still had to endure systemic deskilling processes that downplayed their credentials because they were foreign, in that they had to get jobs for which they were overqualified and underpaid. Even while they recognized external factors, systemic deskilling reflects Freire's concept of internalized oppression, in that marginalized groups are led to believe that their struggles are also individual failures rather than solely products of an exclusionary system. The participants' experiences illustrate how the system enforces a cycle of economic subjugation, compelling immigrants to accept their disadvantage as inevitable.

Some participants had to wait too long for their immigration documents, some still cannot get a job that fits their level of education and abilities, some continue to have visa issues, and all suffer professionally, personally, financially, and psychologically as a result. These structural barriers have been documented extensively. Studies published in 2024 by The Business School of Alberta, The Canadian Senate, and The Canadian Council for Refugees identified numerous systemic issues such as excessive wait times for language tests, discriminatory hiring practices,

and additional hurdles for people of color and women (The Business School of Alberta, 2024). Discrimination in the labor market and non-recognition of previous credentials were among the top issues reported (The Business School of Alberta, 2024; The Canadian Senate, 2024; The Canadian Council for Refugees, 2024). Furthermore, a survey conducted by The Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) revealed that only 8% of immigrants are aware of the services available to them upon arrival (2021) highlighting significant gaps in accessible information. Additionally, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the main governmental source of information for newcomers, has not been updated in years, further compounding these challenges (The Business School of Alberta, 2024).

One example of an overloaded immigration system causing the most heartbreaking event in a family's life is the death of a child. Layla told me about her experience as a refugee claimant since 2019. She was granted acceptance into a PhD program in feminism, gender and sexuality, but had her student visa in the U.S. withdrawn due to restrictive immigration rules put in place by the Republican administration at the time. Layla found herself crossing the border on foot with her two young children and husband. Unable to return to Gaza, they were detained at the US-Canadian border for weeks before being let into Canada. Three and a half years later, they were finally granted refugee claimant status. "They claim that they don't have enough employees to do the job or treat the files at the immigration department" (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024). For many families, this is the case, but being together makes it easier to bear. However, for Layla's family, this was disastrous. Their eldest child, at 13, was disabled with cerebral palsy. They were not able to transport her when they left Gaza and had left her with extended family with the hope of being able to bring her as soon as possible. "The only way to sponsor a family member is through getting a PR (permanent resident) card, and there's

conditions to that. It's not only the PR. You have to have enough money in your bank account and other stuff so you can support that family member. Anyway, we had no other choice or option. It was just wait and see" (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024).

Throughout their wait for their refugee status to be accepted, and then for COVID limitations to be lifted, the family kept trying to bring their disabled daughter, who had not seen her siblings and parents in years, to them. In October 2023, the genocide in Gaza started and in January 2024, their daughter was killed as a result of malnutrition and lack of medication. "...what happened to my child, to my daughter that I lost because of the immigration process that doesn't make any sense is unfathomable" (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024). Layla's story illustrates what Freire would call an imposed fatalism—the belief that these barriers are insurmountable, reinforced by institutions that continuously delay and obstruct paths to stability. Freire's pedagogy urges us to break this cycle by enabling oppressed individuals to become aware of their oppression and challenge it through collective action.

Participants Muna and Lucia both had French passports but completely different visa processes. Muna, who is a hijab-wearing, North African French young woman, had come in as a graduate student, whereas Lucia, who is a young Portuguese French woman, had arrived as an employee having received a job offer. The following example illustrates how external processes do not affect all foreigners in the same way. Despite being young women, Muna (hijab-wearing, North African French young women) and Lucia (young European woman) had significantly different experiences navigating the host society. While Lucia went through a seamless renewal of her visa, Muna experienced a series of bureaucratic loopholes that complicated her immigration status.

Every time Muna had to renew her visa between contracts, she had an exceptionally

difficult experience at the *tour de poteau, or* flagpole tour, where one has to cross the Canadian border into the US, get a visa refusal, and then turn back to get a new Canadian visa stamp.

Once a customs officer refused to process her papers, "*parce que j'ai dit visa et pas permit de travail*" ("because I said visa and not work permit!") when she gave him her papers. She is still not a resident but is trying to get her residence visa after four years. She first entered Canada in June 2021. In December 2021, she paid somebody to drive her to the border but had to walk with the cars to cross the border. She has completed this process four times to date and was due for a fifth time shortly after our meeting. Each time was progressively worse, especially after putting on a hijab. "*Très restreint. Pas de téléphone, silence, pas de ci, pas de ça. Douanes canadiennes horribles. On sait que ça doit être des personnes d'autorité, mais on ne te demande pas d'être une personne ignoble*. *Je suis humain. J'ai une dignité*." (Very restrictive. No phone, no talking, no this, no that. Horrible Canadian customs. We know they must be people of authority, but nobody's asking you to be a despicable person. I'm human. I have dignity) (Muna, personal communication, June 22, 2024). About U.S. customs agents, she said, "*bizarrement, ils ne sont pas méchants. Je pense parce que tu ne restes pas chez eux*." (Strangely enough, they're not mean. I think because we're not staying there) (Muna, personal communication, June 22, 2024).

Lucia had to renew her visa only once, and she reported no issues. She had no recollection about the process, as it was so smooth. Her employer completed the process for her visa renewal in 2023, and she was back to work without issues. Freire's concept of the dehumanization of the oppressed is evident here: Muna's dignity was repeatedly stripped away in these bureaucratic encounters, where she was treated as a lesser person simply because of her background and appearance. She describes her interactions with Canadian customs as

demeaning, reinforcing her sense of alienation from a society that claims to champion diversity.

Freire's concept of critical consciousness and revolutionary education highlights the need for transformative approaches that actively engage the oppressed in understanding and altering their social reality. In Canada, this implies that educational institutions, community organizations, and policymakers must develop more inclusive and participatory frameworks that recognize and address the specific needs of immigrants and refugees. Studies have shown that skilled newcomers to Canada generally earn less and live below the low-income cutoff compared to their Canadian-born counterparts, with negative effects on social integration and mental well-being (Reihan et al., 2023). These findings align with older studies on the experiences of newcomers in Quebec and other Canadian provinces, which highlight the additional burdens faced by racialized and gendered immigrants (Bauder, 2003; Chuong & Safdat, 2016; Girard & Bauder, 2007; Guo, 2015; McAndrew, 2010; Syed, 2013). These studies suggest that immigrants from colonized, lower resources countries often encounter more obstacles to their integration than those from higher-income countries, further highlighting systemic disparities in the process.

Employment Discrimination and Credential Non-recognition

Quebec, despite its reputation for multiculturalism and inclusivity, often exhibits systemic challenges that reflect the dynamics Freire describes. For many new immigrants and refugees, the Quebecer professional and educational systems can perpetuate oppression in ways similar to Freire's observations. The traditional approach to recognition of credentials in Quebec is to reject most education done outside of Canada. Akin to Freire's banking model, it can fail to address the unique needs and contributions of immigrants and refugees. This education model can be used to describe new immigrants and refugees. As newcomers, their credentials are almost always rejected and they must do more schooling, which often begins with learning

French in Quebec. Despite there being no statistics about this subject, it has been my experience as an adult education teacher that many newcomers attend adult centers to learn French before going to vocational centers to acquire a diploma they can use to work. According to Statistics Canada (2005), “refugees and Family Class immigrants who speak an official language at landing are at least twice as likely to participate in post-migration training” (para. 28), but there are no recent statistics about this topic since 2005. This ‘banking’ model which treats students as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in their learning process can be used for newcomers, as it is a top-down, rigid approach. It does not encourage critical engagement or address the lived experiences and specific challenges faced by newcomers, which can reinforce existing power structures and limit their ability to challenge their subjugated status.

Most participants reported having a difficult time finding a job to meet their immediate needs. Some participants were able to find employment through engaging in network programs and volunteering. For example, Layla was able to find a job after meeting an organization representative who provided her with the assistance she needed to enhance her employability. Similarly, Carlos indicated he found his current job through a connection made in one of his classes, where he met someone who eventually became his boss. These experiences are consistent with the findings in Otoo’s (2020) study, which stressed the importance of networking in Canada.

Employment is a key factor on whether a person integrates, as it creates and maintains connection to society, financial independence and security, mental and physical activity, and keeps one up to date with the latest in one’s field of expertise. The biggest obstacles regarding finding work are lacking Canadian experience and French fluency. Charlie is university-educated and has some Canadian experience but not much in Quebec, “when you don't work in it all the

time, you really struggle to keep the information fresh. I tried a little bit, but it really feels like you have to constantly do the work without a guarantee that you will get the job" (Charlie, personal communication, July 11, 2024). They also spoke about their experience in the Canadian market, which they described as "hyper capitalist", "you're supposed to come in like hyper confident, and I don't know, like a hyper capitalist go-getter kind of person that has a quick answer for, like, questions, like, where do you see yourself in three years? Where do you see your career trajectory but also not care too much?" (Charlie, personal communication, July 11, 2024).

Sameh shared his experience getting employed in his field. "Despite being university-educated, I can't find a job. That's fine. I have been applying for random jobs, like security and stuff. They keep telling me it's not my field. Yeah, I know. I just need Canadian experience. Finally, somebody employed me. I had to move heavy boxes and stand for hours on end. I injured my back, so they let me go, saying I am not fit for the job. I have been having anxiety attacks and fainting spells from the stress of trying to provide for my family. It was not supposed to be this way" (Sameh, personal communication, July 2, 2024).

"I have experience, and I'm not getting the job" (Carlos, personal communication, July 14, 2024). Carlos came to Montreal from South America and not having any Canadian experience, even though highly educated, experienced and pursuing graduate education, was not getting calls back for interviews. He was feeling very discouraged about the situation. He is an expert in the field of education, and he keeps wondering why he is not getting past the interview process. Older studies that delve into the journey of newcomers striving to integrate into Quebec (Bauder, 2003; Girard & Bauder, 2007) also reflect broader challenges faced by racialized and gendered newcomers in various Canadian provinces (Chuong & Safdat, 2016; Guo, 2015;

McAndrew, 2010; Syed, 2013). These studies indicate that these newcomers struggled to integrate into the host society's workforce due to employers' prejudice towards their language proficiency, foreign credentials, religion, sexual orientation, and skin color.

These university-educated multilinguals pursuing graduate studies had to work multiple jobs, sometimes illegally, to make ends meet. "It seems endless and hopeless. So, I decided to work as a bagger at an IGA store [...] for a couple months. Then I worked for UPS piling up the boxes in the trucks" (Carlos, personal communication, July 14, 2024). Carlos was not an anomaly. "Je faisais le ménage le matin. Je me suis levée à 4h du matin pour aller faire le ménage avant d'aller au laboratoire où je travaillais." ("I did the cleaning in the morning. I got up at 4am to do the cleaning before going to the [graduate] laboratory where I worked") (Muna, personal communication, June 22, 2024).

New immigrants and refugees, having navigated complex geographic realities and challenges in their countries of origin, that may have led to internalization of subjugation. This internalization can manifest in ways that reinforce their marginalized position within Canadian society. Hence, immigrants might accept lower-status jobs or inadequate recognition of their qualifications, perceiving these conditions as inevitable due to a lack of awareness or means to challenge the status quo. This acceptance can be a direct result of systemic barriers and a lack of support systems that address their unique challenges, thereby perpetuating their own subjugation.

Still, with no option to return home, either due to wars or general instability raging in their countries of origin, many stay in Quebec for two main reasons, as expressed by Carlos: "This is a place where I can have even the slightest possibility to work and where I offer [something to] my family" (Carlos, personal communication, July 14, 2024).

The participants' experiences with employment are similar to those reported by Creese and Wiebe (2009), Premji and Shakya, (2014), and Shan (2009). Despite being well-educated and highly skilled, participants constantly expressed their difficulties finding a job because their credentials were foreign. Such was the case with Carlos, who revealed the toil he went through before getting the job that matched his profile, after having to resort to low-paid, low-skilled jobs. According to Creese and Wiebe (2009), Carlos's opportunity to get a job in the manual labor sector, which offers slightly higher pay compared to positions in the cleaning industry, can be attributed to his gender. Similar to participants in Shan's (2009) study, Carlos was eventually able to get a job that matched his profile, through enrolling in educational programs in Canada to obtain local credentials and increase his chances of being employed.

Charlie reported having issues with employers' expectations of potential workers during the interview process: engaging in hyper capitalist practices such as constantly customizing their resumes and displaying an unwavering obsession with work. Charlie revealed they felt they were not a "good fit" in most of these jobs, culturally speaking, as they questioned the repetitive and dehumanizing practices prevalent in work culture these days. Although employers' expectations and practices may appear consistent for all job candidates, Harvey (2007) reminds us that taking advantage of immigrants' vulnerability regarding their status is pivotal for capitalist expansion. This exploitation engenders something he calls "disposable workers," a segment of the workforce who is less likely to complain about exploitative practices.

This is a clear example of how immigrants can become ensnared in power dynamics that "other" them (Freire, 1968) and place them in a position of disadvantage when compared to citizens or even other more privileged immigrants. As might be expected, in the case of Quebec,

this subtle marginalization of racialized groups is consistent with the province's project of attracting specific demographics to preserve its Francophone identity (Bouffard, 2015).

Freire's concept of critical consciousness and revolutionary education highlights the need for transformative approaches that actively engage the oppressed in understanding and altering their social reality. In Quebec, this implies that educational institutions, community organizations, and policymakers must develop more inclusive and participatory frameworks that recognize and address the specific needs of immigrants and refugees.

Language As a Tool of Oppression

Freire critiques how the dominant class enforces a single, official language that excludes and marginalizes those who do not speak it fluently. In the case of Quebec, Bill 96's strict French language requirements could be seen through this lens. Immigrants who do not yet master French face systemic barriers to employment, education, and social integration, reinforcing their subjugation. This echoes Freire's argument that denying people access to communication in their own language—or forcing them to adopt a new one under punitive conditions—maintains existing hierarchies. Despite claims of a welcoming attitude towards French-speaking immigrants, prejudice persists when French is spoken with an accent. This is consistent with the literature reviewed (Guo, 2009, 2015; Newbold et al., 2013) as it indicates that proficiency in French alone is insufficient to avoid being perceived as an unskilled language user. All participants except two were perfectly bilingual in both official languages. Two, Sameh and Charlie, spoke and understood French but were not fluent. Yet, even when they spoke French, if it was a different accent, they were treated as not belonging.

While both Lucia and Muna speak an already flawless French, albeit the "wrong accent," Muna is a member of a visible minority and wears a hijab. The systemic complications she

experienced align with studies done in the US, Australia, UK, and Canada that show how Muslim women, especially those wearing hijabs, experience a more difficult time being employed, keeping employment, and securing visas (Abdelhadi, 2019; Abdelhadi & England, 2019; Ahmed & Gorey, 2023; Foroutan, 2007; Tariq & Syed, 2018). About 71% of Muslim women have considered leaving the province of Quebec in search of employment due to Bill 21 complications (City News, 2024). In this sense, it is not unreasonable to deem the system biased, as it subtly deploys mechanisms to facilitate or obstruct integration depending on the demographics of the immigrants involved.

Freire (2005) highlights how language serves as a tool of power, reinforcing systemic inequalities when the dominant group dictates the acceptable form of communication. Muna, who is fluent in French and speaks it as a native speaker, had a surreal experience in Quebec: "*Je parlais en français, et la personne du Québec me corrigeait tout le temps. Je ne comprenais pas pourquoi. Elle m'a dit, 'mais tu ne sais pas parler'. J'ai dit si je sais parler, c'est juste qu'on a des accents différents*" (I spoke in French, and the person from Quebec corrected me all the time. I didn't understand why. She said, "but you don't know how to speak." I said yes, I can, it's just that we have different accents) (Muna, personal communication, June 22, 2024). Freire's concept of the culture of silence explains how linguistic alienation fosters feelings of inferiority among marginalized groups, making them question their legitimacy in a society that demands linguistic conformity. This process contributes to the broader mechanisms of exclusion and oppression, reinforcing how only certain linguistic identities are valid in Quebec.

Lucia, a French national, said that although her work environment is very kind, people often correct her fluent French or laugh at her. She doesn't let it affect her but was very surprised the first time it happened. She thought it was personal. Later, she realized that "it's a thing that

happens in Quebec" (Lucia, personal communication, July 10, 2024). Hind, a North African French participant, has a perfectly flowing French accent without any errors. It is absolutely beautiful to listen to. Hind also reported having issues in Quebec due to people feeling and treating her like she's "*d'ailleurs*" ("from elsewhere") (Hind, personal communication, July 23, 2024). A study conducted by Šebková et al. (2020) examined Quebecers' perception of four French accents or varieties: French from Quebec, French from France, French from Haiti, and French from Cameroon. For the study, the prestige of each French variety was analyzed with respect to two aspects: the status dimension that shows "the manifest, obvious socioeconomic prestige of speakers" (Moon, 2022, p.33), and the solidarity dimension that represents "the latent, interpersonally appreciated prestige" (Moon, 2022, p.33). The results showed that the Quebec French maintained superiority in both status and solidarity dimensions over the other three forms from the Quebecer perspective.

Interestingly, despite French being the sole official language of Québec, Bergeron (2020) found that the Québec French variety is frequently relegated to a lower status in favor of the French from France "norm" used by newscasters and French language teachers. French speakers from outside of Quebec give negative evaluations about Quebec French while at the same time not being able to reliably distinguish between the two accents (Bergeron, 2020). This reflects Freire's (2005) argument that dominant linguistic structures are enforced to maintain power. The insistence on a single acceptable accent or variety of language functions as a gatekeeping mechanism, positioning those who do not conform as outsiders regardless of their fluency.

Taken together, these studies suggest how Quebecers who value their own variety of French may feel marginalized in their own province—where their dialect is neither prioritized by Radio-Canada nor widely adopted by immigrants. This also can create an image of what

newcomers—who despite their best efforts—are unable to speak Quebec French the same way a child who was born here can. The refusal to recognize linguistic diversity in Quebec parallels Freire's (2005) criticism of educational and social systems that silence marginalized voices rather than fostering dialogue. According to Freire, true integration would require a participatory approach where linguistic diversity is seen as an asset rather than a deficit.

This type of othering against people who did learn French or already spoke it upon arrival creates a particularly angry reaction. "Speak French like a settler, who's been here for decades. This is the main criterion. If you're not, then you will experience discrimination in Quebec." (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024). She continued, "it's shocking that that's happening in Canada, because Canada claims to have a beautiful image of promoting human rights, equality, equity, diversity, accepting people, accepting refugees" (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024). Layla's frustration aligns with Freire's concept of critical consciousness, wherein individuals begin to recognize the systemic barriers that uphold their oppression. When immigrants realize that their linguistic abilities are not the true barrier to integration—but rather a tool used to maintain exclusion—they begin to challenge the system more directly.

Guo's study (2009) reveals that the situation with language prejudice is so severe that immigrants agree to take courses to reduce their accents and Westernize their names to boost their chances of employment. In other words, integration is not as seamless as it appears for French-speaking newcomers. To fully integrate into the host society, they must undergo a series of changes that require them to adopt and adapt to cultural aspects beyond language. This attitude towards the subtle cultural content attached to language seems to be purposely designed to force newcomers to comply with acculturation processes to facilitate their integration. Freire's

work reminds us that such imposed changes are not neutral but are instead part of an ongoing process of domination, where the oppressed are expected to conform to the structures that oppress them rather than challenge them. Immigrants are required to pawn their values, beliefs, and attitudes to adopt those of the dominant group in the host society, reinforcing Freire's critique of oppressive linguistic assimilation.

Interpretation of the Findings: Research Question 2

RQ2: What can we understand about integration, resilience and post-traumatic growth from marginalized participants in Quebec?

Due to the complexity of the answer, different subthemes from Theme1, systemic dysfunction, Theme 2, misfits in an inclusive place and Theme 3, emotional trauma, are used to elaborate on it. This section is subdivided into four subsections: Integration or assimilation, in-betweenness, perceptions, post-traumatic trauma and resilience (see Table 16).

Table 16

Subthemes Responding to RQ2

Themes	Systemic dysfunction, Misfits in an 'inclusive' place, Emotional trauma
Subtheme 1	Integration or assimilation?
Subtheme 2	In-betweenness
Subtheme 3	Perceptions: navigating identity and racialization
Subtheme 4	Post-Traumatic trauma

Note. The names of the Subthemes of Themes 1, 2 and 3 are slightly modified in the discussion to flow better with the subject and excerpts used. For example, the Subtheme entitled traumatic experiences in chapter 4 is changed to post-traumatic trauma in discussion, as it weaves theory and analysis with the participant data.

In exploring the multifaceted experiences of newcomers and marginalized groups as they navigate post-colonial and diasporic contexts, the theories of Frantz Fanon, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Sara Ahmed provide critical lenses through which to examine emotional and psychological journeys. Each theorist sheds light on the intricate relationships between identity, belonging, and trauma inflicted by systems of oppression. Fanon's work on the psychological effects of colonization and the rejection of assimilation speaks to the deep-seated conflict of trying to reconcile one's identity in a society that demands conformity (Fanon, 1963). In contrast, Anzaldúa's concept of *nepantla* offers a profound exploration of the liminal space inhabited by those who exist between cultures, continuously negotiating their place in a world that insists on fixed boundaries (Anzaldúa, 1987). Similarly, Ahmed's analysis of how individuals are shaped by the social and cultural perceptions of others emphasizes the ways in which these external expectations can influence self-worth and contribute to feelings of alienation (Ahmed, 2004).

Together, these theorists help illuminate the complex emotional terrain newcomers must traverse—ranging from the internalized rejection of assimilation to the painful desire for integration, all while contending with the perceptions others hold of them in a colonized society. These psychological struggles are further compounded by the trauma of displacement and the challenges of navigating a new home, where feelings of loss and the lingering effects of past traumas often intersect with resilience and post-traumatic growth. Through the voices of the participants, we begin to understand how these theories manifest in lived experiences, and how, despite the weight of these challenges, there is a pathway to growth and transformation that arises from the crucible of trauma.

Resilience, in this context, is not simply the absence of struggle but the ability to persist, adapt, and rebuild in the face of adversity. It is found in the ways that individuals and

communities—despite experiencing profound loss, displacement, and the trauma of colonial systems—continue to forge connections, create new identities, and build spaces for collective support and empowerment. In this sense, resilience becomes an active process of a collective struggling (Fanon, 1963), navigating trauma (Anzaldúa, 1987), challenging oppressive structures, and fostering the emergence of new, more inclusive possibilities for belonging (Ahmed, 2004).

Integration or Assimilation?

Quebec, as opposed to the rest of Canada, embraced interculturalism as the foundational principle for integrating immigrants. This strategy is pivotal for securing the future of French in Quebec, as it privileges certain groups who may experience a smoother integration due to their Francophone background (Mathieu & Hart, 2024). The sociopolitical subtext here is hardly subtle: this intercultural approach implicitly suggests that those immigrants who do not share similar Francophone values will inevitably face greater challenges in integrating unless they assimilate. This dynamic is closely aligned with Fanon's (1952) critique of colonial hierarchies, where the "colonizer's language becomes a measure of worth," and those who do not conform are viewed as less deserving of dignity and full integration. Quebec's system, by privileging Francophone immigrants, enforces a hierarchy of belonging, effectively marginalizing those who do not conform to its dominant culture.

The participants not only faced challenges while trying to integrate, but they were also dubious about the assimilation processes they were expected to undergo upon arriving in the province. Such is the case of Layla, who felt that Quebec persistently sought to "impose their culture and language and values in a melting pot," which, for her, was an invitation to reflect on the importance of fighting "for keeping our own values and culture and language" (personal

communication, July 11, 2024). Layla's awareness of this acculturation process echoes Fanon (1961) when he remarked that when the values of the dominant group are privileged over those of others, it inevitably leads to the imposition of the 'civilized system' of the dominant group over the 'backward systems' of the oppressed minorities. This imposition occurs due to the distorted image that the dominant group promotes around minorities, which can generate a sense of inferiority among unprivileged groups (Fanon, 1952). As a result, individuals may either comply with such an image of themselves or reject it, as Layla did. The binary between assimilation and resistance, which Fanon discusses, is clearly visible in Layla's struggle. Her resistance to assimilation mirrors Fanon's view of the internalized or externalized rejection of the imposed identity, a dynamic that often positions immigrants in a perpetual struggle for dignity and belonging.

Sameh and Joseph communicated similar experiences. Sameh was very concerned about his children absorbing everything and not even realizing that they are going through a process of acculturation. He felt "torn," he explained, "I feel so torn. Do I push for them to keep remembering who they were, who I still am, to speak our mother tongue, or do I let them remain happy in their ignorance?" (personal communication, July 2, 2024). This emotional struggle speaks to Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of living in the 'borderlands,' a place where individuals are neither here nor there, but in between, forced to constantly navigate two worlds. Sameh's sense of being torn between preserving his children's heritage and allowing them to integrate reflects the challenges of existing in a space where both personal and societal identities are in flux. Anzaldúa (1987) discusses the violence of linguistic oppression—referred to as "linguistic terrorism" (p. 58) which echoes Sameh's concerns that his children may lose touch with their origins in the process of adapting to Quebec's dominant culture. This linguistic shift is not just a

personal adaptation; it is a forced negotiation of identity that strips immigrants of their autonomy and forces them into survival mode rather than true integration.

Joseph speaks to the compounded effects of both racial and linguistic marginalization, saying, “I don’t know. I feel the push, and I don’t push back too much, but you know, I already look different [Black], so no matter how much I try, I stand out. I don’t push to not push my luck” (July 24, 2024). His experience aligns with Fanon’s (1952) analysis of racialized subjects who, in addition to being subjected to the dominant culture, also face the dehumanizing effects of being seen as other. His restraint in pushing back against assimilation reflects a survival tactic in a system where the risks of resistance are often too great. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon describes how immigrants and colonized people experience a profound identity crisis when they encounter a society that views them as "other." This sense of alienation is traumatic because it forces individuals to confront not only the loss of their homeland but also the loss of their identity. For many immigrants and refugees, arriving in a country like Canada, where they may face racism and discrimination, triggers feelings of inferiority and rejection. The trauma of being uprooted and the psychological violence of being marginalized in a new country exacerbate the suffering that many already carry from their past experiences.

In contrast to Layla’s, Sameh’s, and Joseph’s experiences, no such suspicion toward assimilation was evident in Sara’s and Carlos’s stories possibly because they are fairer-skinned than other participants with similar backgrounds, they practice the Christian faith like the majority in Quebec, and they feel less foreign culturally. When inquired about his integration into Quebec, Carlos described experiencing a general societal integration and an optimistic view about the life he is currently leading. His optimism was likely supported by the way he and his family adapted to the host society, even though he expressed experiencing some drawbacks

regarding his relatives' absence and his difficulties finding a job upon arriving in the province (due to his accent being foreign).

The participants described many situations in which they felt that they were fighting assimilation while really trying to integrate in this society:

> It's never integration; it's assimilation. What is dignity? If you accept all they impose as they try to assimilate you, where is your dignity? You are not the same person anymore. You will never get the job that you want. You are barely making income, so you are in survival mode. They don't let you get fully integrated, so why should we work hard to be fully integrated?" (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024)

Layla's statement reflects both Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of mestiza consciousness—the ability to navigate and resist imposed identities—and Fanon's (1961) decolonial resistance, which is a rejection of assimilation to avoid losing one's identity. This is a form of resistance against colonization. Although these newcomers are not facing a classic form of violent colonization in Quebec, they arrive and find themselves in a different colonial system. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon emphasizes that resistance against colonial rule is not just political but also psychological and cultural. Layla's rejection of assimilation is not just a personal complaint but a conscious act of resisting the imposition of a dominant culture that seeks to erase her dignity:

> They get the immigrant families, they get the kids, who will absorb the culture, but for me as a first-generation immigrant? No…We need to fight for keeping our own values and culture and language. So, the label integration depends on how you define it, it's more…. Yeah, it's more assimilation than I would need. I just need to be able to live here,

to get a job and live in dignity and happiness." (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024)

Sameh shared feeling disenfranchised and at the same time, worried about his precarious position as a refugee. "I can't keep a job, I can't feel like I am safe, I can't make my children's lives better. I am doing everything possible, but I will not forget where I come from, and I will not forget how they lied to us before we got here. Nothing is like they said it would be" (Sameh, personal communication, July 2, 2024). Ahmed (2004) asserts that emotions circulate within social structures, influencing both the perception of migrants and their sense of belonging. Sameh's feelings of disenfranchisement and disillusionment illustrate how the so-called 'promise' of migration is embedded in national myths that construct refugees as either grateful beneficiaries or undeserving outsiders. His ongoing struggle to achieve stability suggests that systemic barriers do not merely exist incidentally but are intentionally structured to perpetuate precariousness rather than mitigate it.

Charlie also talked about not being part of the culture as they are not francophone, even when they understood conversations. "Not being able to volunteer because of my lack of French also didn't help my integration in Quebec. I was able to in Ontario when I first arrived, and it made a world of difference" (Charlie, personal communication, July 11, 2024). This limitation of integration based on linguistic barriers supports Anzaldúa's theory of linguistic terrorism and reflects the oppressive force of language policies in Quebec.

Joseph talked about how being a Black man was already an issue, but as a non-French speaking Black man, it was even worse. Hind, a French-speaker who said she came to Quebec city running away from a "*France raciste*" ("racist France") (Hind, personal communication, July 23, 2024), expected a warmer, more welcoming place but was surprised that despite all her

efforts, she was living in a "*bulle dans une autre bulle*" ("bubble inside another bubble") (Hind, personal communication, July 23, 2024). A study conducted by Mooten (2021) confirms the existence of racism, classist approaches and systemic discrimination towards migrant workers in Canada.

Hind's story was mirrored by another participant. "*Je n'ai vraiment pas le choix. J'ai fui une France raciste et sans espoir pour moi mais ça veut dire que je n'ai pas ma famille autour de moi*" (I really have no choice. I ran away from a racist, hopeless France but that means that I am alone without family here) (Muna, personal communication, July 11, 2024). Muna was nervous during the time of the interview with me, as she had just gotten a new job offer, and she was planning to do another trip to the border to renew her visa. "*Chaque fois, c'était pire que l'autre. Je prévois d'y passer la journée, car c'est le temps qu'il faut. Je vois des gens entrer et sortir, et je me demande pourquoi leur procédure est simple et la mienne ne l'est pas. J'ai un passeport français, je suis né là-bas. Mon problème, c'est peut-être mon nom ? Mon hijab ? Je ne sais pas, mais à chaque fois, je me dis que c'est la dernière fois et que je serai renvoyée chez moi pour un destin encore plus incertain*" (Each time it was worse than the last. I plan to be there all day, because that's how long it takes. I see people going in and out, and I wonder why their procedure is simple and mine isn't. I have a French passport, and I was born there. Maybe my problem is my name? My hijab? I don't know, but every time I do, I tell myself that this is the last time and that I'll be sent home to an even more uncertain fate) (July 11, 2024).

The participants who were much younger when they arrived found it easier to integrate, similar to past findings (Beck et al., 2012; Fou et al., 2016; Karpinski et al., 2024). Sara arrived as a child of about 8 to Canada and seems to be one of the more integrated participants. "*J'étais obligé de choisir soit mon père, soit ma mère, j'ai choisi Papa parce que je voulais rester au*

Canada" (I had to choose either my father or my mother, I chose Dad, because I wanted to stay in Canada) (Sara, personal communication, July 1, 2024). She continued, "*mon père nous avait promis de venir au Canada pour une meilleure vie, c'est ça*" (my father promised us that we would come to Canada for a better life, that's it) (Sara, personal communication, July 1, 2024). Despite feeling settled here and supported by her community of friends, Sara talked about how much she misses home, where she was born.

In-Betweenness

One of the more touching stories relating to the theme of decolonial resistance is the interview with Charlie, a Jewish citizen of Israel born in Haifa. A nonbinary person who has been in Canada for about ten years, Charlie first arrived in Ontario for school because, as they said, "I needed to get away from that country" (July 11, 2024). Seeking a space that aligned with their love for "wide, open spaces" and "post-rock music, which Montreal had a lot of," Charlie always imagined that home might exist somewhere far from the place they grew to dislike (July 11, 2024).

Accepting their family's financial support to travel to Canada, Charlie seized the opportunity to leave. Over the past decade, they have witnessed radical political changes in Quebec, COVID-19 restrictions, and, most recently, a genocide being committed "in [their] name" in Gaza (personal communication, July 11, 2024). Their experience encapsulates the psychological and existential struggles that Fanon (1963) describes in *The Wretched of the Earth*—the profound alienation of those who must not only decolonize their own minds but also navigate a world where they do not fully belong. Colonial subjects, Fanon argues, internalize the ideological structures imposed upon them, and even when they physically leave the colonial space, its psychic grip remains. For Charlie, this manifests in the dissonance between their

rejection of Israeli nationalism and their continued entanglement in its structures, including a nationality that follows them across borders.

As a visibly queer person, Charlie faces systemic barriers and discrimination. “My name on my official records is not the name that I use. So that's been hard, especially in terms of job applications” (Charlie, personal communication, July 11, 2024). Their struggle with imposed identity markers mirrors Fanon’s (1967) analysis in *Black Skin, White Masks*, where he examines how colonized individuals must contend with the external gaze that categorizes them according to rigid, colonial frameworks. Charlie’s official documentation, much like Fanon’s discussion of racialized identity, reflects an institutional refusal to recognize self-determined identity, reinforcing a sense of estrangement.

Charlie’s Jewishness also presents another layer of tension. They describe instances where they felt compelled to cherry-pick what aspects of their identity to share or conceal. Working in a reform synagogue, a Canadian experience that they now “hide from [their] resume,” they navigate a world where Jewish identity is often flattened into a monolithic stereotype. “People assume I’m all about *Seinfeld*, bagels, and a New York Jewish accent that are not representative” (Charlie, personal communication, July 11, 2024). This reflects Anzaldúa’s (1987) concept of *nepantla*, which is described as a painful but generative space—a site of becoming, where old categories break down and new forms of selfhood emerge. Charlie exists within this space, neither entirely belonging to their place of origin nor fully assimilated into their adopted home.

Fanon’s (1963) theory of decolonization as a violent rupture—not just in the political sense but in the psychic and epistemic sense—resonates with Charlie’s story. To reject the colonial frameworks imposed upon them, they must navigate multiple fronts of resistance:

against the Zionist structures of their birthplace, against the bureaucratic violence that denies their gender identity, and against the cultural assumptions that reduce their Jewishness to stereotypes. Their struggle is not merely about seeking belonging but about actively dismantling the frameworks that refuse to recognize their existence on their own terms.

Charlie's experience highlights that decolonial resistance is not just an external battle; it is also an intimate, daily negotiation of selfhood in the face of imposed identities. As Anzaldúa (1987) writes, "Living in *nepantla* means being in a constant state of displacement—an uncomfortable, even painful space, but one that allows new consciousness to form" (p. 78). In resisting the colonial narratives imposed upon them, Charlie embodies Fanon's (1963) call to create new ways of being beyond the structures of oppression.

Berry's (1997) acculturation model further helps contextualize Charlie's experience. Berry outlines four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Charlie does not fully assimilate, as they reject dominant cultural norms, nor do they entirely separate, as they have built relationships beyond their community of origin. Instead, their experience reflects marginalization, where neither the home nor host culture provides a sense of belonging. This reinforces Anzaldúa's notion that *nepantla* is not just a transitional phase but an ongoing state of negotiation, where individuals must continuously redefine their relationship with identity and place.

The experience of living in this liminal space, particularly for visible minorities, mirrors the identity negotiation process that Anzaldúa (2002) describes. She argues that individuals in *nepantla* reconstruct their sense of self, confronting and reconciling conflicting cultural identities against societal expectations. For Charlie, reconciling their multiple identities (Jewish, nonbinary, and immigrant) within a society where they feel neither fully included nor excluded

demonstrates this ongoing process. Keating (2009) expands on this, arguing that *nepantlism* is not just about fragmentation but also transformation, offering opportunities for self-awareness and resistance. In this way, Charlie's experience aligns with the broader theme of identity reconstruction, where the disintegration of old selves allows for the emergence of a more complex, resilient identity.

Despite efforts to integrate, many participants still feel like outsiders. Hind expressed frustration: "*Ce n'est pas ce que j'ai pensé. Je ne peux pas retourner, je ne peux pas être moi-même ici non plus*" ("It is not what I thought. I can neither return nor be myself here") (Hind, personal communication, July 23, 2024). She has yet to feel a sense of belonging. In Quebec City, she feels ostracized. She has started to build a community with like-minded individuals, slowly embracing her identity negotiation process. "I still have plans to leave Quebec, but for now, I feel less shunned by society because of my friendships" (Hind, personal communication, July 23, 2024). "I keep wondering about other options, but my wife told me, 'You brought us here, we'll stay and make it work'" (Carlos, personal communication, July 14, 2024). These experiences resonate with Berry's (1997) concept of acculturative stress, where the struggle to balance cultural identities leads to psychological strain.

Layla, who has been in Canada for three years, still feels like an outsider. "You will not be seen as a fully integrated Quebecer or Canadian, even if we do the whole checklist for them" (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024). This statement aligns with Keating's (2009) argument that those in *nepantla* often resist imposed cultural categories, instead carving out new spaces for belonging that defy rigid national or ethnic boundaries.

Perceptions: Navigating Identity and Racialization

Being well-perceived by others in a new host society is an important factor in feeling welcome in the new place. However, for many participants in this study, the experience of being visible minorities is shaped by deep racial and cultural stigmas, reflecting what Fanon (1952) describes as the psychological impact of colonization and the alienating effects of the colonial gaze.

All participants except Lucia, Sara, and Maria reported feeling badly perceived in Quebec, due to being visible minorities. Sameh, Joseph, Carlos, Charlie, Muna, Hind, and Layla are convinced that each of them is not being employed or integrated due to one or more of these factors: darker skin color, accents, religion, or visible Queerness: “I’m not getting the job because I’m foreign,” Carlos declared. “HR people, they just probably read the name, and they think ‘oh, the person with an immigrant name doesn’t probably speak the language, and it's going to be a problem to adapt to our environment or whatever’” (July 14, 2024). This experience resonates with Fanon’s (1952) concept of the black body being seen as the "Other," a position that constantly denies them full personhood and perpetuates their alienation. This also aligns with a recent study by Ahmed & Boulanger (2023) which delves into how accents and foreign-sounding names impact the employment opportunities of immigrants in Quebec, echoing the concerns expressed by Carlos about his name.

The prejudice expressed by some local Quebecers often manifests in seemingly innocuous comments. Carlos received the comment, “You’re smart!” because of his accent. This statement reflects Fanon’s (1952) analysis of the epidermal schema, where a person’s racial appearance becomes the primary determinant of their intelligence or abilities. This external perception distorts how people of color are viewed by society, often relegating them to a position

of inferiority despite their actual capabilities. Similarly, Layla was told, “You speak well!” This left her questioning whether the compliment was truly about her ability, or a stereotype based on her accent or ethnic background. Fanon’s (1952) theory of the white gaze explains how such comments reinforce racial hierarchies by objectifying the individual based on their cultural or racial differences.

While such comments may seem like ordinary compliments to some, they are often laced with underlying racial assumptions that imply immigrants are only “smart” if they meet the expectations of the host society, such as language proficiency or cultural assimilation. These remarks become particularly uncalled for considering that both Carlos and Layla are highly educated newcomers. Anzaldúa’s (1987) theory of mestiza consciousness helps explain how such instances impact individuals who occupy multiple cultural identities. The mestiza identity—born of the conflict between two worlds—captures the psychological turmoil experienced by participants like Carlos and Layla, who must negotiate between their ethnic backgrounds and the expectations of Quebecois society. Anzaldúa (1987) notes that this internal conflict often results in the formation of a hybrid identity, one that may help individuals embrace multiple aspects of their identity but can also be fraught with emotional and psychological strain as they confront rejection from both their own culture and the dominant society. A study by Jung & Lee (2022) emphasizes how racialized immigrants in Canada experience discrimination and employ multiple coping strategies. Identity negotiation is the process through which individuals from marginalized or racialized groups navigate and reconcile the multiple aspects of their identity in a society that pressures them to conform to dominant cultural norms. For immigrants, particularly those of color, their sense of self is shaped not just by personal and cultural factors but also by the reactions and perceptions of others in the host society. Instead of completely

conforming to the host culture or remaining strictly attached to their own, many immigrants engage in the process of hybridization, where they integrate aspects of both their native and host culture. Mestiza consciousness, as described by Anzaldúa (1987), resonates with this strategy.

Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands theory explores how immigrants experience identity struggles, marked by the inability to fully belong to either side. Carlos is caught between maintaining his identity and adapting to societal expectations that favor whiteness and linguistic conformity. Language is a site of struggle, where individuals with non-dominant identities must decide whether to assimilate or resist (Anzaldúa, 1987). Carlos's experience embodies this tension, as his name, rather than being a neutral identifier, becomes a marker of difference that limits his access to opportunities, reinforcing his marginalization within the job market. Carlos's concern is a manifestation of the racialized experience that Fanon (1952) describes, where the colonized individual is marginalized not just because of appearance, but also by the psychological effects of being viewed and classified as 'other.'

Carlos's and Layla's experiences reflect the broader dynamics of racialization and identity in multicultural societies. These participants must constantly navigate the tension between maintaining their cultural heritage and attempting to integrate into a society that often sees them as outsiders. For immigrants in Quebec, as in the context described by Anzaldúa (1987) and Fanon (1952), this tension is not just external but also internal. They must contend with the expectations placed on them while questioning how these demands shape their sense of self. By negotiating their identities, immigrants are able to create meaningful ways of belonging, resist cultural erasure, and navigate their psychological and emotional experiences of racialization (Jung & Lee, 2022).

Carlos's concerns are certainly not unfounded, given that having a foreign-sounding name—particularly those from countries like India, Pakistan, or China—can reduce immigrants' chances of getting an interview by up to 40% in Canada (Oreopoulus, 2011). This statistic reflects the systemic nature of discrimination and mirrors Anzaldúa's (1987) notion of the emotional burden of existing within the borderlands.

There are certain kinds of visibly different identities—Queer, hijab-wearing, kippah-wearing, etc.—that affect people's perception of an immigrant in their new home. Lucia was the only participant who never felt unwelcome. A Gen Z, attractive, tattooed Latina woman who speaks French fluently, Lucia seems to be having an easier time in Quebec. Her biggest issue, however, is that "Now the city is not safe anymore. There are crackheads everywhere. So, as a girl that lives alone in a foreign country that's so far from her family, I'm kind of starting to not like the vibe here" (July 10, 2024). Regarding her French-from-France accent, Lucia said, "The kids find it funny and sometimes they laugh," but for the most part, it is her English accent that's sometimes difficult to understand, though she didn't report negative perceptions regarding it. "As for my English accent, people at work sometimes say they didn't understand this word. I had somebody who has autism and is very oppositional, and he would say things like, 'I don't think that's the word you're looking for,' and I'd be like, 'okay, go and look for the word. Is this the right word to use?' He then would say, 'yes,' and that's that!" (July 10, 2024).

Studies confirm that certain immigrants or refugees are better accepted than others. According to a study by Public Safety Canada, the number of police-reported hate crimes increased by 72% from 2019 to 2021, and then by another 7% in 2022, with Muslim, Jewish, and Black populations being the most targeted groups (Public Safety Canada, 2024). People from racialized communities and those who "seem" to belong to any of these populations are at

greater risk of being assaulted (Souissi, 2021). This underscores the prevailing challenges of racialization in Quebec, a factor that resonates with both Fanon's (1952) and Anzaldúa's (1987) works, where systemic marginalization and the psychological toll of being perceived as "other" are key obstacles that immigrants must confront daily.

Post-Traumatic Trauma

The trauma experienced by immigrants and refugees is not merely an individual phenomenon but is deeply shaped by historical, cultural, and social contexts. Frantz Fanon's theory of colonial alienation (1961) offers a powerful lens through which to understand the multifaceted nature of this trauma. Fanon's work highlights how colonized peoples are forced to confront their loss of identity, a theme that resonates strongly in the immigrant experience. As they encounter a new society that marginalizes them, their sense of self is destabilized, leading to profound psychological impacts. Fanon's description of the colonizer's dehumanizing gaze directly relates to the ways the participants in this study, experience racism, xenophobia, and systemic exclusion, which compound their prior trauma.

There are numerous studies about traumas experienced by immigrants and refugees in their new homes (Mercado et al., 2024; Grafft et al. 2022; Prisco & Silva, 2020; Sangalang et al., 2019; Fortuna, 2008; Herrera, 2015). The negative impact of post-migration trauma is evident in both refugee and immigrant groups. Discrimination, acculturative stress, loss, and family conflict contribute to an increased risk of disorder and distress in complex ways across these groups (Sangalang et al., 2019). This alienation is not simply a personal experience but also a collective one, intertwined with the larger historical and social forces at play. A significant study by Lijtmaer (2022) examined how immigration itself can be considered a social trauma. Lijtmaer maintains that as individuals lose a secure environment, they navigate mourning and nostalgia,

which may lead to depression, self-pity, and guilt, hindering both the mourning and the integration process. To cope, individuals often seek connections to their past while adapting to their new environment.

Loss of Independence. As immigrants and refugees navigate their new lives, they face the burden of reconstructing not just their external circumstances but also their internal identities. This is reflected in the participants' personal stories, where they speak of losing their previous sense of independence and identity. Maria's experience, for example, vividly captures this loss: she was once able to navigate life on her own terms, but her arrival in Quebec stripped her of this autonomy. Maria felt that she lost the stability she once had back home, whether at work or in her family life. Even her relationship with her husband felt different. She had been an independent woman with a job, a car, and a decent social status. She then became a new arrival who couldn't navigate streets and was dependent on her husband for everything, from transportation to translation. She was told to take it as a rebirth, a new life:

"*Tómalo como si fuera un renacer relacional y eso hoy me quedó marcado. Si eso es volver a tomar un nuevo rumbo de vida, es empezar desde cero, es empezar a construir muchas cosas desde cero. Hasta nuestra relación empezó desde cero*" (Take it as if it were a rebirth of all your relationships. Take a new direction in life, starting from scratch. Start to build [a lot of things] from scratch, even your [with partner] relationship starts from scratch) (Maria, personal communication, July 23, 2024).

Despite the 'advice,' Maria struggled. She had been totally independent but found herself unable to have a coffee outside with a friend without her partner being right behind her: "*Siempre él estaba atrás mío como una sombra y no, yo puedo salir a tomar un café con amigas ya puedo ir*" (He was always behind me like a shadow and now, I can now go out for a coffee with friends)

(Maria, personal communication, July 23, 2024). While Maria's narrative reflects resilience in the face of these challenges, it also underscores the difficulty of navigating a system that does not value her previous life experiences.

Loss of Community. The trauma that immigrants and refugees face is deeply intertwined with their social and political realities. For example, a refugee who has escaped a war zone may continue to feel unsafe in their new country if they experience racism, xenophobia, or in some cases, sexual violence. Trauma is compounded by these external social forces, including not having a community that supports newcomers in ways they need, making it difficult for immigrants and refugees to heal fully.

Even without any horrific traumatic events taking place, separating families is an impossible hurdle to go through for many people. Joseph couldn't bring his family with him. He came here as a refugee from the Comoro Islands. It was difficult for him to talk about how he made his way here to escape extreme poverty back home. He wanted to get an education and get some work, and to bring his family here, but he didn't realize how hard the process would be. "I need to be rich, basically, which is impossible. So now, I feel guilty that I made it" (Joseph, personal communication, July 24, 2024). He is working on a new business project though, hoping that it will have success. "I've been working on something really cool. Hopefully it will get picked up. I'm working on my connections. I'm excited," he continued. As for being able to be reunited with his family, "I can't even think about it from the guilt. I don't know what to do anymore" (July 24, 2024).

On top of all the stressors in the new home and the worry about the old home, the fear people get when they lose touch is paralyzing. "We didn't have any relatives here at the time, and our family being thousands of kilometers away from us, we didn't know if they were going to be

okay. It was impossible to even think at the time" (Carlos, personal communication, July 14, 2024). Maria shared similar feelings as well, "*es para ellos también es muy difícil de que sos única, hija, que la única y la que les queda fuera*" (What's very difficult is that you're the only daughter left [after the death of her brother] and you're away) (Maria, personal communication, July 23, 2024). Sameh once lost touch with his family for 24 hours, and it was the scariest time of his life. Layla had also lost touch with her family once. She was beyond terrified.

Loss of Choice. An important distinction made in Lijtmaer's study (2022) is the difference between immigrants who chose to leave willingly versus those who had to seek safety away from home. The latter group carries significantly more trauma and is subject to huge disappointments and nightmares of humiliation and fear (Lijtmaer, 2017; 2022; Varvin 2021). Layla spoke of the incommensurable loss of her daughter due to genocide in Gaza. Similarly, Sara described her alienation from her father for being queer, Charlie for being an intersection of Queer, Jewish, and Israeli, and Joseph for experiencing harsher, racist alienation as a Black immigrant. Regrettably, these participants have faced the systemic oppression of colonialism at different levels. Their situation as oppressed human beings, Fanon (1961) would explain, is produced under the clash of values promoted by the oppressors who seek to impose their values over a group of people who they blatantly labeled as "uncivil" (Fanon, 1961, p.160). Due to their ethnic backgrounds and their gender identities, Layla and Charlie are perpetually subjected to the dehumanization practices of the oppressors.

Loss of Financial Independence. Sameh's biggest burden was to find a home for his family and be able to provide for them:

> We were going from one place to the next, no stability, no jobs, francization lessons were hard, all day and online. I knew we needed to do it to find jobs. It was so difficult to focus

> on that with everything else going on in the background. We are educated, you know? So well educated!! But it meant nothing to them. So, we moved from place to place, until this lovely woman who was helping us said, "take my place," it was finally a door opening." (July 2, 2024)

A huge part of independence is financial independence, which allows people to live in dignity and make choices. This challenge is reflected in the following three quotes: "Because we're immigrants, they do not consider any kind of diploma or experience from outside of Quebec or Canada. We tried anyway, but we couldn't find jobs. It was covid at the time. People were losing their jobs" (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024). "I am trying to do better, but I can't without a job. I feel ridiculous that I can't provide better" (Sameh, personal communication, July 2, 2024). "I'm about to launch my own business soon. I am tired of feeling like I'm wasting time on wasted chances" (Joseph, personal communication, July 24, 2024).

Disconnection. Loss of the ability to connect to their new home is problematic and still being felt by many of the participants. This not only isn't helpful for integration but also triggers feelings of nostalgia towards a person's home country or elsewhere, further worsening the current experience. Talking about their native home, Sara shared, "*ce n'était pas quelque chose que j'ai manqué. Maintenant, ça me manque atrocement*" (It wasn't something that I missed. Now, I miss it terribly) (Sara, personal communication, July 1, 2024). "*Je voulais partir dès la première semaine, et ce n'est pas amélioré*" (I wanted to return the first week I got here. It still hasn't gotten better) (Muna, personal communication, June 22, 2024). Layla shared a similar feeling, "this is not the life I planned for or aimed for or dreamed of, and it's not a place for my children to grow up in." When asked, what would be a best-case scenario for her here, she

responded with, “In Canada, there's none” (July 11, 2024). Sameh echoed similar sentiments, “we’re not staying here. As soon as we can leave, we will” (July 2, 2024).

> I have no other option but staying here for the time being, but when the time comes, I will give it [Canadian citizenship] away. Yeah. For me, it was like, maybe we can be Canadian like Canadians and live, but at some point, I don't know when exactly, I decided I don't want to live in this country. I don't want to have its citizenship. I'm not proud of it. With all the pain and the challenges that that brings. Yeah. Fuck Canada. Fuck. I have no more fucks given.” (Layla, personal communication, July 11, 2024)

Deeply Traumatic Experiences. Additionally, immigrants and refugees endure a slew of traumatic experiences (Guruge et al., 2012). All participants without exception reported trauma experienced in Quebec, including loss of identity, loss of independence and economic exploitation. Deeply traumatic experiences that participants reported involved loss of family members and sexual assault.

Family loss is particularly difficult to write about Sara’s mother, who couldn’t stay in Canada when the father brought his children here from North Africa. Her mother, who was divorced from her father before immigrating here, could only enter Canada as a visitor. Later, Sara lost her father by becoming a Trans woman, as he was not supportive of the gender change. While the Queer community is very supportive of her, she has a sadness at being estranged from family and feeling that she can’t be there for her siblings. Sara has huge feelings of loss as she is no longer in touch with even her siblings, due to pressure from her father. She has not communicated with her mother, who had returned back home after a few years of trying to win a legal child custody battle in Canada.

As described earlier, Layla lost her daughter during the genocide in Gaza. Some of her family members made it out of Gaza, but they are still waiting in Egypt to travel out on the Canadian Gaza Crisis Visa program. They have been waiting without any news for months, with no social support from Egypt or Canada. Layla is feeling guilty for leaving her child back home, to have even left her family enduring the worst years of their lives pursuing an education. She had no idea things could turn so quickly for the worse. Thinking she was going to get a great education and give her children a better life with better chances beyond the open-air prison that was Gaza, she was shocked that within three years, she lost everything: her daughter, her home, and possibly seeing her family again. Her entire story was traumatic, from walking through the U.S.-Canada border to enter Canada when her student visa in the U.S. was revoked, to spending days in a detention centre with her two children and husband, to going through a very hard time until they found a home and to today, where they are still struggling to make a life. Even though she had found a job through a connection, her mental health deteriorated after the murder of her child, and she has been unwell for over a year now.

"When we came here, we had no idea what the process was nor what it would cost us," explained Sameh (July 2, 2024). "We arrived and it hit us in the face. It was like running from a fire, but then you discover the extent of your loss when you survive the first escape, and you regret having survived" (Sameh, personal communication, July 2, 2024). Sameh also has been unable to reunite with his family from Lebanon, and he feels great guilt having left his entire family behind to not really have a better life or better chances here. In the last year, he lost a few family members, and he reported, "I can't even let myself mourn them like I need or should. I am still putting out fires here every day" (July 2, 2024).

Traumas like sexual assault are beyond difficult to disclose, let alone live with every day. Two people disclosed having gone through sexual assault early on after their arrival to Montreal. Sara was a minor who was molested by her neighbour who used to watch them when their father was working or out. "*elle se permettait de me toucher et de m'embrasser*" (She allowed herself to touch me and kiss me) (Sara, personal communication, July 1, 2024). On another occasion, another older child made her take off her pants by offering to show her diamonds, "*Il m'a dit que si j'enlève mon pantalon, il me montrera des diamants*" (Sara, personal communication, July 1, 2024). Sara still occasionally sees the first aggressor, and they both pretend not to know each other. Every time they meet, Sara feels triggered as she replays the experiences again in her head.

Muna, who was in her 20s at the time, was attacked by a man while she was closing up the restaurant where she was working under the table to make ends meet, "*il est venu derrière moi, m'a tenu les mains au-dessus de la tête, m'a serré les mains et a essayé de m'embrasser*" (He came from behind me, held my hand above my head and he pressed on them and then tried to kiss me) (Muna, personal communication, June 22). She couldn't continue the story after that.

Effects of Trauma. Trauma experienced by immigrants and refugees extends beyond physical harm to profound psychological distress, often manifesting as PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks, emotional numbness, and difficulties in forming relationships can persist without proper support, exacerbating social isolation.

This trauma does not exist in isolation; it deeply affects families and communities, including through intergenerational trauma, where psychological distress is passed down through generations (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 1998). Colonial violence leaves lasting psychological wounds, shaping the emotional and mental landscapes of those who have been forcibly displaced

(Fanon, 1961). For refugees and immigrants, the structural violence they experience—whether in the form of racism, xenophobia, or exclusionary policies—creates psychic alienation, wherein individuals feel trapped between a painful past and an unwelcoming present.

Despite Canada's universal healthcare system, many immigrants and refugees face significant barriers to mental health services, due to, for instance, language difficulties, lack of awareness about available resources, and cultural stigma surrounding mental health. These challenges contribute to psychological stress, particularly when immigrants struggle to integrate into a new society while maintaining their cultural identity (Berry, 1997). Systemic inequalities impact access to healthcare, reinforcing barriers to well-being (Keating, 2009).

Sara Ahmed's (2010) affective economies help explain how emotions like fear, anxiety, and grief circulate among immigrants, shaping their relationships with both their new country and their past. The hostility many refugees face—whether in the form of exclusionary laws or social prejudices—turns them into what Ahmed calls affective strangers, individuals whose suffering is often met with suspicion rather than compassion. This emotional displacement compounds psychological distress, leaving many struggling to heal in an environment that does not fully welcome them.

Without adequate mental health interventions, trauma can deepen social exclusion, leaving affected individuals without the necessary support to heal. A trauma-informed, culturally competent approach to mental health care—one that recognizes the structural and historical roots of immigrant trauma—is essential to breaking these cycles and fostering resilience among displaced communities. In the absence of such resources in our society, and in the absence of participatory policies to make these newcomers feel welcome, we risk not only worsening their

previously-acquired traumas and lack of integration, but we also add new traumas linked to alienation, marginalization and further colonization and oppression.

Resilience

Resilience does not have a fixed formula to follow. Anzaldua (1987) sees it as a continuous evolution of identities; Ahmed (2004) sees it as resistance to social norms, a defiance to expectations and building community; and Fanon (1963) sees it in resistance itself, a refusal to submit and die. Each participant showed their own way of resilience while telling their story. Those who didn't speak French before arriving learned it; those who did not have family or friends with them built community; those who went through loss fought back against the oppressive experiences. Even those who said they would leave if given the chance are out there every day resisting what they refuse and fighting for their goals.

In Maria's experience, she strove to gather the necessary optimism to move forward by thinking of her experience as a form of "rebirth." This perspective encouraged her to find stability despite her struggles with loss. As Garmezy (1991) explains, Maria's response exemplifies how individuals can develop resilience in the face of adversity. Furthermore, this mechanism shows that people's psyche can cope with traumatic experiences progressively. Ultimately, Maria's experience with loss and her efforts to rethink her situation in Quebec reveal the potential strength that emerges from the psychological drive that inspires individuals to move forward. It is against this backdrop that their sense of loss of control must be understood. They feel as though their situation has inevitably gotten out of control, leaving them on unstable ground wherever they go. They are "wretched" (Fanon, 1963), because the values brandished by the colonizers deprived them of the possibility of finding a place they can call home, away from

the dehumanizing practices that seek to undermine their values and identities. They nostalgically recall a time in which they felt mostly everything was under control in their places of origin. For example, Sameh spoke of the countless difficulties he went through to find the bare minimum stability for himself and his family. “Francisation,” he explained, was the key element he could hold on to make his way out of unemployment in Quebec (personal communication, July 2, 2024). His account lays bare the process of acculturation immigrants must comply with if they expect to move up on the social ladder.

Maria, Sameh and Layla raised awareness of the difficulties immigrants face in finding stability as they navigated Quebec without any prior knowledge of French. With a looming six-month deadline to learn French fluently enough or leave, they all managed differently. Sameh is still unable to speak French, Maria is fluent, and Layla has a jarring non-Quebecer accent that remains an obstacle to this day. Indubitably, the fact that these accounts are similar illustrates how colonialism subtly operates to ensure immigrants adopt the values of the host society. Language imperialism deeply affects people on a psychological level, calling into question their identities as they are pressed to learn a language that is foreign to them (Fanon, 1961). Yet, each participant, with their varying levels of knowledge, was able to find a job, an odd job, or a volunteer position and build community. They are upset and struggling with identities, belonging, and myriad losses and yet, they persist in their own way.

Successes, like obtaining stable employment or building community, contribute to feelings of belonging. They are also signs of resilience and post-traumatic growth.

We are living a much more stable life. We have jobs. We have had the same jobs for the

> past two years. Our daughter is speaking both official languages and our home language. We have met people that accommodate our way of doing things, even if they were born here. We have stayed friends with them. You always want to find that person who wants to meet with you on a Sunday to talk about anything or come to your house and just have coffee and bread." (Carlos, personal communication, July 14, 2024)

The ability to form a chosen family and build community aligns with Anzaldúa's (1987) view that *nepantla* is not just about alienation but also about reimagining connections that transcend conventional cultural belonging. Resilience is the holistic interconnectedness between one's emotions, thoughts, actions and community (Maté, 2003). Recent studies on social integration further support this claim. Community engagement can help close the integration gap for some immigrants, though racial biases persist (Japaridze & Kaplan, 2023). Belonging is not a passive process but an active construction through shared values and social networks (Liu et al., 2022).

Layla, Charlie, Carlos, Muna, Joseph, Hind and Sara shared similar experiences of community-building, emphasizing that their sense of belonging was rooted not in the place itself but in the relationships they formed. Whether skating, planning short trips, or celebrating birthdays, it was the solidarity and chosen family that fostered a sense of home. It was only through communities that they chose to build and belong to that they reduced the feeling of being othered. Through hybridization, community building, and resilience, identity negotiation becomes not just a coping strategy, but a means of empowerment and survival in a racially complex and sometimes hostile environment.

The immigrant journey, shaped by the weight of historical and present-day traumas, becomes a deeply transformative experience. The psychological theory of colonial alienation

adds a layer of depth to understanding the immigrant's experience as not just a personal struggle, but a collective, historically informed trauma (Fanon, 1961). This sense of alienation is traumatic because it forces individuals to confront not only the loss of their homeland but also the loss of their identity.

The Diaspora Tax: Performing Belonging in the Space Between

Migration is not merely a movement of bodies across borders, but a restructuring of identity, time, and emotion. For many immigrants, refugees and other newcomers in Quebec, the process of integration entails a daily cost—what I conceptualize as the 'diaspora tax': a mental, emotional, physical, and social toll that is paid through the performance of belonging. This concept draws on and extends the ‘minority tax’ (Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011), transnational obligation (Glick Schiller et al., 1995), and racialized emotional labor (Ahmed, 2012), while centering the unique pressures that diasporic individuals face within settler-colonial states. It accounts for the ways diasporic people must continuously “pawn their intellectual possessions” (Fanon, 1968, p. 49) in order to belong and yet never fully do. Drawing on Edward Said’s reflections on exile, this tax emerges in the persistent condition of double displacement—feeling neither fully at home in the host society nor in the homeland. Said (2000) writes that “exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience,” noting that the exilic subject is both hyper visible and dislocated, “always aware of at least two cultures, of two settings, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions” (p. 186). This awareness becomes exhausting. The immigrant is never simply a self, but always a representative tasked with carrying the hopes of those back home while simultaneously defending or proving their worth in the host society.

The diaspora tax manifests not only in this double gaze but in the emotional and affective labor required to survive social scrutiny. As Sara Ahmed (2004) argues, emotions "stick" (p. 120) to certain bodies, particularly those marked as racialized, immigrant, or non-normative. In Quebec, where discourses of secularism and nationalism (e.g., Bill 21, Bill 96) often place immigrants under surveillance, the burden to assimilate without disappearing becomes a central tension. Ahmed's (2010) notion of the *Willful Subject* is instructive here: immigrants who refuse, question, or simply fail to perform ideal integration are rendered problematic—willful in ways that justify exclusion. Even the successful immigrant is not immune from this tax. They often experience a chronic imposter syndrome, a sense that no matter how fluent, accomplished, or grateful they are, belonging is always deferred. 'Making it' becomes an endless horizon. They must not only succeed but do so gracefully, without complaint, while also remitting money, stories, and proof of success to family and community back home.

This representational burden, the sense that one immigrant's actions reflect on an entire community, is also a key feature of the diaspora tax. Participants in my research described feeling like 'ambassadors' for their people. Whether in job interviews, social spaces, or acts of public worship or activism, they understood their behavior as reflecting broader narratives about 'immigrants,' 'Muslims,' 'Africans,' or 'refugees.' Ahmed (2012) describes this in terms of "diversity work," (p. 2) where marginalized individuals must perform inclusion while navigating exclusion. Similarly, Anzaldúa (1987) explores how those living in the borderlands are compelled to translate, mediate, and represent across multiple and often conflicting cultural worlds. Adding other intersections (Crenshaw, 1989), like being gay or non-binary, to simply being an 'immigrant' would add another fascinating angle. Imagine the tax being paid by a Black, Muslim, pansexual non-binary person, for example. The weight of the expectations that

this person would be struggling under would be baffling to most of us. This person is an ‘ambassador’ to their Black, Muslim family in one way, to their Queer community in another, and to their host society in another. They represent each aspect separately and simultaneously, depending on the surroundings and context. It imprisons the person in a constant struggle of who they are expected to be. Where can this person exist as the true version of themselves or as they would like to be? This labor of representation is emotionally taxing and unrelenting. It reflects what Ahmed (2004) identifies as the “affective economy” (p. 124) in which certain bodies carry the emotional weight of others’ perceptions and projections. Thus, the diaspora tax is not a metaphor, but a lived condition—a cost extracted not through policy, but through the everyday negotiation of identity, loyalty, and visibility.

Chapter 7. Creative Presentation of Research

Voices of the voiceless

This mini chapter is a spoken word poetry made up of the words of all participants talking as one person, with many, many thoughts.

Harb, R. (2025, May 4). *Voices of the voiceless* [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/8oL6lK6UCi4

Table 14

Voices of the Voiceless Poem Using In Vivo Codes

"Voices of the voiceless" lyrics from each participant	**English Translation**
Israel gives us authorization to leave from Gaza	
J'ai dû quitter	I had to leave
I came by myself	
J'ai pas eu le concours	I didn't "win" the job
El proceso de migración no es fácil	The immigration process isn't easy
C'est le Québec qui m'a répondu en premier	It's Quebec that responded to me first
I didn't realize that, umm, Canada was actually really, really, huge	
So in my mind, I had this idea that you know, there's wolves and bears and rocky mountains right next to Toronto and Montreal	
Canadian Tourism Propaganda	
ما اعطوا تصريح لجوزي	They didn't give authorization to my husband
They're not nice, they never smile at you	
You feel like you're in a better place	
In a safer place	
No parks	

me siento, me siento, me siento, me siento, me siento bien cansado	I feel, I feel, I feel, I feel, I feel very tired
Literally	
I contribute to society and I get paid nothing	
Entoces me toca cargar, la carga todo sobre mi cuerpo	then it's my turn to carry, the burden all on my body
It’s gratifying	
We’re fighting for everything	
J'étais pas tant aimée	I wasn’t very loved
I don’t know why you want my story, it’s probably not that interesting	
J’avais pas les capacités. J’avais pas un système que je trouvais adapté pour moi	I didn’t have the capacity. I didn’t have a system that I thought was adapted/inclusive for me
I wanted to find a good place	
Sin conocer a nadie nada te hable de hablar	Knowing no one, nothing to talk about
Do you how important that scholarship is?	
أخدتني سنة أحضر لها	It took me a year to prepare for it
The progression is chaotic	
Elle nous a aidé beaucoup	She helped us a lot
Je suis dans une bulle, dans une autre bulle	I am in a bubble, inside another bubble
C'était la première fois que j’avais un sens de communauté. Elle était la prof à tout faire	It was the first time that I had a sense of community. She was a prof that could do anything
اجينا مش عارفين شي عن البلد	We arrived not knowing anything about this country
اجينا خبط لزق	We came smack dab into it
When I see the prices…	
I really don’t understand how it can be so different	

But he’s got some disability issues	
Quand je suis arrivée la première semaine, je voulais déjà partir	When I arrived the first week, I already wanted to leave
But	
Es para ellos también es muy difícil de que sos única, hija, que la única y la que les queda fuera	It is also very difficult for them that you are the only one, daughter, that you are the only one and the one left out.
It was the commute	
And then covid hit	
The kids think it’s funny	
La personne du Québec m’a corrigé tout le temps	The person from Quebec corrected me all the time
They imposed the French language	
C'était dur être seule	It was hard being alone
Then they impose the other thing	
Il m’a serré la main	He tightened his grip on my hands
I really don’t understand	
Il a essayé de m'embrasser	He tried to kiss me
I REALLY wanted to find a good place	
Elle se permettait de me toucher	She allowed herself to touch me
How could it be so different?	
I lost my daughter	
mi hermano falleció	My brother passed away
Survival mode	
T’as réussi	You succeeded
The genocide is still happening	
في شغلة حابب أحكيها	There’s something I would like to say
Fuck you	

Chapter 8. Conclusion

The journey of integration for refugees and immigrants in Quebec, particularly those navigating discriminatory legislation such as Bills 21 and 96, alongside challenges related to credential recognition, reveals a complex interplay of systemic dysfunction and personal resilience. This study offers a nuanced understanding of how these newcomers perceive, navigate, and attempt to overcome the barriers they face, ultimately shaping their educational, professional and social decisions. By juxtaposing these experiences with relevant theories and literature, we gain critical insights into the systemic and personal dynamics at play.

Summary of Responses to Research Questions

The short answer from this research is that in the participants' perception, there is no integration, only attempted assimilation, and it is only the latter that would give them peace of mind. Except that it is not attainable for many of them, as they are either of colour, hijab-wearing, non-fluent in French, or visibly Queer, and so it is impossible for them to 'assimilate enough' until they are under the radar.

Interviews with the participants revealed that they face numerous challenges beyond typical adaptation issues, including discriminatory laws like Bill 21 and Bill 96, and the non-recognition of their credentials, which make them feel inadequate and unwelcome. Immigrants and refugees face a multitude of issues settling in a new place. Being of color, Queer, visibly belonging to religious minorities, and encountering these limitations imposed by a system supposedly designed to welcome newcomers make it very difficult, if not impossible to integrate. Despite these obstacles, they demonstrate resilience by building communities, learning French, and striving to join the job market. The journey to Canada is often marked by pre- and post-migration traumas, which have long-lasting effects on mental health. The inaccessibility to

employment and financial emancipation are also detrimental to mental health as well as integration. The aim of this study was to add theorists like Gloria Anzaldua, Paolo Freire and Frantz Fanon, so that we can begin to understand the deep emotional scars of displacement, and the need to address both individual and systemic trauma, while recognizing the importance of listening to their experiences and giving voice to the voiceless.

Attempting to integrate and thrive in a new home while juggling traumas, job insecurity and marginalization is debilitating.

As previously mentioned, Montreal's population growth since 2022 contributed to increased housing demand. This created a competition for affordable housing particularly among new immigrants and low-income renters. The struggle to secure stable, affordable housing is not just an economic issue but a fundamental barrier to meaningful integration and well-being. This exacerbates another issue that has also worsened in the last couple of years: homelessness.

Implications for Educators and Policymakers

Paulo Freire's (2005) concept of *conscientização* (conscientization)—or critical consciousness—refers to the process of becoming aware of social, political, and economic contradictions and taking action to change oppressive structures. True transformation does not happen through passive adaptation but through critical engagement with the systems that shape our lives.

For refugees and immigrants in Quebec, integration is often framed as an individual challenge—learning the language, securing a job, and fitting in—rather than as a structural issue that requires policy changes. Meaningful integration does not come from simply adjusting to pre-

existing barriers; it comes from questioning and reshaping them (Freire, 2005). Immigrants, educators, and policymakers must recognize and challenge the systemic forces that create exclusion, working together toward a society where full participation is possible.

The recommendations below are not just policy suggestions but steps toward a more *conscientized* approach—one that empowers both newcomers and the host society to transform outdated structures into inclusive and just ones.

1. Address Systemic Barriers: Policymakers should work toward eliminating, or at the very least, reducing systemic barriers that hinder the integration of newcomers, particularly in the areas of credential recognition and employment. Oppression persists when people accept exclusionary structures as unchangeable realities (Freire, 2005). In this case, dismissing foreign qualifications keeps skilled individuals in positions of dependency rather than allowing them to contribute fully to society. Recognizing credentials and creating pathways for skill validation is not an act of charity but a necessary step toward justice and economic equity. While recognizing the validity of the professional bodies' protection of standards in Quebec, transitional programs or partial recognition should be favored. A *conscientized* approach would empower both immigrants and decision-makers to critically examine how exclusionary hiring and credential policies reinforce inequality and to change them.

2. Support Cultural Integration: Quebec's intercultural model emphasizes the preservation of Francophone identity, but conscientization calls for a two-way process in which cultural exchange transforms both the newcomer and the host society. Integration should not be about forcing immigrants to conform while leaving dominant institutions

unchanged. Instead, workplaces, schools, and public institutions must actively work to challenge biases and recognize the value that diverse cultural perspectives bring. This includes shifting the rigid approach of Bill 96 to one that encourages language learning. Language acquisition is an empowering process rather than a test of worthiness.

3. Rethink Language Policies for Effective Integration: The francization program should not only receive more support but also integrate Quebec history and culture in ways that foster connection rather than alienation. Education should be a tool for liberation, not an instrument of oppression (Freire, 2005). When language policies create excessive burdens that prevent rather than facilitate integration, they fail in their purpose. A more flexible and strategic approach—offering job placements for part-time learners and making services remain accessible in multiple languages—would ensure that language learning is an opportunity for growth rather than a barrier to participation. Combined with the aforementioned transitional programs for the recognition of credentials, this would be a powerful tool for integration.

4. Enhance Emotional Support: Moving to a new country comes with deep emotional and psychological challenges, yet mental health support is rarely prioritized in integration policies. Offering spaces of dialogue where people can process their realities, recognize injustices, and find the courage to resist them in addition to free online mental health support for newcomers—would not only address an urgent need but also create a network of mutual learning. When newcomers have access to spaces where they can reflect on their experiences, they are better equipped to name and challenge the systemic barriers they face.

5. Foster Inclusivity: Inclusivity must move beyond symbolic gestures to actual structural change. This means not only rejecting policies like Bill 21, which institutionalize discrimination, but also ensuring that immigration rates align with available resources so that newcomers are genuinely supported rather than thrown into an overburdened system. True inclusion requires critical reflection followed by action (Freire, 2005). This means asking: Who benefits from current policies? Who is excluded? How can these structures be reimagined to create real belonging, rather than conditional acceptance?

Ultimately, *conscientization* is not just for immigrants—it is for everyone. If integration policies remain transactional rather than transformational, exclusion will persist. A society that encourages critical awareness of its own systemic failures is one that can adapt, grow, and become more just for all. By fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges newcomers face, educators and policymakers can move beyond short-term fixes and work toward meaningful, lasting integration.

Summary of Cultural Context

The political movements in Quebec are deeply affected by the history of its populations. No discussion of modern laws aimed at identity issues, including immigrants' integration into Quebec, can be dissociated from that past.

The French population of Quebec, initially involved in colonization, faced 200 years of assimilation efforts after the British conquest. Following the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, they reclaimed legislative powers and resisted assimilation. Today, Quebec's French-speaking population views its identity as vulnerable, contrasting with the secure Anglo-Canadian identity.

They point to past examples of French communities in places like New Brunswick and Louisiana that were assimilated under British or American influence.

The Quiet Revolution aimed for greater autonomy and a secular rejection of traditionalism, yet Quebec remains sensitive to policies they see as threatening their linguistic and cultural rights due to their history of marginalization.

Modern Canadian policies on immigration and multiculturalism are often seen in Quebec as threats to its distinct identity. Quebecers fear that multiculturalism encourages immigrants to maintain their cultures rather than integrating into Quebec's French-speaking (secular yet culturally Catholic) society. This fear leads to legislative responses aimed at protecting Quebec identity, which can further marginalize immigrants further by placing additional barriers to their integration. Quebec views new immigration as a threat to its unique culture within Canada and North America. By enforcing othering laws, such as Bill 21, Bill 96 and non-recognition of foreign credentials, Quebec adds a layer of colonialism.

Limitations

Despite providing a humanizing ethnographic set of data, qualitative studies do not provide the statistical power to generalize that comes with quantitative studies. Another limitation is that qualitative analysis is time consuming, and the coding is oftentimes subject to the researcher’s biases or perceptions. To mitigate the second limitation, I performed two cycles of In Vivo coding using the participants’ words. Furthermore, I asked the participants about why they felt the way they do, to increase accuracy of responses as well as the ethnographic value of their stories and leave less room for guess work during the analysis.

Another limitation was the low number of participants who identified as Queer. Although they were welcome to participate, finding Queer newcomers who have been in Quebec between three and ten years comfortable to open up was very difficult.

I am still quite happy with the experience of one-on-one interviews as they allowed for more vulnerability of participants, which would have probably been quelled in a group setting. I was able to listen actively to each individual, I was able to cry with some of them, and I was able to give them each as much time as they needed. I can never describe how much I love telling stories, but more than that, I love bearing witness to people's stories; I feel honoured when they choose to share. I feel responsible to witness, which is much deeper than listen, and then to share. Nock talked about the responsibility of witnessing, i.e. being changed by the stories we hear, as a sign of being truly affected by them. We have to carry each other's stories, be changed by them, protect them and share them (Nock, 2014).

Future Directions for Research

While there are very few studies that investigate the experiences of Queer, BIPOC Quebekers (Mousseau, 2023), there are no other studies in Quebec that intersect these multiple aspects of identity with the newcomer aspect attempting to integrate in this society with its legislative and societal obstacles. There are many directions that future research can take, including conducting a larger, longer, mixed method study with more Queer participants, as they were a minority in this study. I had not specifically asked participants if they were Queer or self-identified as a particular minority. These details came out as they were telling their stories. I simply made sure they responded to the study's eligibility criteria and after vetting, I left the interview open-ended. It would be interesting to get in touch with the same group again in a few years to check on their integration processes and ask them more identity questions.

Another direction would be to consider COVID-19 limitations on the integration process of many of the participants in this study. Since the study targeted people who have been in Quebec between three and 10 years, it would be informative to see how that affected their processes. Although I included it in the early stages of my creative presentation of research, I ultimately decided not to consider COVID-19 in my analyses, as it neither came up in the interviews nor was it asked about specifically.

It was very important to me to leave the interviews open and unstructured to not influence the participants' stories in any way. After the incredibly touching stories I heard, I would love to return with more questions about identity, gender, sexual orientation, other experiences with racism and adding the COVID-19 context.

Je Me Souviens

In summary, just like newcomers need to understand the context of Quebec and make an effort to integrate, Quebec needs to meet them halfway. There is so much that is still not understood or known by the host society about newcomers in Quebec. Until there is an attempt to understand, dialogue and move forward together as equals, newcomers will constantly struggle with the assimilation in Quebec (and Quebec will struggle with inclusion). As a first-generation Quebecer, Canadian who still struggles with *nepantla* over 20 years later, I often wonder if Quebec fixates on the negative aspects of "*je me souviens,*" then how can newcomers not?

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

(To be sent to community organizations)

Dear _____,

My name is Rawda Harb, a doctoral candidate at the Individualized program at Concordia University. I am contacting you regarding a study I am conducting, entitled: "Where adult learners' dreams thrive or die: detecting signs of hope, resilience and posttraumatic growth". The main objective of my study is to shed light on the educational and/or professional path of refugees, immigrants and recent citizens. I would like to give voice to the people who decide to partake in my study by **confidentially** documenting their stories of living and thriving despite all the obstacles they face in their new communities in Montreal.

I would like to ask you to please share this invitation letter with individuals **who are over 18 and who have been in Canada between 3 and 10 years of your community**. I am interested in reaching individuals **who were directly or indirectly affected by Quebec laws 96, 21 and the non-recognition of previous credentials**.

For this project, first, I would love to meet each individual online on Zoom, and then if they agree, I will invite them to choose a public place of their choice for us to meet. At that public location, they will be invited to take a video of that public space as they tell me a story about their early days in Montreal and some of the educational and professional choices that they made to integrate. **Their faces and names will never be recorded or identified in the research.** From the beginning of the project until the very end, I will never ask for any personal information that could identify them. We can exchange names during the screening interview, but after that, their names will never be used, and only pseudonyms will be used with any publication.

Participating in this study involves an audio-recorded individual interview at a time of each individual's convenience. I will never publish the audio. I will only use it to remember our exchange, then I will delete it.

The individual interview would be approximately 30 minutes. In compensation for each participant's time, each will receive a 30$ gift card from a local grocery store or pharmacy.

This is a great opportunity to contribute your knowledge and experience about being a recent arrival in Montreal. It is hoped that your voice informs future actions and policy development for integration and higher education and/or training programs.

Please feel free to reach out with some questions or if you would like

to participate.

Thank you,

Rawda Harb
rawda.harb@concordia.ca

Appendix B: Lettre d'invitation (Français)

Bonjour,

Je m'appelle Rawda Harb, candidate au doctorat dans le cadre du programme individualisé de l'Université Concordia. Je vous contacte au sujet d'une étude que je mène, intitulée : "*Where adult learners' dreams thrive or die : detecting signs of hope, resilience and posttraumatic growth* " (Où les rêves des apprenants adultes prospèrent ou meurent : détection des signes d'espoir, de résilience et de croissance post-traumatique). L'objectif principal de mon étude est de mettre en lumière les parcours éducatifs et/ou professionnels des réfugié.es, des immigrant.es et des nouveaux.nouvelles citoyen.nes.

J'aimerais donner une voix aux personnes qui décident de participer à mon étude en documentant **de manière confidentielle** leurs histoires de vie et d'épanouissement malgré tous les obstacles auxquels elles sont confrontées dans leurs nouvelles communautés à Montréal.

J'aimerais vous demander de bien vouloir partager cette lettre d'invitation avec des personnes âgées de **plus de 18 ans dans votre communauté et qui vivent au Canada depuis 3 à 10 ans**. Je souhaite atteindre des personnes **qui ont été directement ou indirectement touchées par les lois québécoises 96 et 21 et par la non-reconnaissance des diplômes antérieurs.**

Pour ce projet, j'aimerais d'abord rencontrer chaque personne en ligne sur Zoom, puis, si elle est d'accord, je l'inviterais à choisir un lieu public de son choix pour que nous nous rencontrions. Dans ce lieu public, elles seront invitées à prendre une vidéo de cet espace public pendant qu'elles me racontent l'histoire de leurs débuts à Montréal et certains des choix éducatifs et professionnels qu'elles ont faits pour s'intégrer. **Leurs visages et leurs noms ne seront jamais enregistrés ou identifiés dans le cadre de la recherche**. Du début à la fin du projet, je ne demanderai jamais d'informations personnelles permettant de les identifier. Nous pouvons échanger nos noms lors de l'entretien de sélection, mais par la suite, leurs noms ne seront jamais utilisés, et seuls des pseudonymes seront utilisés pour toute publication.

La participation à cette étude implique un entretien individuel enregistré au moment qui convient à chacun(e). Je ne publierai jamais l'enregistrement. Je ne l'utiliserai que pour me souvenir de notre échange, puis je l'effacerai.
L'entretien individuel durera environ 30 minutes. En contrepartie de son temps, chaque participant.e recevra une carte-cadeau d'une valeur de 30 dollars dans une épicerie ou une pharmacie locale.

Il s'agit d'une excellente occasion de faire part de vos connaissances et de votre expérience en tant que nouvel.le arrivant.e à Montréal. J'espère que votre voix influencera les actions futures et l'élaboration de politiques en matière d'intégration et de programmes d'enseignement supérieur et/ou de formation.

N'hésitez pas à me contacter si vous avez des questions ou si vous souhaitez

participer.

Je vous remercie,

Rawda Harb
rawda.harb@concordia.ca

Appendix C: Information Letter for in person Interviews

Dear _____,

Thanks for reaching out to me and showing interest in participating in this research study. Allow me to share with you some details about the research.

The name of the research study: “Where adult learners’ dreams thrive or die: detecting signs of hope, resilience and posttraumatic growth”.

What is the purpose of this research study:

- To give voice to immigrants, refugees and recent citizens about how they thrive despite the obstacles they face.
- To document the stories of these groups in the hopes that it would help trigger a policy change regarding integration, education and training programs.

What you will be asked to do:

- First, please meet me on Zoom! We can talk for 5-10 minutes, so you can see who I am, and I can explain the project further. It would be a great time for you to let me know if you would like to do the in-person interview and then choose a time and place.
- Second, please sign the consent form before the in-person interview. For this, the consent form will be shared with you and read to you, and any doubts you may have will be clarified.
- Finally, for the 30-minute in-person interview, we will meet at a public location of your choice at a mutually convenient time. During that interview, you will be asked to take pictures, videos, or record sounds which help you talk about your early days in the city.

What you will contribute:

- You will share your knowledge and experience about being a refugee, immigrant, or a recent citizen. Your participation will give voice to a group of people that we almost never hear from, and that will hopefully inform future policy development and/or actions regarding higher education and training programs.

What you will receive:

- As an incentive, you will receive a 30$ gift card from a local grocery store or pharmacy in your neighbourhood for participating in this research project. You will receive the gift cards in-person during our meeting. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and you will still receive this compensation.

When it will start, and how long it will take:

- The individual interviews are scheduled to be conducted in summer 2024. We will choose a time that is mutually convenient.

Please let me know if you would like to know more information about the study or wish to participate.

Thank you for your interest in this research,

Rawda
Email : rawda.harb@concordia.ca

Appendix D: Lettre d'information pour les entretiens en personne

Chère, Cher _____,

Je vous remercie de m'avoir contactée et d'avoir manifesté votre intérêt pour cette étude. Permettez-moi de vous donner quelques détails sur la recherche.

Le nom de l'étude : *"Where adult learners' dreams thrive or die : detecting signs of hope, resilience and posttraumatic growth"* "Où les rêves des apprenants adultes prospèrent ou meurent : détection des signes d'espoir, de résilience et de croissance post-traumatique".

Quel est l'objectif de cette étude ?

- Donner la parole aux personnes immigrantes, réfugiées et nouvelles citoyennes sur la façon dont elles s'épanouissent malgré les obstacles qu'ils rencontrent.
- Documenter les histoires de ces groupes dans l'espoir de contribuer à un changement de politique en matière d'intégration, d'éducation et de programmes de formation.

Ce qu'on vous demandera de faire :

- Tout d'abord, rencontrez-moi sur Zoom ! Nous pourrons parler pendant 5 à 10 minutes, afin que vous puissiez voir qui je suis et que je puisse vous expliquer plus en détail. Ce sera le moment idéal pour me faire savoir si vous souhaitez participer à l'entretien en personne et pour choisir le lieu et la date de l'entretien.
- Deuxièmement, veuillez signer le formulaire de consentement avant l'entretien en personne. Pour ce faire, le formulaire de consentement vous sera communiqué et lu, et tout doute que vous pourriez avoir sera clarifié.
- Enfin, pour l'entretien en personne de 30 minutes, nous nous rencontrerons dans un lieu public de votre choix à un moment qui vous conviendra mutuellement. Au cours de cet entretien, il vous sera demandé de prendre des photos, des vidéos ou d'enregistrer des sons qui vous aideront à parler de vos premiers jours dans la ville.

Ce que vous apporterez :

- Vous partagerez vos connaissances et votre expérience en tant que personne réfugiée, immigrante ou citoyenne récente. Votre participation donnera la parole à un groupe de personnes que nous n'entendons presque jamais et qui, nous l'espérons, contribuera à l'élaboration de politiques et/ou d'actions futures concernant les programmes d'enseignement supérieur et de formation.

Ce que vous recevrez :

- Pour votre participation à ce projet de recherche, vous recevrez une carte-cadeau de 30 $ d'une épicerie ou d'une pharmacie de votre quartier. Les cartes-cadeaux vous seront remises en personne lors de notre rencontre. Vous pouvez vous retirer de l'étude à tout moment et vous continuerez à recevoir cette compensation.

Quand l'étude commencera-t-elle et combien de temps durera-t-elle ?

- Les entretiens individuels devraient avoir lieu durant l'été 2024. Nous choisirons une date qui conviendra aux deux parties.

N'hésitez pas à me faire savoir si vous souhaitez obtenir plus d'informations sur l'étude ou si vous souhaitez y participer.

Je vous remercie de l'intérêt que vous portez à cette recherche,

Rawda Harb
Courriel : rawda.harb@concordia.ca

Appendix E: Information and consent form

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Where adult learners' dreams thrive or die: detecting signs of hope, resilience and posttraumatic growth
Researcher: Rawda Harb
Researcher's Contact Information: rawda.harb@concordia.ca
Faculty Supervisors: Dr. Sandra Chang-Kredl
Faculty Supervisors' Contact Information: sandra.chang-kredl@concordia.ca;
Source of funding for the study: N/A

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

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is 1) to give voice to newcomers to Quebec; 2) to document their stories as they find ways to thrive in their new life in Canada; 3) to share the stories in the hopes of encouraging others and triggering a policy change with respect to integration or education or formal training.

B. PROCEDURES

If you participate, you will be asked to complete a 30–45-minute audio-recorded individual interview with the researcher. The interview will be conducted at a time and public place that is convenient for you.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

You might face certain risks by participating in this research. These risks may include a) that you experience some emotional distress when retelling or remembering particular events. In moments like this, you may experience strong emotions (e.g., sadness, fear, etc.). Also, b) you may experience risks to your

relationships with others—colleagues or family members—who disapprove of your participation in this study.

The following are steps that will be followed to further minimize the risks mentioned above:
If you become emotionally disturbed during an interview, the researcher will:
• Offer grounding techniques to keep you emotionally safe
• Offer you to take a break
• Ask you if you want to reschedule an interview
• Remind you your right to withdraw from the research process

If you experience risks to your relationship with others, the researcher will:
• Advise you to withdraw from the study.
• Remind you that your participation is entirely confidential.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

I will gather the following information as part of this research: shared photos, videos, and an audio recorded individual interview.

I will not allow anyone else to access the information. My supervisors might have access to the coded data that will use a pseudonym with your story and never any identifying information. I will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The information gathered will be anonymized. That means that only I will know your name and link it to your story, but it will not be possible for anyone else to make a link between you and the information you provide. A pseudonym will be used in all communications, interviews, coding and publications. I will protect the audio recording and transcriptions by storing it locally (e.g., in the researcher's external hard drive) and keeping it password protected. Only the researcher, Rawda Harb, will have access to the raw data.

I intend to publish the results of the research (i.e: pictures or videos you take of the public space–without including your voice, face or any identifying information–and analysis of your story). It will not be possible to identify you in the published results. The confidentiality of the data will be protected, and just your pseudonym will be included in any publications or presentations about the research study.

I will destroy the information five years after the end of the study. All information will be kept in a locked hard drive, and/or a locked filing cabinet for five years after

the study is finished. After that time, all information will be destroyed. Electronic files will be deleted, and the external hard drive will be reset. Paper files will be shredded.

F. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. Your participation in the individual interviews is important to the project. These interviews allow you to share your personal experience. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher within 30 days after your interview. After 30 days, the results will be condensed, analyzed and reported, and the information you provided will be shared with the research supervisor and committee members.

As a compensatory indemnity for participating in this research, you will receive a $30 gift card from a local grocery or pharmacy. You will receive the gift card in person at the interview. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and you will still receive this compensation.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping, or asking me not to use your information.

G. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

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

NAME_____

_____

EMAIL _____

DATE _____

Would you like to be provided with a summary of the results after analysis is completed?

Yes No

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

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the

Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix F: Renseignements et formulaire de consentement

Renseignements et formulaire de consentement

Titre de l'étude : Là où les rêves des apprenants adultes prospèrent ou meurent : détection des signes d'espoir, de résilience et de croissance post-traumatique
Chercheuse : Rawda Harb
Coordonnées de la chercheuse : rawda.harb@concordia.ca
Superviseurs de la faculté : Sandra Chang-Kredl
Coordonnées des superviseurs de la faculté : sandra.chang-kredl@concordia.ca
Source de financement de l'étude : N/A

Vous êtes invité.e à participer à l'étude de recherche mentionnée ci-dessus. Ce formulaire fournit des informations sur ce qu'impliquerait votre participation. Veuillez le lire attentivement avant de décider si vous voulez participer ou non. Si vous ne comprenez pas quelque chose ou si vous souhaitez plus d'informations, n'hésitez pas à vous adresser au chercheur.

A. OBJECTIF
L'objectif de la recherche est 1) de donner la parole aux personnes nouvelles arrivantes au Québec ; 2) de documenter leurs histoires alors qu'elles trouvent des moyens de s'épanouir dans leur nouvelle vie au Canada ; 3) de partager ces histoires dans l'espoir d'encourager d'autres personnes et de déclencher un changement de politique en matière d'intégration, d'éducation ou de formation formelle.

B. PROCÉDURES
Si vous participez, il vous sera demandé de réaliser un entretien individuel de 30 – 45 minutes avec le chercheur. L'entretien se déroulera à un moment et dans un lieu public qui vous conviendront.

C. RISQUES ET AVANTAGES
Vous pourriez courir certains risques en participant à cette recherche. Ces risques peuvent inclure a) que vous ressentiez une certaine détresse émotionnelle en racontant ou en vous souvenant d'événements particuliers. Dans de tels moments, vous pouvez ressentir des émotions fortes (par exemple, de la tristesse, de la peur, etc.). En outre, b) vous pouvez courir des risques dans vos relations avec d'autres personnes - collègues ou membres de la famille - qui désapprouvent votre participation à cette étude.

Les étapes suivantes seront suivies pour minimiser les risques mentionnés ci-dessus :

Si vous êtes émotionnellement perturbé(e) au cours d'un entretien, la chercheuse. :
- vous proposera des techniques d'ancrage pour vous protéger émotionnellement
- vous proposera de faire une pause
- vous demandera si vous souhaitez reporter l'entretien à une date ultérieure
- vous rappeler que vous avez le droit de vous retirer du processus de recherche.

Si vous rencontrez des risques dans vos relations avec les autres, la chercheuse. :
- vous conseillera de vous retirer de l'étude
- Vous rappeler que votre participation est entièrement confidentielle.

D. CONFIDENTIALITÉ

Dans le cadre de cette recherche, je recueillerai les informations suivantes : des photos et des vidéos partagées, ainsi qu'un entretien individuel enregistré.

Je ne permettrai à personne d'autre d'accéder à ces informations. Mes superviseurs pourraient avoir accès aux données codées qui utiliseront un pseudonyme avec votre histoire et jamais d'informations d'identification. Je n'utiliserai les informations qu'aux fins de la recherche décrite dans ce formulaire.

Les informations recueillies seront anonymisées. Cela signifie que je serai le seul à connaître votre nom et à le relier à votre histoire, mais que personne d'autre ne pourra faire le lien entre vous et les informations que vous fournissez. Un pseudonyme sera utilisé dans toutes les communications, entretiens, codages et publications.

Je protégerai l'enregistrement audio et les transcriptions en les stockant localement (par exemple, sur le disque dur externe du chercheur) et en les protégeant par un mot de passe. Seule la chercheuse, Rawda Harb, aura accès aux données brutes.

J'ai l'intention de publier les résultats de la recherche (c'est-à-dire les photos ou les vidéos que vous prenez dans l'espace public - sans inclure votre voix, votre visage ou toute autre information permettant de vous identifier - et l'analyse de votre histoire). Il ne sera pas possible de vous identifier dans les résultats publiés. La confidentialité des données sera protégée et seul votre pseudonyme figurera dans toute publication ou présentation de l'étude.

Je détruirai les informations cinq ans après la fin de l'étude. Toutes les informations seront conservées sur un disque dur verrouillé et/ou dans un classeur verrouillé pendant cinq ans après la fin de l'étude. Après cette période, toutes les informations seront détruites. Les fichiers électroniques seront supprimés et le disque dur externe

sera réinitialisé. Les dossiers papier seront déchiquetés.

F. CONDITIONS DE PARTICIPATION

Vous n'êtes pas obligé de participer à cette recherche. La décision vous appartient. Si vous participez, vous pouvez arrêter à tout moment. Votre participation aux entretiens individuels est importante pour le projet. Ces entretiens vous permettent de partager votre expérience personnelle. Si vous décidez de ne pas utiliser vos informations, vous devez en informer le chercheur dans les 30 jours suivant l'entretien. Après 30 jours, les résultats seront condensés, analysés et rapportés, et les informations que vous avez fournies seront communiquées au directeur de recherche et aux membres du comité.

En guise d'indemnité compensatoire pour votre participation à cette recherche, vous recevrez une carte cadeau d'une épicerie ou d'une pharmacie locale d'une valeur de 30 $. La carte-cadeau vous sera remise en personne lors de l'entretien. Vous pouvez vous retirer de l'étude à tout moment et vous continuerez à recevoir cette compensation.

Le fait de ne pas participer, d'arrêter ou de me demander de ne pas utiliser vos informations n'entraîne aucune conséquence négative.

G. DÉCLARATION DE PERSONNE PARTICIPANTE

J'ai lu et compris ce formulaire. J'ai eu l'occasion de poser des questions et toutes les questions ont reçu une réponse. J'accepte de participer à cette recherche dans les conditions décrites.

NOM_____
COURRIEL _____
DATE _____

Souhaitez-vous recevoir un résumé des résultats une fois l'analyse terminée ?
Oui Non

Si vous avez des questions sur les aspects scientifiques ou érudits de cette recherche, veuillez contacter la chercheuse. Leurs coordonnées se trouvent à la page 1. Vous pouvez également contacter leur directrice pédagogique.
Si vous avez des préoccupations concernant les questions éthiques liées à cette recherche, veuillez contacter le gestionnaire, Éthique de la recherche, Université Concordia, au 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 ou au oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix G: Recording instructions and Individual interview instructions

Dear _____,

These are the instructions on how to take photos, record videos and sound for this research project. There are two core elements in recording image or sound for this project: safety and quality. However, safety is always our number one priority. To procure your safety, I recommend you follow these steps while you use your phone, or recording devices, to take photos, record videos or sound.

- Record in a public and empty—or not too crowded—place.
- Avoid recording when it's dark outside.
- Put your phone close to your body, like in the pocket of your shirt or pants.
- Record in takes, in short periods of time.
- Take other precautions you normally do when using your phones.
- Underage students must not appear in photos or videos.
- Identifiable images of yourself must not appear in the photos or videos.
- Public names (e.g., school names) must not appear in photos, videos, or sounds.

To procure the quality of the recordings, I suggest you do the following.

- Adjust the frame and resolution of your phone camera for high quality. You can find tutorials on how to do this on YouTube. You can contact me if you need any help adjusting these features in your phone.
- Do not use the digital zoom (or zoom as little as possible). When it comes to smartphone cameras, image quality gets worse the more you zoom in. Try moving your phone closer to the object or situation you want to capture instead.
- Do not use the flash. The flash on some phones tends to decrease the quality of the photos they take. If you need more light, try to move closer to windows, or check if the photo or video is clear in the current conditions. If needed, light can be added later to the video or photo. It is the technical quality of the image and sound that we need to take care of primarily.
- Do not use photo filters. For the purposes of this research project, you are required to not use the filters in your camera app. Keep things as natural as possible, so the photos are an accurate representation of what you want to show.
- Move your phone microphone as close as possible to the source of sound as you can. The sounds of birds, motorbikes, people yelling, and other "noise" are welcomed in the recordings in this project. Additional sounds enrich the description of the places where the recording happened. If you are concerned about not clearly

recording something you said, you can take some notes of why you wanted to record this sound, write down what was said, or anything else that helps us explain this sound if needed.

These are the instructions for the individual interview. In preparation for this interview, please be ready with a charged phone or device to record video, pictures or sound. If not, you will be offered a device by the researcher during the interview. As you meet and walk with the researcher, please take photos or record video and/or sound of the place that reminds you of your early days in Montreal. The purpose of these photos or sound recordings is to help you to remember, talk and elaborate on your experiences as a new arrival. The researcher will refer to these files to help further the conversation sparked during the interview. Please remember that you must always use your chosen pseudonym, and never your name and to not take pictures, video or audio of yourself.

Please, choose ONE of the following dates for your interview.
1. (To be provided later)
2. (To be provided later)
3. (To be provided later)

Please, access the following link to join the interview.
(Link)

Warmly,
Rawda Harb
Researcher

Appendix H: Instructions d'enregistrement et instructions pour l'entretien individuel

Chère, Cher_____,

Voici les instructions pour prendre des photos, enregistrer des vidéos et du son dans le cadre de ce projet de recherche.

L'enregistrement d'images ou de sons dans le cadre de ce projet repose sur deux éléments essentiels : la sécurité et la qualité. Cependant, la sécurité est toujours notre priorité numéro un. Pour assurer votre sécurité, je vous recommande de suivre les étapes suivantes lorsque vous utilisez votre téléphone ou vos appareils d'enregistrement pour prendre des photos, enregistrer des vidéos ou du son.

- Enregistrez dans un lieu public et vide ou pas trop fréquenté.
- Évitez d'enregistrer lorsqu'il fait sombre à l'extérieur.
- Placez votre téléphone près de votre corps, par exemple dans la poche de votre chemise ou de votre pantalon.
- Enregistrez par prises, sur de courtes périodes.
- Prenez les autres précautions que vous prenez habituellement lorsque vous utilisez votre téléphone.
- Les élèves mineurs ne doivent pas apparaître sur les photos ou les vidéos.
- Les images identifiables de vous-même ne doivent pas apparaître sur les photos ou les vidéos.
- Les noms publics (par exemple, le nom de l'école) ne doivent pas apparaître sur les photos, les vidéos ou les vidéos de ce type.

Pour améliorer la qualité des enregistrements, je vous suggère de procéder comme suit.

- Réglez l'image et la résolution de l'appareil photo de votre téléphone pour obtenir une qualité élevée. Vous trouverez des tutoriels sur YouTube. Vous pouvez me contacter si vous avez besoin d'aide pour régler ces fonctions sur votre téléphone.
- N'utilisez pas le zoom numérique (ou zoomez le moins possible). Sur les appareils photo des smartphones, la qualité de l'image se dégrade au fur et à mesure que l'on zoome. Essayez plutôt de rapprocher votre téléphone de l'objet ou de la situation que vous souhaitez photographier.
- N'utilisez pas le flash. Le flash de certains téléphones a tendance à diminuer la qualité des photos qu'ils prennent. Si vous avez besoin de plus de lumière,

essayez de vous rapprocher des fenêtres ou vérifiez que la photo ou la vidéo est claire dans les conditions actuelles. Si nécessaire, la lumière peut être ajoutée ultérieurement à la vidéo ou à la photo. C'est à la qualité technique de l'image et du son qu'il faut avant tout veiller.

- N'utilisez pas de filtres photo. Dans le cadre de ce projet de recherche, vous êtes tenu de ne pas utiliser les filtres de l'application de votre appareil photo. Gardez les choses aussi naturelles que possible, afin que les photos soient une représentation exacte de ce que vous voulez montrer.
- Placez le microphone de votre téléphone aussi près que possible de la source du son. Les bruits d'oiseaux, de motos, de personnes qui crient et autres "bruits" sont les bienvenus dans les enregistrements de ce projet. Les sons supplémentaires enrichissent la description des lieux où l'enregistrement a eu lieu. Si vous craignez de ne pas enregistrer clairement quelque chose que vous avez dit, vous pouvez prendre des notes sur la raison pour laquelle vous vouliez enregistrer ce son, écrire ce qui a été dit, ou toute autre chose qui nous aide à expliquer ce son si nécessaire.

<u>Voici les instructions pour l'entretien individuel.</u>
Pour vous préparer à cet entretien, veuillez-vous munir d'un téléphone ou d'un appareil chargé pour enregistrer des vidéos, des photos ou du son. Si ce n'est pas le cas, la chercheuse vous proposera un appareil au cours de l'entretien.

Lorsque vous rencontrerez la chercheuse et marcherez avec elle, prenez des photos ou enregistrez des vidéos et/ou des sons de l'endroit qui vous rappelle vos premiers jours à Montréal. L'objectif de ces photos ou enregistrements sonores est de vous aider à vous souvenir, à parler et à élaborer sur vos expériences en tant que nouvel arrivant. La chercheuse se référera à ces fichiers pour approfondir la conversation entamée pendant l'entretien. N'oubliez pas que vous devez toujours utiliser le pseudonyme que vous avez choisi, et jamais votre nom, et que vous ne devez pas prendre de photos, de vidéos ou d'enregistrements sonores de vous-même.

Veuillez choisir UNE des dates suivantes pour votre entretien.

- (à préciser ultérieurement)
- (à communiquer ultérieurement)
- (à communiquer ultérieurement)

Veuillez accéder au lien suivant pour participer à l'entretien.
(Lien)

Chaleureusement,
Rawda Harb

Chercheuse

Appendix I: Interview themes

This guideline outlines the themes or topics to be discussed with the participants during the individual semi-structured interview.

1) Participant's information

Name, age, gender identity. New arrival experience (where, when, how long, etc.). Previous education or profession (city, program)? Did you keep your educational or professional plans upon arrival to Quebec? Why or why not? Were you affected by the language or charter of value laws? What decisions did you take as a result?

2) Location and or recording information

Does this location have a special meaning to you? Would you like to share what that is? Do you have a story you would like to share? Please tell me the story of this photo/video/sound file that you are recording or have recorded.
Could you describe it?
Would you like to watch it and tell me how you feel after seeing it for the first time? Is there anything else that you want to add about this recording?
What would you title this photo/video/sound?

Appendix J: Thèmes de l'entretien

Ce guide présente les thèmes ou sujets à aborder avec les participant.es au cours de l'entretien individuel semi-structuré.

1) Informations sur le participant.e

Nom, âge, identité sexuelle. Expérience de nouvel arrivant (où, quand, combien de temps, etc.). Formation ou profession antérieure (ville, programme) ? Avez-vous maintenu vos projets éducatifs ou professionnels à votre arrivée au Québec ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ? Avez-vous été affecté par la langue ou la charte des valeurs ? Quelles décisions avez-vous prises en conséquence ?

2) Informations sur le lieu et/ou l'enregistrement

Ce lieu a-t-il une signification particulière pour vous ? Souhaitez-vous nous en faire part ? Avez vous une histoire à raconter ? Veuillez me raconter l'histoire de cette photo/vidéo/fichier audio que vous enregistrez ou avez enregistré.
Pourriez-vous la décrire ?
Voulez-vous la regarder et me dire ce que vous ressentez après l'avoir vue pour la première fois ? Souhaitez-vous ajouter quelque chose d'autre à propos de cet enregistrement ? Quel titre donneriez-vous à cette photo/vidéo/son ?

Appendix K: Screening Participants

This guideline outlines the steps for selecting people to participate in this research project.

I will meet potential participants via Zoom, or I will contact them via phone call if they choose. I will begin by introducing myself and sharing my experiences with immigration, education and employment. I will then share with them about the research study: the purpose, chronogram, and expected outcomes. Then, I will ask them to tell me about them.

Selection Criteria:

- Being over 18 years old
- Having been in Canada between 3 and 10 years
- Directly or indirectly affected by Quebec's Bill 96 or Bill 21, and/or the non-recognition of previous credentials.

Selection Questions:

- Tell me about your newcomer experience in Quebec.
- Tell me about your educational and/or professional and/or life choices.
- Were you affected by Quebec's language or charter of values laws like Bill 21 or Bill 96?
- Were your academic or professional credentials recognized in Quebec?
- Tell me why you want to be part of this project.

Appendix L: Sélection des personnes participantes

Ces lignes directrices décrivent les étapes de la sélection des personnes qui participeront à ce projet de recherche.
Je rencontrerai les personnes participantes potentielles via Zoom, ou je les contacterai par téléphone si elles le souhaitent. Je commencerai par me présenter et leur parlerai de mon expérience comme ancienne immigrante, enseignante et universitaire. Je leur parlerai ensuite de l'étude de recherche : l'objectif, le chronogramme et les résultats attendus. Je leur demanderai ensuite de me parler d'eux.

Critères de sélection :

- Être âgé(e) de 18 ans et plus
- Être au Canada depuis 3 à 10 ans
- Être touché(e) directement ou indirectement par la loi 96 ou la loi 21 du Québec, et/ou par la non-reconnaissance des titres de compétences antérieurs.

Questions de sélection :

- Parlez-moi de votre expérience de nouvel.le arrivant.e au Québec.
- Parlez-moi des choix que vous avez faits en matière d'éducation ou de profession ou de vie.
- Avez-vous été affecté par les lois québécoises sur la langue ou la charte de valeurs, comme la loi 21 ou la loi 96 ?
- Vos qualifications académiques ou professionnelles ont-elles été reconnues au Québec ?
- Dites-moi pourquoi vous voulez participer à ce projet.

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Appendix M: Resources List

- Aire Ouverte (mental health services for youth between 12 and 25 years of age) Telephone or text : 438 832-2270 Email : aireouverte.ccsmtl@ssss.gouv.qc.ca
- Info-santé/Info-social: call 811
- CLSC (I will provide info for a local CLSC in their neighbourhood of choice)
- Maple: free for international students on IHI plan (getmaple.ca/medavie)
- Tiahealth: free for students with QC, ON, AB, & BC health card (tiahealth.com)
- Aminy (psychiatry): GP referral required, free (aminy.com)

Appendix N: Liste de ressources

- Aire Ouverte (service pour la santé mentale des jeunes âgés entre 12 et 25 ans).
  Téléphone ou texto : 438 832-2270
  Courriel: aireouverte.ccsmtl@ssss.gouv.qc.ca
- Info-santé/Info-social: 811
- CLSC (dépendamment du quartier choisi)
- Maple: service gratuity pour les étudiant.e.s intenationaux/internationales (getmaple.ca/medavie)
- Tiahealth: gratuits pour des étudiant.e.s au QC, ON, AB, & BC (tiahealth.com)
- Aminy (accès au psychiatre): requête par médecin de famille requise, service gratuit (aminy.com)

Appendix O: Coding Sample

The following is a coding sample:

phrase number	participant code	phrases from transcriptions	in vivo first cycle	in vivo second cycle
1	A1	je me rappelle de certaines parties mais au fur et au mesure ca va faire du sens	certaines parties, faire du sens	faire du sens
2	A1	j'ai choisi l'école la Dauversière parce que c'est mon école d'accueil	école d'accueil	école d'accueil
3	A1	mes connaissances en français n'étaient pas assez fortes pour que genre dans une école normale.	mes connaissances n'étaient pas assez fortes	connaissances
4	A1	je suis né en Algérie, ca me manque atrocement	Algérie, atrocement	Algérie, atrocement
5	A1	là a 7 ans, j'allais presque pas avoir mon 8eme anniversaire là-bas, on a déménagé	déménagé	déménagé
6	A1	c'est la première fois que c'était pendant l'hiver donc j'ai j'avais jamais vu la neige	j'avais jamais vu la neige	jamais vu
7	A1	blanc partout	blanc partout	blanc partout
8	A1	Il faisait froid	froid	froid
9	A1	Juste à côté de l'école et pendant 1 ans, j'ai vécu ma vie	j'ai vécu ma vie	ma vie
10	A1	J'étais pas capable de parler	pas capable de parler	pas capable de parler
11	A1	j'ai vraiment fait beaucoup d'effort	fait beaucoup d'effort	beaucoup d'effort
12	A1	J'ai pas d'amis	J'ai pas d'amis	J'ai pas d'amis
13	A1	j'ai toujours été un kid un peu privé	un kid un peu privé	un kid un peu privé
14	A1	avec l'aide de ma professeur de français Madame Daphné	ma professeur de français	ma professeur de français
15	A1	j'ai eu une très belle expérience	très belle expérience	belle expérience

16	A1	ne venait pas d’ici	ne venait pas d’ici	ne venait pas d’ici
17	A1	pour fortifier leur français mais c'était difficile	mais c'était difficile	c'était difficile
18	A1	Madame Daphné nous a beaucoup aidé et nous a soutenus.	nous a beaucoup aidé et nous a soutenus.	nous a soutenus.
19	A1	C'était la première fois que j'avais un sens de communauté vraiment partout	j'avais un sens de communauté	communauté

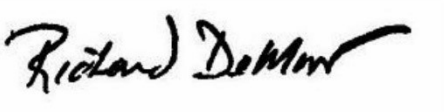
Appendix P: Ethics Certificate

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Rawda Harb
Department:	Individualized Program
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	Where adult learners' dreams thrive or die: detecting signs of hope, resilience and posttraumatic growth
Certification Number:	30020148

Valid From: June 21, 2024 To: June 20, 2025

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.



Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee