

I COULD STAY HERE FOREVER... IF I FIND A JOB: EXPERIENCES OF
INTEGRATION AND MARGINALIZATION OF YOUTH FROM REFUGEE
BACKGROUNDS IN HALIFAX

by

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Abstract

This study examines the experiences of integration and marginalization of six youth from refugee backgrounds living in Halifax. The research identifies formal and informal supports they access as well as barriers and challenges they face, and analyzes to which extent Halifax is a welcoming and/or unresponsive community in relation to the needs of these youth. The conceptual framework reframes and problematizes the concepts of integration, marginalization, and welcoming community, and introduces the notion of unresponsive community. Within a qualitative approach with individual interviews, the experiences of the youth are explored in six integration areas: education, official language, employment, health, housing, and social connections. Overall, the youth experienced different degrees of integration and marginalization in each area outlined. Halifax oscillated between a welcoming and unresponsive community depending on the area of integration and the age, country of origin, kind of sponsorship, and educational background of the youth.

Key words: youth; refugee; integration; Halifax; welcoming community; marginalization.

List of Abbreviations Used

IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
CCR	Canadian Council for Refugees
GAR	Government Assisted Refugees
PSR	Privately Sponsored Refugees
BVOR	Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugees
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmark
RAP	Resettlement Assistance Program

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Chapter 1: Introduction

How is it possible that a community makes the effort to provide newcomers with a welcoming environment, but at the same time creates barriers that restrict opportunities for them? How can a youth from a refugee background experience integration and marginalization at the same time in the same community? Why do some youth find a community more welcoming for them than for others? What do these experiences say in relation to the capacity of the host community in retaining newcomers?

These are some of the questions that emerged in this study during the analysis of the experiences of six youth from refugee backgrounds who were living in Halifax. The initial proposal sought to identify formal and informal supports for integration, and barriers and challenges that were increasing the risk of marginalization of these youth. Later, this strict delineation between integration and marginalization revealed insufficiencies to understand the experiences of the youth.

As a result, this thesis proposes that the integration of the youth ought to be considered by examining the interconnections between and among the concepts of *integration* and *marginalization*, and *welcoming community* and *unresponsive community* – this last one was formulated by this study as part of its conceptual framework. Only by reframing the experiences of the youth in the relational processes that involve both informal and formal supports and barriers and challenges from both the host community and the youths' cultural communities, can it be seen that Halifax is both a welcoming and an unresponsive community.

The first part of this introductory chapter presents the rationale for this thesis. This chapter contextualizes the research and situates the researcher in relation to this

study and its participants. The chapter also provides a brief description of the methodology followed by the presentation of the structure of the thesis. Finally, a list of definitions provides the reader with an understanding of important and frequent terms used in this thesis.

Why Integration of Youth from Refugee Backgrounds in Halifax

A growing number of immigrants and refugees have been settling in second and third-tier cities in Canada, including Halifax (Dobrowolsky, Bryan, & Barber, 2015; Frideres, 2006; Guo & Guo, 2016). Federal and provincial governments have been making efforts to attract and retain newcomers in these smaller urban centers and promote a regionalization of immigration; traditionally concentrated in Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto (Dobrowolsky et al., 2015; Dobrowolsky & Ramos, 2014; Esses, Hamilton, Bennett-abuayyash, & Burstein, 2010). However, the retention of newcomers is a complex issue and Nova Scotia is not the best example of it: retention rates in this province are among the worst in Canada (Dobrowolsky & Ramos, 2014). Therefore, more research is necessary to better understand the integration process of newcomers in the specific context of Halifax and to examine if this city is indeed a welcoming community for immigrants; especially for those from refugee backgrounds.

Considering the research gap on integration of youth from refugee backgrounds in smaller urban centers in Canada and the context of Halifax, this thesis explores which formal and informal supports six youth from refugee backgrounds accessed in this third-tier city. In exploring the experiences of these youth, this thesis seeks to examine whether Halifax as a host community provides adequate conditions for the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds or creates barriers and challenges that increase their risk of

marginalization.

Context of the Research

A specific historical context informed the development of this research. In November 2015, the Canadian federal government launched a resettlement program that targeted an intake of 25,000 Syrian refugees in two months (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], n.d). By the end of January 2017, Canada received more than 40,000 Syrian refugees (IRCC, n.d). Consequently, more than 1,300 refugees restarted their lives in Nova Scotia between 2015 and 2017; 55% of whom were 17 years old or younger (IRCC, 2017). This number challenged the capacity of settlement organizations and other service providers for assisting all these newcomers (ISANS, 2016).

In Canada, youth ages 14-25 represent about one-third of resettled refugees since 2012 (Marshall et al., 2016). The literature indicates that youth experience specific issues that may increase their vulnerability; therefore, they require specialized service provision in the resettlement country (Marshall et al., 2016; McDonald, 1998; O'Rourke, 2011; Piper et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2010). Among the common challenges associated with the refugee experience, such as low literacy skills and financial constraints, youth are more likely to experience education disruption, lack of professional experience, and the need to adapt to a new educational system (Marshall et al, 2016; Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005). Therefore, in examining the experience of youth resettled in Halifax, it was important to identify which supports they accessed and if those supports addressed their specific needs in respect to the integration process.

Historically, Halifax has been losing its newcomers to other provinces due to

economic factors, namely unemployment and underemployment (Ramos & Yoshida, 2015). There is evidence “of a disjuncture between Atlantic Canadians’ stated openness to those ‘from away’ versus the high level of perceived discrimination by immigrants” (Ramos & Yoshida, 2015, p. 52). In relation to this factor, it is important to highlight that Halifax is inserted in a context of historical racial discrimination and nepotism that creates important barriers not only for immigrants, but also for local non-white communities (Ekpo, 2000; Etowa, Beagan, Eghan, & Bernard, 2017; Rutland, 2011; Webster, 2017). In addition, Nova Scotia has higher and deeper levels of poverty in comparison with other Canadian provinces; causing equally high levels of food insecurity (Saulnier, 2009). Altogether, inefficient immigration policies, racism, discrimination, and poverty contribute to shape a very challenging environment for the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds; a context that is reflected in the experiences of the participants of the study.

Personal Standpoint

In 2017, I worked as a volunteer for a community-based organization in Halifax. There, I was able to observe how the organization delivered services to immigrants and people from refugee backgrounds. I participated in a project organized for youth from different countries and helped to facilitate workshops to build cultural awareness and a welcoming community for newcomers. Those experiences inspired this thesis, which I developed as an international student in Halifax, Canada.

My short experience in this community-based organization provided me with some clues about the welcoming and unresponsive facet of this lovely and gorgeous city where I chose to live. I saw excellent and committed professionals doing their best to

promote a welcoming community and tackle racism and discrimination towards immigrants and refugees with a very limited budget to the point that sometimes they could only serve water to the participants of the workshops they were facilitating (with no cups, though: we had to use our own bottles). I also witnessed a professional blaming resettled refugees for their slow pace in learning English and using this argument to justify their poor insertion in the job market and their dependency on the social assistance resources – although I was shocked, I was also glad to see this group of refugees reacting and challenging this particular professional and his/her ethics standards.

As a volunteer, I had the support of managers and co-workers to expand my experience and knowledge about the local context, and to gain more confidence in using English in public presentations because (I believe) they knew this would be essential for my own insertion in the local job market in the near future. I also heard from a manager that, because I was a newcomer, I did not have any knowledge on the local context and so I would not have much to contribute to the services she/he was responsible for. Moreover, it seems that my “*lack of*” condition was something very widespread among this particular team, as I heard the same observation from other co-workers to the point that one of the professionals thought that she/he could use me to separate garbage during one of her/his workshops. On the other hand, after some months working with other teams, co-workers recommended me for part-time positions that the organization had available, but these positions were offered to other part-time employees. If this was happening to me, a social worker since 2005 and a master’s student in the biggest local university with years of professional experience, who speaks three languages and understands five, and with a previous official European Master of Gender Studies, I was really interested to see

what kind of situations I would find among the participants of this research and how the community was reacting to their presence here.

I came to Canada with a student visa in 2016. As such, the participants of this research and I share the experience of being newcomers in Halifax; learning about the local culture and having English as an additional language. Unlike me, the youth interviewed for this research were all permanent residents. They also had lived in Halifax for longer than me. Therefore, they could access resources that I could not, such as the public health system and settlement support from community-based organizations. Consequently, they knew more about these resources than I initially did and I learned about some of the available supports from them.

On the other hand, unlike the participants, I could choose and plan my settlement in Halifax. In Brazil, I studied English and saved money before my arrival. Although I lived in a violent city and suffered traumas of urban violence, I was not forced to leave my country due to war and did not spend years in a refugee camp without access to education. Brazil experiences moments of political, institutional, and economical instabilities, and I was born in the end of a dictatorship, but my country was not a dictatorship at the time I left it. I can visit it whenever I want. For these and many other reasons, my position in relation to the participants is privileged. Thus, I am aware that even though at times participants and I share similar experiences, my circumstances and background give me better conditions to deal with barriers and challenges we face as newcomers – although, apparently, my skills and experience are also not enough to overcome the challenge of finding a job in this city.

While my short experience working in this organization broadened my knowledge

about the local service provision for immigrants and refugees, I was still learning about them at the time of this research. That situation created some limitations for me as a researcher because I could not fully explore some aspects of the participants' experiences due to my own unfamiliarity with some of the resources they mentioned during the interviews. Nonetheless, in some cases, the lack of familiarity of the youth with some local services was such that I was still able to provide them with information about available resources. My peer position in relation to the participants who were university students at the time of the interviews and their higher English level enabled me to better explore their experiences, which an attentive reader will certainly notice throughout the thesis. This does not mean that the other participants' voices were not as important; it only indicates my limitations as a researcher in the context of this study.

Methodology

Conceptual Framework. Developed in the context of social work research and within a transformational paradigm, this study is committed to the promotion of social justice and social change, and to giving voice to a traditionally marginalized population (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2008; Westhues, Cadell, Karabanow, Maxwell, & Sanchez, 1999). From this perspective, the conceptual framework draws on the intersections and relationships identified in the conceptual discussions of *integration*, *marginalization*, and *welcoming community* (Ager & Strang, 2008; Dunne, 2005; Esses et al., 2010; Hyndman, 2011). This thesis critically reframes the understanding of integration and marginalization, and suggests that these are not opposed or binary, but complementary and relational processes that occur in terms of degrees. In this sense, the youth may have experiences of integration and marginalization at once, and these experiences may be

more or less intense in different areas of their lives (education, official language, employment, and so on).

Within a similar perspective, this study formulates the new concept of *unresponsive community*, which is complementary to the already existing concept of *welcoming community*. This new concept opens space to discuss the promotion of welcoming communities coupled with the idea that the host community can also be proactive in creating barriers that marginalize newcomers, similarly to what Portes and Zhou (1994) define as *neutral* and *low receptivity* contexts. Together, the concepts of *welcoming* and *unresponsive community* help to better understand the role of the host society in relation to the integration and marginalization of youth. In contrast to the notion of different contexts for immigrants that Portes and Zhou (1994) point out, this thesis understands welcoming and unresponsive community relationally and in terms of degrees that depend on the extent to which the host community engages in removing barriers, fostering integration, and meeting the needs of these youth. The host community can also be welcoming and unresponsive simultaneously; oscillating in different degrees according to the integration area and in relation to the experiences of integration and marginalization of each youth.

Within this framework, barriers and challenges that youth face restrict the access of resources and compromise their integration process, which increases their risk of marginalization and indicates that the community is unresponsive. Through the access of formal and informal supports, a welcoming community facilitates the access to resources and fosters integration, which prevents youth from marginalization. In the experiences of the youth, supports, barriers, and challenges coexist and interact in the same integration

area in relation to the same host community. Feelings and perspectives are also representative of their experiences towards integration or marginalization.

Research Design. Within a qualitative method, this study uses guided in-depth and open-ended individual interviews to explore the resettlement experiences of six youth from refugee backgrounds who have been living in Halifax between one and a half to two years at the time of the interviews. Both deductive and inductive approaches are used in the data analysis. The areas outlined to explore the formal and informal supports available for the integration of the youth are education, official language, employment, health, housing, and social connections (Ager and Strang, 2008; Hyndman, 2011; Esses et al., 2010).

The following questions inform this study: which formal and informal supports are being accessed by youth from refugee backgrounds who have resettled in Halifax? Do those supports contribute to their integration process? How do those supports foster the integration of these youth? What are the challenges and barriers they are facing in this city? Do these barriers and challenges threaten their integration process? To what extent do the supports, barriers, and challenges indicate the existence of a welcoming community?

To elucidate the experiences of these youth, this study makes use of concept maps (Novak & Cañas, 2006), which are visual tools that help to organize interview transcriptions and better understand the data collected. The concept maps enable the visualization of differences among the youth regarding the flow of resources accessed through formal and informal supports in each integration area listed above.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds. This chapter situates different types of refugee sponsorship in Canada and explores specific issues in respect to the experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds in each integration area. The literature review also highlights common barriers and challenges that youth face, and the recommended supports to foster their integration.

Chapter 3 details the methodology of this research, which includes the conceptual framework that informs the data analysis and the research design. This chapter also explains methods used for the data analysis, which includes the use of concept maps as an analytical tool. Finally, specific ethical issues are reviewed in this chapter.

Chapters 4 to 9 present the findings of the research by integration area in the following sequence: education, official language, employment, health, housing, and social connections. These chapters explore the formal and informal supports youth accessed, and barriers and challenges they faced. Concept maps illustrate the supports and the tables summarize the challenges and barriers identified. Lastly, drawing on the findings and on the conceptual framework, each chapter discusses the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth and how these experiences outlined Halifax as a welcoming and/or unresponsive community.

Chapter 10 consolidates the findings presented from chapter 4 to 9 to discuss the welcoming and unresponsive aspects of Halifax as a host community for the youth. This chapter also discusses different factors that affect their experiences and Halifax's capacity to retain these newcomers. Furthermore, it presents a review of the conceptual framework that incorporates important elements on the integration and marginalization process of the youth identified throughout the findings.

Chapter 11 is the conclusion of this thesis, which highlights the main contributions and limitations of this research and presents recommendations for future research and the improvement of the service provision for youth from refugee backgrounds.

Definitions

The terms listed below are frequently used throughout this thesis or have a specific meaning within this study.

Formal Supports. For the purpose of this research, formal supports are those developed through social policy processes and typically funded by the provincial and federal governments, such as settlement agencies, health services (hospitals, mental health support, family doctors, and walk-in clinics), schools, universities, public housing, social assistance, employment support, and those privately funded but formally organized, such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), autonomous professionals (lawyers, counsellors, and dentists), churches, mosques, community associations, and others.

Informal Supports. Informal supports refer to any social networks that in some way help newcomers to access resources (such as formal services, programs, or even information) and foster their integration. These networks are made up of family, friends, teachers, co-workers, classmates, and neighbours, among others. They may or may not share the same mother tongue or religious, cultural, and racial background.

Integration Area: in the extant literature, the conceptual discussions on *integration* and *welcoming community* present indicators or dimensions in which these concepts are related to. Although these indicators and dimensions vary throughout the

literature, some are very persistent and consensual. They help to identify aspects of the integration process and of a welcoming community in the experiences of the youth. This thesis refers to these dimensions as *integration areas*, and as mentioned in the research design, they are education, official language, employment, health, housing, and social connections.

Refugees. Refugees are forced migrants fleeing from hostile living conditions in their homeland (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2016). They are selected and accepted based on humanitarian grounds and the need for protection. The integration of refugees has different patterns in comparison with economic or family class immigrants (Yu, Ouellet, & Warmington, 2007). They have fewer choices about their resettlement country and greater chances to be in precarious situations when resettled (UNHCR, 2016). In comparison with other classes of immigrants, refugees are generally more exposed to traumatic events, which may indicate the need for specific short and long-term supports (Hyndman, 2011).

Youth. Definitions of youth vary in the literature. The Canadian federal government considers youth to be between 15 and 35 years old, and depending on the governmental program, this range may have different parameters (Gilmour & Doucette, 2010). For this research, the age range selected is youth 17 to 25 years old, as suggested by Gaudet (2007), which is an approximated and flexible range that covers an exploratory and semi-autonomous phase of development. However, it should be noted that each study in the literature review has its own criteria to define the age range applied to the definition of youth, which may or may not coincide with the range considered for this thesis.

Youth from Refugee Backgrounds. This term refers to those youth who were refugees in the past and have already gone through a resettlement process. This means that they left their refugee camps in asylum countries because another country selected and admitted them as refugees and are now living in the new country as permanent residents.

Resettlement or Host Country. The country that receives refugees as part of a resettlement process.

Community. This is a term broadly used in social sciences, diversely defined, and that needs to be contextualized (Amit, 2002; McGrath, Moffatt, George, & Lee, 1999). In this thesis, community, whether welcoming or unresponsive, does not refer to a homogeneous and ahistorical common sense of identity or ethnicity among a group of people. The notion of community used here comprises three aspects. The first aspect is a geographic location and an urban environment: Halifax. Second, the term also includes a set of actors that compose a complex social structure that is part of this environment: people who live in the city, community-based and private organizations, governmental institutions, and so on. Third, the notion of community is also shaped by a set of attitudes towards youth from refugee backgrounds. In this sense, the concept also comprises the way the actors react to the presence of these youth and the capacity and willingness they have in meeting the needs of these newcomers. Community is, then, the particular context in which the youth find supports and face barriers and challenges composed by different actors that may be or may be not supportive in relation to their integration process.

Host Community or Host Society. The community in which a refugee is resettled. It may refer to an entire country by some authors in the literature or the city

where youth were resettled, such as in the case for this thesis.

Cultural Sensitivity. This thesis uses the concept of cultural sensitivity to refer to a set of attributes that an institution or person must have to achieve effective/successful communication, effective intervention, and satisfactory interaction when in contact with a person/people from a different cultural background (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Foronda, 2008). This set of attributes includes awareness about one's own cultural background, knowledge of the diversity of cultures and values, which may be acquired by training or experience, consideration and respect for these differences, and an open-minded, empathic, and non-judgmental attitude toward cultural differences (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Foronda, 2008).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the extant literature on integration of youth from refugee backgrounds. First, this chapter presents the context regarding refugee resettlement in Canada. Then, it indicates gaps in research regarding the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds in smaller urban centers in Canada (second and third-tier cities). Next, it discusses the particularities of the integration process for these youth. Finally, this chapter explores the experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds in different studies in relation to education, official language, employment, health, housing, and social connections as well as recommended supports for their integration.

Contextualizing Refugee Resettlement in Canada

The UNHCR is the agency in charge of providing assistance and protecting the rights of refugees while seeking durable solutions that allow them to safely restart their lives elsewhere. The durable solutions available are voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement (UNHCR, n.d.). The first is applied, when possible, for those who wish to return to their country as soon as this becomes a safe option. Local integration seeks to integrate refugees into the asylum country, while the resettlement process selects and transfers refugees from the asylum country to a third one (UNHCR, n.d.).

Local integration and resettlement are not a refugee choice, or a right, or a government duty; they are discretionary processes for States Parties to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and refugees have little control over them (Clayton, 2015). As Clayton (2015) states, “Resettlement procedures vary to some extent from operation to operation; however, in general there is no method

for refugees to apply for resettlement” (p. 92). Clayton also discusses the disparity between the number of refugees in need of resettlement and the capacity of the UNHCR to refer them to established resettlement programs, which usually have limited and previously defined places available each year (Clayton, 2015). This situation has become worse in recent years with a constant increase in the number of forced displaced people in need of resettlement in the world: they were around 700,000 in 2014 and close to 1,200,000 in 2017 (Canadian Council for Refugees [CCR], 2016).

Refugees in Canada. In Canada, refugees have different gateways to land and to have their status recognized, which may affect their integration process. Refugees can be selected overseas or can claim refugee status once they are in Canadian territory (CCR, 2016). This research focuses on overseas refugees: those who are selected to rebuild their lives in Canada. Examining the structure offered to the integration of refugees deliberately selected to resettle in Canada was considered relevant to better understand to which extent the context in which they are living is able to meet their needs. As Portes and Borocz (1989) discuss, the *conditions of exit* of an immigrant has significant effects in their settlement process. In the case of overseas refugees, the assistance available for their resettlement “represents an important component of the early adaptation” as they usually do not have any network in or familiarity with the host community (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p. 616). Moreover, the *conditions of exit* have implications for the health and wellbeing of the refugees, which also challenges the structure of the host community in relation to the services offered to support immigrants from refugee backgrounds (Esses, Hamilton, & Gaucher, 2017; Portes & Borocz, 1989).

Overseas refugees are referred by UNHCR and accepted in Canada as

Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs), Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugees (BVORs), or Privately-Sponsored Refugees (PSRs). Refugees in each one of these three categories, once landed in this country, are considered permanent residents (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], n.d.-a). That gives them equal access to services and social benefits, and almost all rights of a Canadian citizen. In comparison to citizens, permanent residents do not have the right to vote and are not eligible to access some high-level security clearance jobs (IRCC, n.d.-a).

During the first year, GARs are supported by the government; BVORs are supported for six months by the government and six months by a private sponsor, and PSRs are only supported by a private sponsor or a group of private sponsors (CCR, 2016). Private sponsors or a group of private sponsors need to be approved by the government and are responsible to financially and emotionally support their sponsored refugees in their first year of resettlement (CCR, 2016). Their identity may vary from a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or religious institution to a group of five people that includes close relatives (CCR, 2016). Non-Governmental Organizations – NGOs, funded by the government, provide GARs with settlement support.

The role of the government of Canada in assisting GARs goes beyond financial provision. The Resettlement Assistance Program – RAP includes reception at the airport, provision of temporary housing, support in finding permanent residence and basic domestic items, and general orientation about life in Canada (IRCC, n.d.-b). The Immigration Loans Program covers the costs associated with travel documents and transportation to Canada, which means that at some point GARs are required to repay the expenses that the government used to bring them here (IRCC, n.d.-b).

Drawing from the literature, the integration experiences of PSRs and GARs may be very different in the short term; however, it is unclear whether these two groups have different outcomes in the long term in relation to their integration process (Beiser, 2003; DeVoretz, Pivnenko, & Beiser, 2004; Hyndman, Payne, & Jimenez, 2017). In this sense, more research is necessary to identify the determinants of a good integration process associated with each type of sponsorship and how relevant they are in a short- and long-term perspective.

Integration of Youth from Refugee Backgrounds in Halifax: The Need for Research

A growing number of newcomers (immigrants and refugees) have been settling in second and third-tier cities in Canada, including Halifax (Dobrowolsky & Ramos, 2014; Guo & Guo, 2016). Low-growth rates and aging populations are some of the reasons that motivated the improvement of immigration policies in Nova Scotia in the attempt to attract and retain a higher number of immigrants in the province (Dobrowolsky & Ramos, 2014; Tastsoglou, Dobrowolsky, & Cottrell, 2015). However, as Dobrowolsky and Ramos (2014) and Bryan (2012) discuss, most of these initiatives focused on economic and entrepreneur immigrants, and on the economic benefits that they could bring to the province. Non-economic immigrants, including those from refugee backgrounds, received little attention in the immigration policy making process (Dobrowolsky et al., 2015; Dobrowolsky & Ramos, 2014).

These policies were able to increase the number of immigrants in the province, but they were not effective in retaining these newcomers. Counting on immigrants' ability to support themselves due to their economic status, these policies failed in providing them with adequate conditions for their integration (Bryan, 2012; Dobrowolsky &

Ramos, 2014). As a consequence, not only were these policies inefficient in retaining newcomers, but they also reproduced social and gender inequalities and compromised the economic development of the province (Bryan, 2012; Dobrowolsky & Ramos, 2014). Dobrowolsky and Ramos (2014) suggest that “it is the inattention to the hard cold realities faced by immigrants to this province, both economic and cultural, that helps to explain why many do not stay” (p. 22). The authors continue arguing that to retain newcomers, the province must do more than simply receive them and expect that they will need little support to integrate and contribute to the local economy.

The challenges for the retention of newcomers in this province bring opportunities to explore if Halifax, as a host community, provides adequate conditions for the integration of newcomer youth from refugee backgrounds. If the experience of economic immigrants indicates the need for more support from the host community for their integration, what does the experience of these newcomer youth who immigrated based on humanitarian conditions say in relation to the supports available and the challenges and barriers existing in this city? In this sense, this study seeks to better understand if Halifax prevails as a welcoming or unresponsive community for these youth, and how the youth navigate the flow of resources available in the city – if towards integration or marginalization. The experiences of the youth have the potential to indicate opportunities for the improvement of policies and service provision in Halifax in relation to a group of immigrants that has been receiving little attention within the scope of provincial immigration policies, as Dobrowolsky and Ramos (2014) point out. This is especially relevant in a context of a massive number of refugees starting to rebuild their lives in this city in a short period of time.

Youth from Refugee Backgrounds: Resettlement Challenges

Adolescence and the early years of adulthood are typically a period of intense personal changes and adjustments, which are even more complex when they are combined with a refugee experience (McDonald, 1998; Piper, Khakbaz, & Quek, 2015). Youth have specific challenges and needs during their resettlement and integration process. When resettled, they may experience an increase in their family responsibilities and often must support them economically and emotionally (Guruge et al., 2015; Pumariega et al., 2005). They must also adapt to a new educational system while learning a new language after years of educational disruption (Guruge et al., 2015; Pumariega et al., 2005).

The literature indicates that racism and discrimination are important issues that youth from refugee backgrounds experience in resettlement countries (Piper et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2010; Shields, Rahi, & Scholtz, 2006; Stewart et al., 2008), and that are historically present in Halifax (Ekpo, 2000; Etowa et al., 2017; Rutland, 2011; Webster, 2017). Stewart et al. (2008) triangulated data from an ethnographic inquiry, settlement services reports, and census of Toronto, Vancouver, and Edmonton, to elucidate the meanings of social supports for immigrants and refugees in Canada. The authors identify that “many newcomers maintained that discrimination, prejudice, and racism were root causes of major challenges such as employment and housing” (Stewart et al., 2008, p. 134). Unfriendly attitudes towards immigrants and refugees and the restriction of opportunities were some of the consequences pointed out by Stewart et al. (2008), which according to Portes and Borocz (1989) creates a context of low receptivity. Racism and discrimination occurred due to newcomers’ visible minority status, skin color, and accent

(Stewart et al., 2008, p. 134). Although Stewart et al. (2008) do not focus on youth from refugee backgrounds, other studies identify discrimination and racism towards this population and the effect on their integration, especially in areas such as education and employment (Piper et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2010; Shields et al., 2006).

Despite these challenges, it is important to stress that youth from refugee backgrounds are a very heterogeneous group, and their diverse pre-migration experiences also contribute to shaping their pathways in the host country (McDonald, 1998). Piper et al. (2015) recommend the provision of services addressing the specific needs of these youth, especially due to their educational disruptions and traumatic experiences.

Resuming education and learning the official language. Education is a very sensitive and challenging area for a successful integration of youth from refugee backgrounds into the resettlement country (McDonald, 1998; Piper et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2010). Besides providing basic skills for employment, education is also a way for newcomer youth to connect with the local community and build social connections (Ager & Strang, 2008; Hyndman, 2011). Supports to foster the integration in this area are those offering “the provision of timely, accessible information about the Canadian (and relevant provincial/territorial) education system and educational facilities in the community” (Esses et al., 2010, p. 54).

Data from IRCC in Table 1 shows that more than 85% of the refugees resettled in Nova Scotia up to October 2017 had a secondary or less than secondary level of education, including those who declared having no education. Unfortunately, these data are not available by age group. Yet, this high percentage draws attention to the complexity of integrating this population.

Table 1 *Canada – Admissions of resettled refugees in Nova Scotia (January 2015 to October 2017)*¹

Province/Territory and Education Level		Blended Sponsorship Refugee	Government-Assisted Refugee	Privately Sponsored Refugee	Total
Nova Scotia Total		365	1,345	440	2,150
	None	105	395	95	595
	Secondary or Less	190	855	225	1,270
	Formal Trade Cert. or Apprenticeship	5	10	15	35
	Non-University Certificate or Diploma	--	15	10	30
	Some University - No Degree	--	10	30	45
	Bachelor's Degree	5	20	35	60
	Some Post-Grad. Education - No Degree	0	--	--	5
	Master's Degree	0	0	5	5
	Education Level not stated	55	35	10	100
Source: IRCC, October 31, 2017					

As identified by Shakya et al. (2010), this low level of education is often accompanied by low skills in the official languages (French and English). However, a more precise map of the educational situation and pathways of youth from refugee backgrounds in Canada is difficult to obtain. Governmental data usually dissolve the category “refugee” among others such as “immigrants,” and the literature covering the

¹ “Please note that all values between 0 and 5 are shown as “--”. This is done to prevent individuals from being identified when IRCC data is compiled and compared with other publicly available statistics. All other values are rounded to the closest multiple of 5 for the same reason; as a result of rounding, data may not sum to the totals indicated. Data are preliminary estimates and are subject to change. Contains information licensed under the Open Government Licence – Canada.” (IRCC, 2017).

educational experience of this population is scarce and concentrated in the UK and Australia (Shakya et al., 2010).

Seeking to fill part of this knowledge gap, a community-based research study on educational aspirations of youth from refugee backgrounds involved 57 youth between 16-24 years of age living in Toronto (Shakya et al., 2010). Using individual interviews and focus groups, the study found that the youth had expectations to access higher education in Canada and that this was a way to overcome educational disruptions and pre-migration experiences (Shakya et al., 2010). Shakya et al. state that “Participants from all focus groups passionately emphasized how their educational aspirations have strengthened considerably after coming to Canada and indicated that studying was the most important of their responsibilities here” (p.68). The increase in their educational expectations is explained by the contrast with the difficulties in accessing education in the pre-migration period, the positive educational experiences in Canadian institutions, and the association between education and employment opportunities (Shakya et al., 2010).

Conversely, Shakya et al. (2010) also identified barriers and challenges. As mentioned before, one of the challenges youth from refugee backgrounds face is the increase in their responsibilities toward their families in the post-migration period, which may include the need to work while acquiring a new language (Guruge et al., 2015; McDonald, 1998; Piper, 2015; Pumariega et al., 2005). Additionally, the research points out other factors as systemic barriers to their education acquisition in Canada, such as lack of guidance with respect to the educational system and experiences of discrimination from other students in schools. Shakya et al. (2010) mention that “many youth from all of the focus groups mentioned the difficulties they faced in getting information and

guidance about the Canadian education system and how this led to confusion and misdirection in their educational path” (p.71).

The research highlights that this difficult access to information/guidance has been present in the literature for at least 15 years, which represents a structural gap in social policy in Canada (Shakya et al., 2010). According to this study, linguistic and financial barriers are also key challenges to the achievement of the educational aspirations of the youth, especially when it comes to accessing colleges and universities. In dealing with these barriers and challenges, the study identified that the youth seek and utilize any source of formal and informal supports they may have available, notably friends (Shakya et al., 2010).

In Australia, other research involving 106 youth from refugee backgrounds aged 16-25 found similar results (Piper et al., 2015). Piper et al. (2015) point out education and fluency in the official language as key factors for a successful integration of this population. Moreover, the lack of orientation and discrimination are in the top 10 barriers mentioned by the participants (Piper et al., 2015). According to these findings:

Young people from refugee backgrounds see education as crucial for building their future in Australia. They are also aware of how their past experiences have disrupted their education and are both eager to make up for lost time and aware they need additional support to enable them to do this. (Piper et al., 2015, p. 140)

In the UK, a 1994/95 study on students from refugee backgrounds between 14-19 years of age examined their experiences in schools and colleges in London (McDonald, 1998). Similar to the other two studies conducted in Canada and Australia, McDonald finds that the lack of advice and guidance in relation to educational opportunities has a

negative impact on the educational pathways of these youth. This author identifies that youth choose their courses arbitrarily, their applications to colleges follow an unclear process, and they often experience a delay in accessing the new educational system, partially due to shortages in the provision of English classes (McDonald, 1998).

In New Zealand, a study drew information from several initiatives, interviews, group discussions, and participant observations of students from refugee backgrounds and community leaders to examine how policies interact with barriers and affect the educational pathways of these youth (O'Rourke, 2011). Low English skills, precarious financial situation, and unfamiliarity with the new education system were also barriers found in this analysis. However, this particular study included some youth that completed tertiary education. This specific group of students reported that "a weakness in vocabulary and the reading of academic English require a large time investment for even simple tasks" (O'Rourke, 2011, p. 30). Reluctance in seeking available help is a major problem derived from feelings of guilt and shame related to the stigma of being a refugee (O'Rourke, 2011).

Still in this same research, the authors identified that the lack of orientation and unfamiliarity with the educational environment persist among this group even after one or more years of being a university student, with impacts on their peer socialization process (O'Rourke, 2011). In other words, if they take longer to produce essays in English, if the system is still unclear, and if they are not comfortable to seek help, chances are that they will not have time to dedicate to their social life. Socialization at the university is also hindered by discrimination and lack of cultural sensitivity of teachers and peers (O'Rourke, 2011). This finding indicates the need for adjustments of university and

settlement services to meet the specific needs of university students from refugee backgrounds.

All of these studies, in different countries and in different decades, show that immigration policies (and, consequently, service providers) systematically ignore common challenges regarding educational pathways of youth from refugee backgrounds. Yet, they also show that these youth are eager to resume and complete their education and that they explore any source of support that can help them in achieving their educational goals (Shakya et al., 2010).

Finding a job. For youth from refugee backgrounds, specific challenges are present when it comes to finding a job. The main ones are the lack of recognition of previous work experience and educational credentials, low official language skills, and underemployment (when people work in positions that are not equivalent to their educational level and experience) (Ager & Strang, 2008; Esses et al., 2010; Hyndman, 2011).

As Nunn, McMichael, Gifford and Correa-Velez (2014) remark, these youth have particular vulnerabilities: “Located at the intersection of these two cohorts, refugees who migrate during adolescence face a unique constellation of employment opportunities and challenges that both align with and diverge from those of adult refugee migrants and young people more generally” (Nunn et al., 2014, pp. 1205–6). They continue arguing that:

As young people, they are likely to share with their non-refugee-background peers the experience of complex, non-linear transitions from school to work, an increased emphasis on tertiary education, and insecure work and/or

underemployment. In addition, they are likely to encounter some of the employment barriers faced by adult refugee migrants, including low literacy, limited social networks, and insufficient access to support and information. (Nunn et al., 2014, p. 1206)

In a study conducted in Australia with 51 participants aged 18-27 years, Nunn et al. (2014) were able to identify that the employment pathways of the youth have no pattern and are influenced by five intersected main factors: aspirations, responsibilities, family, education, and networks. Like the findings of Shakya et al. (2010) regarding education, Nunn et al. (2014) identified that the youth have high aspirations in relation to their professional careers. The authors also identified similar barriers in employment to those found in the educational field: low educational level and lack of formal support and orientation about employment structures in the host country (Nunn et al., 2014). The responsibility to support their own families financially also affects employment trajectories of the youth, and immediate needs often make them prioritize finding any job over their long-term career aspirations (Nunn et al., 2014). On the other hand, family support was an important factor to keep youth studying longer before seeking employment (Nunn et al., 2014).

It is interesting to highlight that Nunn et al. (2014) found that many of the youth were able to find a job through their personal networks; however, “most jobs acquired in this way were in unskilled sectors including those such as manufacturing and cleaning in which high numbers of refugee-background workers are employed, as well as in youth employment sectors such as retail and fast food” (Nunn et al., 2014, p. 1214). In some cases, networks were able to increase the employment status of youth, but mostly these

personal contacts provided guidance and assistance that were not found in the formal sources of support (Nunn et al., 2014). In any case, networks are also a relevant source of informal support.

Education affects the employment trajectories of youth from refugee backgrounds in different ways depending on their educational level, fluency in the official languages, and the number of years of educational disruption they have (Nunn et al., 2014).

According to the research, “variations in educational opportunities and experiences, both pre- and post-migration, lead to differing possibilities for success;” yet, “education does not necessarily mediate the ability to find a job, but it has been found to affect the status of employment obtained” (Nunn et al., 2014, p. 1215). However, this study does not include participants that had completed tertiary education, which makes unclear the impact of pursuing this educational level on their insertion into the labour market.

Research carried out in Canada examined and compared the initial labour market experience of these three groups of youth, which indicated the existence of different school-to-work transition patterns experienced by Canadian-born, immigrant (non-refugee), and refugee youth (Wilkinson, 2008). Wilkinson uses quantitative and qualitative data from the 1998 Survey on Labour and Income Dynamics conducted by Statistics Canada and from a study on resettlement of refugees conducted by IRCC in Alberta, also in 1998 (Wilkinson, 2008). Although important limitations were found in analyzing these two sources of data, the author finds that “overall, Canadian-born and immigrant-born youth had higher rates of employment than refugee-youth, a finding similar to other Canadian studies” (Wilkinson, 2008, p. 160).

Another study conducted in Toronto helps to better understand the barriers that

prevent youth from refugee backgrounds from having higher rates of employment, as identified in Wilkinson's (2008) study. Shields et al. (2006), in a qualitative study, conducted eight focus groups involving 70 participants among refugee and immigrant youth, service providers, and community-based researchers. These authors find that most of the youth face real and perceived discrimination that undermine their expectations regarding the labour market (Shields et al., 2006). The lack of a commonly required 'Canadian experience' and language proficiency were some of the barriers identified by Shield et al. (2006). Due to the barriers faced in finding meaningful jobs, many of the refugee and immigrant youth reported feelings of frustration and hopelessness (Shields et al., 2006).

Finding a good place to live. Finding an adequate place to live that fits in the family budget is an important concern for newcomers in Canada (Hyndman, 2011). Especially for those from refugee backgrounds, financial constraints that usually surround them in their first years of resettlement make this issue even more challenging (Esses et al., 2010). Appropriate conditions include the provision of information (tenant's act and housing conditions), the environment (neighbourhood), the adequate size for the family, and the ability to easily access services such as public transit, schools, health care, and jobs (Ager & Strang, 2008; Esses et al., 2010).

Some challenges regarding refugees' experiences are identified in this area. As Esses et al. (2010) observe, refugees with larger families "are more likely to suffer from crowding in living quarters" (p. 30) and "foreign-born individuals are vulnerable to homelessness to a greater extent than Canadian-born individuals, with refugees being particularly at risk" (p. 30). Similarly, Hyndman (2011) mentions "that refugee

households experience crowding at home at a rate three times greater than economic class immigrants” (p. 19).

Challenges associated with this area include finding affordable homes in good condition, located in safe neighbourhoods, and with adequate size considering the family composition (Ager &Strang, 2008; Esses et al., 2010). Another issue identified by Teixeira and Halliday (2010) is “that refugees face the most difficult housing circumstances of all newcomers to Canada” (p. 4). These authors also point out some challenges in this area:

Collecting and using information about housing vacancies, particularly in complex housing markets with low vacancy rates, can pose a serious challenge for recent immigrants and refugees. These difficulties can be amplified when combined with limited financial resources, language barriers, insufficient and/or inaccurate information provided by friends and family, discriminatory practices by landlords, neighbours and others, as well as a lack of knowledge on the part of newcomers about their rights and responsibilities as tenants or renters. (Teixeira & Halliday, 2010, p.3)

Supports that may be provided in this area is the access of information about local housing conditions and legislation (Esses et al., 2010). This access may happen through formal and informal sources of support. Esses et al. (2010) identifies access to services that gather and disseminate housing information as a way to support newcomers on this issue.

Accessing health services. Resettlement is more likely to be offered to healthier refugees (Preston-Thomas, 2015); yet, a range of specific health problems are commonly

reported among youth and children from refugee backgrounds (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994; Preston-Thomas, 2015). These include under-immunization, poor dental health, and psychological injury due to exposure to traumatic situations (Preston-Thomas, 2015). Some common barriers faced by refugees in accessing health services are unfamiliarity with the services available, cost, and communication problems.

A qualitative understanding of social-cultural factors affecting the health of youth from refugee backgrounds is proposed by Edge, Newbold, and McKeary (2014).

Research driven by the authors in Hamilton, Ontario, was able to explore definitions of health by youth aged 18-25 (Edge et al., 2014). Sense of belonging and positive self-identity, emotional wellbeing, and a supportive environment that promotes empowerment and self-determination were emphasized by the youth as protective factors of good health (Edge et al., 2014). In this sense, “belonging to a social system or community provides youth with access to social supports that assist in the development of self-esteem, self-efficacy and empowerment to improve conditions within their own lives, communities, or society at large” (Edge et al., 2014, p. 39). Discrimination, trauma, stress, pressures, and mental health stigma were reported as factors that can potentially undermine wellbeing and prevent youth in accessing health services or other sources of social support (Edge et al., 2014).

Meeting people and making friends. It was already identified in this review that friends and family may be an important source of support for newcomers in finding information for education and accessing job opportunities (Nunn et al., 2014; Shakya et al., 2010). Ager and Strang (2008) refer to these relationships as *social connections*. Different authors consider these relationships as part of immigrants’ social capital (Ager

and Strang, 2008; Esses et al., 2010; Kazemipur, 2006). Social capital “refers to the connections within and between individuals’ social networks and highlights the value of social contacts and connections” (Esses et al., 2010, p. 24). However, having social connections by itself does not guarantee a better integration of newcomers into the host society, as indicated by the studies conducted by Kazemipur (2006) and Landolt and Goldring (2015).

By studying social networks among immigrants in relation to native-born people, Kazemipur (2006) finds three elements that determine their impact: size and density (including number of people), the potential access to resources through people in these networks, and the intention of sharing these resources. This was determined by a nationwide survey involving approximately 600 participants in 14 different cities across Canada. For a positive impact, the three identified elements must work together (Kazemipur, 2006). In this sense, number of contacts and access to more resources are not necessarily related, especially if people in the networks do not have any resource to share (Kazemipur, 2006).

In addition to these three elements, Kazemipur (2006) identifies in the literature that bonding social capital (relationships with people from similar cultural backgrounds) and bridging social capital (relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds) also have different impacts on the access to resources (Kazemipur, 2006). Kazemipur (2006) does not distinguish immigrants from people from refugee backgrounds, and it is not possible to know if the latter are included in the study. However, Kazemipur’s (2006) findings are similar to other studies in the refugee integration field. Ager and Strang (2008) also identify this distinction on immigrants’

relationships in their research, which includes people from refugee backgrounds. They refer to these differences as social bonds (connections with like-ethnic people) and social bridges (connections with communities from different cultural backgrounds) (Ager & Strang, 2008). Esses et al. (2010) work with the idea of primary networks (family and friends) and secondary networks (loosely knit relationships). Bridging social capital networks, or the contact with people from different cultural backgrounds (including those originally from the host community), exposed immigrants to resources that they would unlikely access by themselves, which enrich their experiences (Kazemipur, 2006).

The findings of Kazemipur (2006) show that, in relation to native-born, except for British, French, and German people, immigrants in Canada have poorer and smaller networks in terms of diversity, size, and socioeconomic value (Kazemipur, 2006). Moreover, these findings indicate that *social connections* is a mainstream integration area, which means that it affects the access of resources of other dimensions.

Similarly, Landolt and Goldring's (2015) study also points to the importance that social interactions have for immigrants in the access of resources – both facilitating and restricting this access. A study conducted by the authors in Toronto examines experiences of noncitizenship and legal status trajectories among Caribbean and Latin American immigrants. Landolt and Goldring find that that immigrants' social interactions shape their access to important resources as well as their trajectories to a legal status in Canada. In this sense, a trajectory from a refugee claimant status to the permanent residence can be shortened or extended depending on the way that the immigrants interact with different actors, such as lawyers, employers, family, and other immigrants (Landolt & Goldring, 2015). Although Landolt and Goldring examined the experiences of

immigrants who were not permanent residents in Canada at the time of their landing, these findings are still important for this thesis in the sense that they reinforce the relevance that the youth's social connections have in promoting their integration or creating barriers that push them towards marginalization.

Another important aspect of the social connections for resettled refugees is the context of the resettlement. Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014), in analyzing community organizing experiences of Colombian refugees in Canada, outline a set of elements that influence the engagement of these refugees in the host community (Riaño-Alcalá & Goldring, 2014). Among these elements, the authors identify “the type of reception and solidarity practices directed toward particular groups of refugees from local civil society and settlement” (Riaño-Alcalá & Goldring, 2014, p. 84). This study finds that the conflict in Colombia fomented networks between Colombian and Canadian-led solidarity groups and shaped the relationships among Colombian refugees resettled in different cities in Canada. Although the study focuses on the engagement in transnational initiatives, the idea that the interest in a conflict can make the local community more open to build relationships with newcomers from a specific country is particularly important for this thesis. Considering the context in which this thesis was formulated, the Syrian civil war is an important aspect to be considered when analyzing the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth in different areas, whether Syrians or not.

Even though social contacts are an informal source of support, Ager and Strang (2008) suggest that organizations can foster the development of social connections: both bonds and bridges. Language training, volunteer programs that involve both newcomers and native-born people, and job mentoring programs are some of the recommendations to

support this process (Esses et al., 2010).

Conclusion

This literature review brought important aspects of the experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds in a host country. First, this chapter situated the different types of refugee sponsorships existent in Canada that enable them to resettle in this country. Second, the review identified a gap in research on integration of youth from refugee backgrounds in smaller urban centers in Canada. Next, this chapter identified in the literature challenges and barriers that these youth usually face in accessing education, learning the official language, finding employment, accessing health services, searching for adequate housing, and rebuilding their social networks.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents the conceptual framework, research design, and methods for data analysis of this thesis. First, it situates this thesis in the transformational research paradigm and theoretical perspectives that inform this study. Second, it presents a conceptual discussion of integration, followed by the examination of the concepts of a welcoming community and marginalization. Finally, it integrates these three concepts and introduces the notion of unresponsive community. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework. After this discussion on the theoretical and conceptual framework, this chapter presents the research design and methods used for data analysis.

Theoretical Perspective: Social Work and Transformative Research.

The commitment with social justice and social changes, as well as anti-oppressive and structural perspectives, are relevant aspects of the research in social work (Dominelli, 2003; Mertens & Ginsberg, 2008; Mullaly, 2007; Westhues et al., 1999). Within a transformational paradigm, this research relies in an anti-oppressive and structural perspective to inform the conceptual framework and the research design (Dominelli, 2003; Mertens & Ginsberg, 2008; Mullaly, 2007).

Westhues et al. (1999) point out that research within a transformational paradigm seeks to connect personal experiences with public issues. In other words, transformative researchers understand these personal issues within a cultural and historical context (Westhues et al., 1999). Researchers make use of tools that create conditions to the expression of voices of traditionally marginalized populations (Westhues et al., 1999). In hearing these voices and making connections with the structural context, the researcher is able to propose changes to enhance social justice.

Listening to marginalized voices leads to uncovering mechanisms of oppression, which is why this thesis is also framed within an anti-oppressive perspective. According to Mullaly (2007) and Dominelli (2003), oppression is a relational concept that refers to the concentration of power, privilege, influence, and resources in certain groups in relation to the others. Oppression is a social construction that takes place in everyday relationships in many ways (Dominelli, 2003; Mullaly, 2007). It may be intentional or unintentional; the latter meaning that it is systemically reproduced (Mullaly, 2007). It may happen in a form of work exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Mullaly, 2007). Still, according to Mullaly (2007), a structural perspective in social work identifies the source of social problems in the way our society is structured, and it focuses on changes in the social structures as opposed to the individuals or families who are experiencing oppression.

A structural perspective is applied in this thesis to understand the relationship between integration and marginalization with a community that may be welcoming or unresponsive. This thesis focuses on the process of marginalization as an oppressive mechanism towards youth from refugee backgrounds and as a result of a restricted access to resources for their integration in the host community. Within a transformational paradigm, this thesis understands the experiences of the youth within their contexts and looking at the access of resources in the host community and its influence on the experiences of marginalization and integration of the youth. In doing that, this thesis seeks to generate a knowledge that can be used in benefit of youth from refugee backgrounds living in Halifax.

Integration of Youth from Refugee Backgrounds: A Conceptual Framework

The adaptation/adjustment process of immigrants into a new host community has been widely studied and a vast literature has explored different contexts as well as factors associated with and challenges of this process. Different authors use different terms to define it. 'Assimilation' or 'acculturation' are terms more commonly associated with the American research on immigration and with an one-way process of adaptation from newcomers in which the host society does not make efforts to accommodate them (Hyndman, 2011; Portes & Borocz, 1989; Vermeulen, 2010). Still, in the American context, Portes and Zhou (1993) developed the concepts of 'segmented assimilation' and 'modes of incorporation' to examine the various outcomes in the experiences of children who formed a second generation of immigrants in the United States.

In applying these two concepts, Portes and Zhou (1993) challenge the idea that assimilation (as the adoption of the new local culture to the detriment of ones' own cultural background) may produce positive outcomes in the experience of immigrants. In examining the experiences of youth descent of Mexican, Haitians, Punjabi Sikhs, and Caribbean immigrants in the United States, the authors identify three possible outcomes for the second generation: downward assimilation, upward assimilation, and the classical pattern or straight-line assimilation (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Vermeulen, 2010). These outcomes reflect the relationship between immigrant parents, children, and ethnic community that may result in consonant, dissonant, and selective acculturation (Vermeulen, 2010; Waters, Tran, Kasinitz, & Mollenkopf, 2010).

Downward assimilation is associated with a vulnerable situation in which the loss of the original cultural identity weakens the social capital of a cultural community and

results in permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass of the host society (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Vermeulen, 2010). This type of assimilation corresponds to a dissonant acculturation (Vermeulen, 2010; Waters et al., 2010). Upwards assimilation means economic integration into the middle class with the retention of the cultural identity of a community, or biculturalism, which characterizes a selective acculturation (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Vermeulen, 2010; Waters et al., 2010). Finally, straight-line assimilation means the incorporation of immigrants into the mainstream middle class with the loss of the original cultural identity, which is considered a consonant acculturation (Vermeulen, 2010; Waters et al., 2010).

Portes and Zhou (1993) reframe the understanding of what they call assimilation process, discussing it as a not-linear and long-term process. This process, shaped by immigrants' relationships, affects immigrants throughout generations and has various outcomes in relation to the ways they are assimilated into the host society (Vermeulen, 2010; Waters et al., 2010). Despite its contributions, Vermeulen (2010) also highlights important critique to this theory. According to the author, the theory suggests that downward and upward assimilation "are end-stages, resulting respectively in 'permanent poverty' or upward assimilation combined with permanent biculturalism" (Vermeulen, 2010, p.1225). The author also points out that downward assimilation and underclass are non-consensual concepts, which leads to problematic discussions of the results of studies applying this theory (Vermeulen, 2010).

In relation to the adjustment process of immigrants, this thesis understands that, in fact, the outcomes associated with the experiences of the youth may be diverse and shaped by different factors. However, in relation to the use of terms this thesis interprets

youth's experiences using the concepts of integration and marginalization for a number of reasons. First, because this is an exploration of a first generation of sponsored refugees in Halifax. Second, because the resettlement process of these youth is very recent, which does not leave much space for the examination of long-term outcomes. Third, integration is a common term applied in settlement agencies to understand newcomer's needs and provide them with adequate services, which makes it easier to translate the results of this research. Finally, this thesis looks at the experiences of the youth in six different areas; identifying supports and challenges and barriers in each of them and trying to understand the community behaviours when responding to youth's needs. This is quite different than looking at the assimilation of the youth into social classes and in relation to the level of retainment of their cultural background - although these are also important perspectives. Therefore, reframing and using the notions of integration and marginalization was considered more suitable to understanding the experiences of the youth in this particular study.

Integration. Once resettled, refugees start their efforts to integrate in their resettlement country. Based on an extensive review of research literature on refugees, Stein (1981) identifies four stages that help to understand the adjustment of a refugee in a resettlement country:

The general pattern of refugee adjustment over time can be analyzed in four stages: 1) the initial arrival period of the first few months; 2) the first and second years; 3) after four to five years; 4) a decade or more later. (Stein, 1981, p. 325)

CCR (1998) classifies the initial period of basic adjustments as the acclimatization and adaptation phases of the integration process. Commonly, a mix of

feelings marks this stage: from euphoria and safety to loss, nostalgia, disorientation, and apprehension (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994; Stein, 1981). The intensity of the culture shock that each individual and family experience depends on the social distance from the original country, which involves factors such as language, prevalent religion, values, urban or rural context, among others (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994). As Kaprielian-Churchill and Churchill (1994) remark, as forced migrants, resettled refugees often do not access precise information about the place where they are going to live. That may bring problems and surprises in terms of the political environment, weather conditions, the focus on individual rights, and access to public social service systems (Kaprielian-Churchill & Churchill, 1994).

Stein (1981) describes the second stage as a period in which “the refugees display an impressive drive to recover what has been lost, to rebuild their lives” (p. 325). This is the time for “language improvement, retraining programs, hard work and determination” (Stein, 1981, p. 326). In the third stage (four to five years of resettlement), refugees start to abandon major efforts and resignation prevails; after ten years, they achieve stability (Stein, 1981). This analysis draws attention to the efforts that refugees make to integrate; however, Stein (1981) does not consider the role that the host community plays in supporting refugees in their endeavour to integrate. Therefore, resignation and stability may occur as part of a process of marginalization in which barriers and challenges drain the energy and determination from refugees throughout the years.

The discussion on the factors involved in the integration process of refugees varies considerably in the academic literature, governmental departments, or settlement agencies (Hyndman, 2011). This thesis draws the conceptual discussion from two studies

to better understand what integration means and to identify key areas that the integration process relies on. The first source is the study conducted by Hyndman (2011), who analyzes the definitions of integration from the UNHCR, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), IRCC, and the academic literature. The second source is the conceptual framework for integration developed by Strang and Ager (2008) based on a study executed in the UK. This last study includes a documentary review and conceptual analysis related to the notions of integration and qualitative fieldwork involving 62 refugees and non-refugee people living in what they call “refugee impacted communities” (Ager & Strang, 2008, p.168).

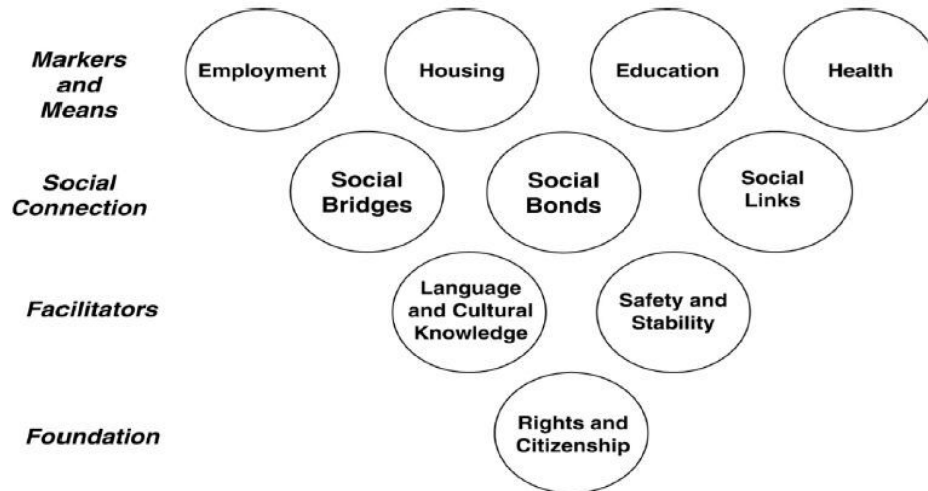
Hyndman (2011) identifies that different actors (government, international humanitarian agencies, and academic researchers) have different understandings about what the integration of resettled refugees means. Conversely, this author also finds that “most current variations suggest that ‘integration’ is a mutual process between new home society and newcomers, though some models do assume a more assimilationist process of adaptation on the part of refugees” (Hyndman, 2011, p. 5). Hyndman also points out that the key indicators of integration accepted in governmental and non-governmental agencies can be summarized as follows: economic, official languages, education, housing, social, legal/citizenship, health, interprovincial migration among refugees, and age, gender, and diversity mainstreaming. In the academic literature, despite the disagreement about definitions, Hyndman highlights that the term ‘integration’ is an attempt to disrupt the notion of ‘assimilation.’

Strang and Ager (2010) also discuss integration as a two-way and multidimensional process. It is two-way because it involves aspirations and intentions

from both sides; it is multi-dimensional because it involves “the conditions to participate in society, actual participation in society and a perception of acceptance in the host society” (Strang & Ager, 2010, p.600). Ager and Strang (2008) propose a conceptual framework to better understand the domains that contribute to a successful integration of immigrants and refugees. This framework is composed of ten domains organized in four categories, which are illustrated in Figure 1.

The *Makers and means* category refers to operational areas widely indicated as fundamental in integrating newcomers and especially identified by the authors in policy documents (Ager & Strang, 2008). They are both makers of and potential means to achieve integration: employment, housing, education, and health (Ager & Strang, 2008). The *Social Connection* category refers to the sense of belonging and the concept of social capital. It includes social bonds (proximity to family and like-ethnic groups), social bridges (connections with people from other cultural communities, including those originally from the host community), and social links (access to services and structures of the state) (Ager & Strang, 2008). The *Facilitators* category refers to areas where barriers must be removed to promote the inclusion of refugees; they are language and cultural knowledge as well as safety and security (Ager & Strang, 2008). Finally, the *Foundation* category addresses the notions of nationhood, citizenship, and rights of refugees that support a complete and equal engagement in the host society (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Figure 1 *A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration (Ager & Strang, 2008).*



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This framework is relevant for this thesis due to the fact that it highlights, in a very practical way, areas in which government, settlement agencies, and other organizations must pay attention in order to foster the integration of newcomers and prevent their marginalization. The framework provides a wider panorama of the complexity in integrating people in a new context; at the same time, it is a tool to organize service delivery in key areas.

Even though Ager and Strang (2008) propose a general approach for the integration of newcomers, it is still applicable to the experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds. As highlighted in the literature review (Chapter 2), these youth have specific needs in this process. Still, the key areas highlighted in the model of Ager and Strang (2008) are aligned with the factors that the studies indicate as fundamental to promote the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds (Esses et al., 2010;

Hyndman, 2011; Kazemipur, 2006; McDonald, 1998; Nunn et al., 2014; O'Rourke, 2011; Preston-Thomas, 2015; Shakya et al., 2010).

Welcoming community. As a two-way process occurring in different domains (Ager & Strang, 2008), the integration of newcomers also relies on the existence of a welcoming community (Esses et al., 2010; S. Guo & Guo, 2016; Y. Guo, 2012). The meaning of a welcoming community that this thesis uses draws on the discussion of Esses et al. (2010) in a report for the Canadian Government. The report is a response to the need for promoting smaller urban centers in Canada as an attractive alternative for the settlement of newcomers and to the increasing awareness about the limitations of basic settlement services in promoting inclusive communities and long-term integration of immigrants (Esses et al., 2010).

Esses et al. (2010) define a welcoming community as: “a collective effort to create a place where individuals feel valued and included” (p. 5) and “a location that has the capacity to meet the needs and promote inclusion of newcomers” (p. 5). These ideas imply a geographical dimension (such as a city) and the agency and engagement from the community to attract, retain, and facilitate the integration of immigrants (Esses et al., 2010). Such a responsibility requires the existence of an institutional structure that enables the provision of services that adequately serve newcomers (Esses et al., 2010). As the authors explain, “the notion of responsibility need not imply that a welcoming community is solely responsible for the outcomes of newcomers’ relocations, but rather that being part of a welcoming community implies a partnership among all parties involved” (Esses et al., 2010, p. 9).

The relevance of the context in the integration process of newcomers is also

discussed by Portes and Borocz (1989) from a different perspective. In examining different settlement patterns among immigrants, these authors highlight three ideal-typical examples of what they call *contexts of reception*, which complements the *conditions of exit* mentioned in Chapter 2. The first one is a context of “low receptivity on the part of the host community” (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p. 618). According to the authors:

The governmental apparatus takes a dim view of the inflow and attempts to reduce or suppress it altogether. Immigrants are negatively typified by employers, either as unsuitable labor or as suitable only for menial jobs, a condition compounded by generalized prejudice among the native population. (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p. 618)

In this context, immigrants’ social bonds are also in a disadvantaged situation and have poor resources to share (Portes & Borocz, 1989). The outcomes of a settlement in these conditions “are precarious at best and opportunities for economic mobility remain permanently blocked” (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p. 619).

The second context illustrated by these authors is a *neutral context*, where “immigration is permitted, but not actively encouraged” (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p. 619). In this second situation, “immigrants are able to freely compete with the native born on the basis of personal achievements and skills” (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p. 619). Finally, a third ideal-typical context is a *favourable public reception*. In this context, immigrants “have exceptionally good opportunities to capitalize on their background skills and experience so that their returns may even exceed those received by the native born” (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p. 619).

Esses et al. (2010) and Portes and Borocz (1989) point out that the level of engagement of the host community is essential to produce positive outcomes in the integration process of newcomers; however, Portes and Borocz (1989) also indicate that the community may be proactive in marginalizing immigrants (low receptivity), or simply not react to their presence (neutral context). In this sense, negative outcomes are also a result of the conditions in which the host community receives newcomers. Furthermore, Portes and Borocz (1989) acknowledge that there is a multitude of contexts of reception, which indicates that the real context of integration of a newcomer is unique and complex as well as its outcomes.

Characteristics of a welcoming community. Esses et al. (2010) list seventeen key ranked characteristics² of a welcoming community. The authors highlight a considerable consensus in the literature on the top three characteristics of this list, which are employment opportunities, fostering of social capital, and affordable and suitable housing (Esses et al., 2010). The list of consensual areas includes educational opportunities and accessible and suitable health care.

Employment is essential to guaranteeing economic independence and access to basic needs (Ager & Strang, 2008). Therefore, this is the main incentive to retain newcomers in a specific place, and a key indicator that a community is welcoming (Esses

² “1. Employment Opportunities; 2. Fostering of Social Capital; 3. Affordable and Suitable Housing; 4. Positive Attitudes toward Immigrants, Cultural Diversity, and the Presence of Newcomers in the Community; 5. Presence of Newcomer-Serving Agencies that Can Successfully Meet the Needs of Newcomers; 6. Links between Main Actors Working toward Welcoming Communities; 7. Municipal Features and Services Sensitive to the Presence and Needs of Newcomers; 8. Educational Opportunities; 9. Accessible and Suitable Health Care; 10. Available and Accessible Public Transit; 11. Presence of Diverse Religious Organizations; 12. Social Engagement Opportunities; 13. Political Participation Opportunities; 14. Positive Relationships with the Police and the Justice System; 15. Safety; 16. Opportunities for Use of Public Space and Recreation Facilities; 17. Favourable Media Coverage and Representation” (Esses et al., 2010, p. 11).

et al., 2010). Strong social connections between immigrants and people originally from the host community are also outcomes of a welcoming society (Esses et al., 2010). Regarding education, indications of a welcoming community would be a quick insertion into the Canadian education system that considers the aspirations and previous qualifications of the youth and that provides support for their language skills development (Esses et al., 2010).

According to the Esses et al. (2010), besides the provision of English classes, a welcoming community also offers opportunities to practice language skills such as conversation groups and opportunities to volunteer (Esses et al., 2010). In this sense, the authors claim that volunteering is beneficial for the integration process of newcomers for many reasons including the language acquisition process (Esses et al., 2010). As they explain:

Volunteering has often been cited as a means by which newcomers can be exposed to the labour market and build social connections. Newcomers themselves have described volunteerism as a means of being part of a cause or organization they care about while allowing them to use their skills and experience. Benefits of volunteerism for newcomers include improving language skills, developing social networks, increasing knowledge of Canadian culture, feeling more connected to other residents, and increasing a sense of identification with the local community. (Esses et al., 2010, p. 70)

In this sense, promoting opportunities to volunteer is considered a characteristic of a welcoming community (Esses et al., 2010).

Finally, in relation to access to health care, Esses et al. (2010) point out that

“health care is widely recognized as a key characteristic of welcoming communities, and access to health care was found to be an important determinant of immigrants’ reported satisfaction with life in Canada” (p. 58). Ager and Strang (2008) also argue that good health as well as engagement in the host society are closely related, which makes this an essential piece of the integration process.

Marginalization. The definition of marginalization is complex and has no consensus in the academic literature. Some authors argue that the term needs to be better clarified and conceptualized to serve as an analytical tool in the social sciences (Billson, 2005; Dunne, 2005). According to Mullaly (2007) and Dominelli (2003), marginalization is a form of oppression. Oppression is a relational concept for these authors; therefore, marginalization also occurs in a relational perspective. In the literature on refugees, terms such as *marginalization* and *marginalized* are often presented in opposition to the idea of integration, and associated with the idea of *social exclusion*, *barriers*, and *discrimination* (Guo & Guo, 2016; Marshal et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2007).

A deeper look at the evolution of this concept indicates that the term *marginality* is first mentioned in an essay published in the 1920s (Billson, 2005). In this essay, the term is associated with the experience of migration and the struggles in being accepted into a new culture, which was pointed out as a cause of personal disorders (Billson, 2005; Dunne, 2005). This conceptualization of *marginalization* is known as the Park-Stoquenist framework (Billson, 2005; Dunne, 2005). Billson (2005) highlights that this earlier literature about marginalization indicates “that the concept refers to a social phenomenon characterized by unsatisfactory, conflicting, inadequate, or unstable definitions of a person’s self and/or his or her role relationships with others” (Billson, 2005, p. 33). The

emphasis on personality was indicated as one of the limitations of this model, which was also criticized for the unproven causal link between marginalization and personal disorders (Dunne, 2005).

Billson (2005) identifies in a literature review three different uses for the term *marginality* that she designates as *cultural*, *social role*, and *structural* marginality. *Cultural marginality* refers to variables of cultural differences such as race, ethnicity, and religion, and the dilemmas resulting from the interaction, in a hierarchical valuation, of these differences. These interactions may produce acceptance or rejection, belonging or isolation, with impacts on the individual's wellbeing (Billson, 2005). This notion is clearly rooted in the Park-Stoquenist framework. *Social role marginality* happens "when an individual cannot fully belong to a positive reference group because of age, timing, situational constraints, or when an occupational role is defined as marginal" (Billson, 2005, p. 31). As an example, Billson mentions the situation in which women start practising professions traditionally carried out by men. Finally, *structural marginality* is a notion that stems from Marx and Engels' framework, and it refers to the location in the socio-economic structure of society. In this case, the term "refers to the political, social, and economic powerlessness of certain disenfranchised and/or disadvantaged segments within societies" (Billson, 2005, p. 31).

Following this Marxist train of thought, Dunne (2005) retrieves ideas of social distance and flow of resources between a social center and its periphery. Resources "refers to several categories of necessary, useful, valued or enjoyable things," such as goods, services, and social support (Dunne, 2005, p. 14). Marginality is then defined not in absolute terms but in degrees, "since resources flow more or less well, social distance

will be more or less great” (Dunne, 2005, p. 14). Dunne also argues that resources may flow within non-dominant groups even when there is great social distance from the societal center. Social integration is then opposed to social distance and is related to the level of access to flows of resources, which includes social supports and information (Dunne, 2005). Based on this conceptual review, Dunne concludes that “marginality is a multidimensional phenomenon in that a given person may be simultaneously integrated with one or more centers while being marginal from one or more other centers” (Dunne, 2005, p. 15).

Dunne’s (2005) perspective on marginality, coupled with the concepts of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Hyndman, 2011) and welcoming community (Esses et al., 2010), provides a consistent framework for understanding the experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds. In this case, integration and marginalization may occur in relation to social bonds and/or social bridges. The intersections between marginalization, integration, and welcoming community are more fully explored below.

Integration and marginalization, welcoming and unresponsive community: A contribution to the field. Integration, welcoming community, and marginalization are three complex, multidimensional, and related concepts that can be used to understand the experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds in Halifax. They are complementary and relevant to this research. Within this research’s framework, a welcoming community promotes integration and prevents youth from marginalization.

When developing and applying the conceptual framework using these three concepts, this thesis identified the need for another concept to refer to a community that is not welcoming. This “unwelcoming” community, instead of fostering integration,

creates and maintains barriers and challenges that prevent the youth from accessing important resources for their integration, which increases their risk of marginalization; which is discussed by Portes and Borocz (1989) as a context of *low receptivity*.

Considering the need for a concept that could complement the idea of welcoming community and indicate when the host community is not proactive in promoting the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds, this thesis formulated and used the concept of *unresponsive community*. With this notion incorporated into the framework, integration is promoted in a welcoming community, and marginalization, as a form of oppression, results from the existence of an unresponsive community.

Following Dunne's (2005) perspective, accessing resources is then essential to promoting integration, for which this thesis explored the supports the youth were accessing in this city. Understanding marginalization in terms of degrees means that integration can also be understood in terms of degrees. Looking at how the youth are navigating the flow of resources available to them in Halifax may help to understand their pathways towards integration or marginalization as well as the different degrees of marginalization and integration experienced by them in specific areas (employment, health, education, and so on).

The existence of formal and informal supports fostering integration and that enable the youth to access enough resources to overcome barriers and challenges indicates that the community is predominantly welcoming. The existence of barriers and challenges restricting the access to resources and pushing the youth into marginalization, even when supports are available, indicates the existence of an unresponsive community. Moreover, an unresponsive community tends to make limited efforts to integrate these

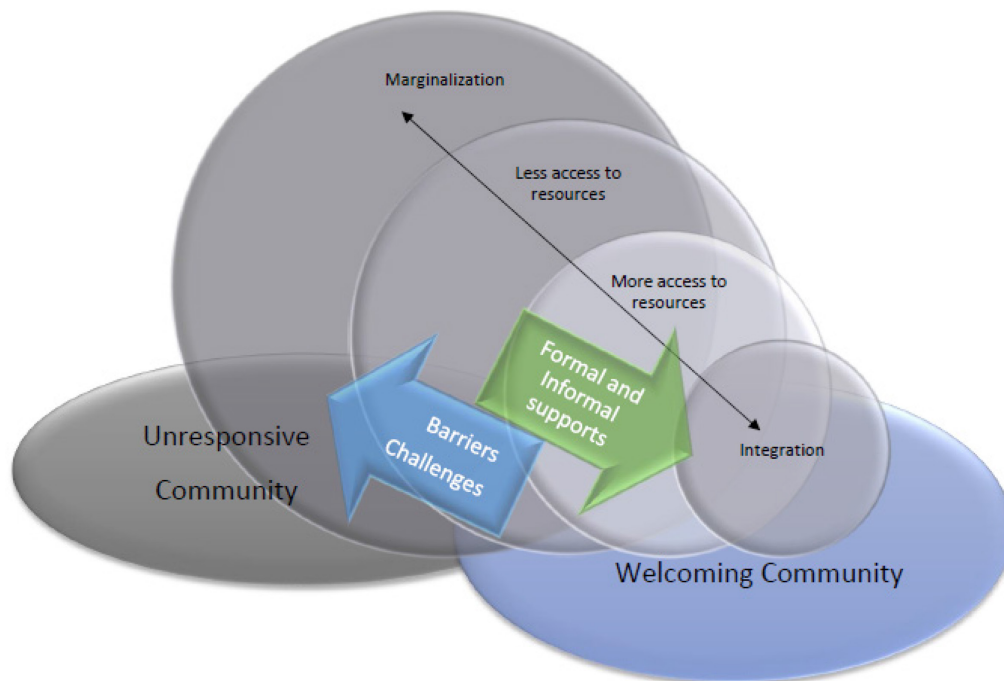
newcomers, does not provide enough or restricts the access to resources for their integration, and is unable to meet the needs of the youth. In this sense, a *neutral context*, as discussed by Portes and Borocz (1989), could also be considered unresponsive. Allowing newcomers to settle but not actively providing them with supports for their integration is a way to restrict their access to resources, as in the case of the policies formulated in Nova Scotia to attract and retain immigrants discussed on Chapter 2 (Bryan, 2012; Dobrowolsky & Ramos, 2014).

Still following Dunne's (2005) perspective, as integration and marginalization may occur in different degrees and in different social centers, welcoming and unresponsive communities are concepts that can be applied to both social bridges and social bonds in different integration areas (e.g., education, housing), and in different degrees. For instance, situations in which informal supports only come from people from the same cultural background may indicate a process of marginalization in relation to the host community, which in this case would act more like an unresponsive community. At the same time, this situation would reveal a stronger integration within a specific cultural community that is working as a welcoming community. Therefore, the combination of several factors may produce a complex and unique experience for each youth in relation to the welcoming and unresponsive facets of Halifax in different integration areas.

A good flow of resources may occur in health or education, but barriers in finding a job would compromise the integration process in the employment dimension. In this case, the community is more welcoming in regard to health and education and works as unresponsive regarding employment. Still, as supports, barriers and challenges may be identified in the same area, then the community may work at different degrees as

welcoming or unresponsive depending on the impact of other factors such as age, educational background, and kind of sponsorship. Figure 2 illustrates how these concepts are integrated and applied to examine the findings of this research.

Figure 2 *Conceptual framework for the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds in Halifax*



The idea of responsibility and partnership as part of a welcoming community (Esses et al., 2010) helps to understand integration as a two-way process (Ager & Strang, 2008; Hyndman, 2011). In the same way, the key characteristics of a welcoming community identified by the authors have common points with the integration domains proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) as well as the key integration indicators summarized by Hyndman (2011). This relation between integration indicators and characteristics of a welcoming community stresses once more that integration must be supported and

promoted in key areas such as employment, education, and social connections.

The conceptual framework of integration proposed by Ager and Strang (2008), the key indicators of integration summarized by Hyndman (2011), and the key characteristics of a welcoming community discussed by Esses et al. (2010), made it possible to identify the areas that this research focuses on. The literature that focuses on youth from refugee backgrounds also contributed to delineating the focus areas in this present study (Edge et al., 2014; McDonald, 1998; Piper et al., 2015; Preston-Thomas, 2015; Shakya et al., 2010). As a result, this thesis examined the experiences of integration and marginalization of youth from refugee backgrounds regarding education, official language, employment, health services, housing, and social connections. For the purposes of this research, social connections are understood as *social bridges* and *social bonds*, as defined by Ager and Strang (2008), which is very close to the *fostering of social capital* that is characteristic of a welcoming community as discussed by Esses et al. (2010). This thesis does not include the idea of *social links* proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) as part of the *social connections* category because it already analyzes the access to services and structures of the state through the identification of formal and informal supports youth accessed in the six areas outlined for this study. Similarly, the dimensions *rights* and *citizenship* are not analyzed in this study for two main reasons: first, only permanent residents could participate in this research, which already gives them a good set of rights in comparison with other categories of migrants and refugees, such as asylum seekers and international students; second, participants should be in the initial years of their resettlement, which means that none of them would meet the criteria to apply for citizenship.

The exploration of formal and informal supports accessed by the youth is then

analyzed in contrast with the barriers and challenges they experience in each integration area selected for this study. Within this perspective, this research identifies which aspects of the experiences of the youth contribute or jeopardize their integration process.

Applying the perspective that Ager and Strang (2008), Dunne (2005), Esses et al. (2010), and Hyndman (2011) present on integration, marginalization, and welcoming community, enable this study to identify situations in which the risk of marginalization exists as well as situations in which the host community is welcoming and/or unresponsive. Based on the discussions of Mullaly (2007) on oppression and Dunne (2005) on marginalization (Dunne, 2005), the level of access to resources (services and social supports) is key to understanding the experience of the youth within this conceptual framework.

Research Design

This thesis is a qualitative study with guided in-depth and open-ended individual interviews (Patton, 2015) involving six youth from refugee backgrounds resettled in Halifax. As this research explores the experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds within a transformational paradigm, it was important to formulate a research design that allowed the youth to describe their own experiences and have these experiences validated. Thus, collecting data from individual interviews was a way to ensure that participants would have a safe space for their voices to be heard. As Patton (2015) points out, interviews and direct quotations reveal “respondents’ depth of emotion, the ways they have organized their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions” (p. 26).

A qualitative approach was considered appropriate to achieve the goals of this research: to identify which formal and informal supports youth from refugee backgrounds

were accessing in Halifax, to explore how these supports were contributing to their integration, to examine if there were any challenges or barriers in the experience of these youth that could potentially hinder their integration process and increase their risk of marginalization, and to better understand if the supports accessed indicated the existence of a welcoming community in Halifax.

Sample. This study involved a purposeful sample of six youth from refugee backgrounds from 18 to 27 years of age participating in individual interviews. According to Patton (2015), a purposeful sample seeks to focus on information-rich cases that generate “insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations,” and that are selected according to the questions of the study (Patton, 2015, p. 264). Patton stresses that “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (p. 311) and that selecting a small number of information-rich cases (or non-probability sampling) well illustrates a qualitative study design (Patton, 2015).

The criteria to participate in this study were defined as follows:

- (a) Be between 18-30 years old.
- (b) Have landed in Canada as a government-assisted refugee (GAR), private sponsored refugee (PSR), or blended visa office-referred refugee (BVOR).
- (c) Have been living in Halifax since landed in Canada.
- (d) Have been living in Halifax for at least one year and maximum of five years.
- (e) Have been no older than 25 years when landing in Halifax.
- (f) Have at least Canadian Language Benchmark CLB 4 (English).

As this research is an exploration of the experiences of integration and marginalization of youth from refugee backgrounds in Halifax, having six interviews was

considered a good trade-off between breadth and depth to capture relevant issues in their diverse experiences (Patton, 2015).

Among the strategies presented by Patton (2015) to select a purposeful sample, this study used snowball technique and the maximum variation sampling. Snowball technique means to “start with one or a few relevant and information-rich interviewees and then ask them for additional relevant contacts, others who can provide different and/or confirming perspectives” (Patton, 2015, p. 270). Therefore, participants were asked if they knew someone who could also be a potential participant in this study. If they did, they were then asked to pass on an information sheet about the study.

The second strategy, maximum variation sampling, intentionally seeks to achieve diversity and “to identify important common patterns that are common across the diversity (cut through the noise of variation) on dimensions of interest” (Patton, 2015, p. 267). The maximum variation sampling initially intended to include government-assisted refugees (GARs), blended visa office-referred refugees (BVORs), and privately sponsored refugees (PSRs). The diversity of sponsorship was relevant for this research because the supports accessed in the initial period of settlement tend to be very different for each one of these groups, which may affect the integration process of these youth. Therefore, including all of them in the sample could provide a better picture of the supports available for youth from refugee backgrounds in this city. However, as BVORs are in much smaller number in comparison with the other two categories, it was not possible to find participants sponsored in this modality. The inclusion of youth of different ages and from different countries of origin contributed to expanding and diversifying the sources of supports accessed and challenges and barriers experienced.

To be part of this research, participants had to be in the adaptation phase of the integration process that is defined by the CCR (1998). That means they had already concluded their acclimatization period, when they make basic adjustments to organize a new life in a new country and have already engaged in the integration process (CCR, 1998). In terms of time, as discussed by Stein (1981), this meant that the youth had been living in Halifax for at least one year and a maximum of five years.

Language skills was an important criterion for participation in this research, which also brought some limitations. Participants had to have at least Level Four of proficiency in English, according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). According to CLB, at Level Four the learner “communicates one-on-one or in small supportive groups in an informal, non-demanding context related to topics of personal relevance” (CLB, 2016, p. 11). This criterion posed limitations for the recruitment of participants as it prevented youth with lower English language skills from being part of this study; however, it was not possible to provide interpretation for the interviews, so this was a necessary pre-requisite.

Participants should be able to self-identify their level of English. If they could not do so, a brief conversation over the phone or in person (before the interview) was enough to check if communication was possible. During the recruitment process, in one case it was assessed in person that the interview would not be possible, and a reimbursement for transportation was provided. Two other potential participants, after having received the consent form by email, assessed that they would not be able to participate in the interview without an interpreter.

Sample profile. This research involved interviewing six youth who had lived in

Halifax for between 1.5 and 2 years. This timeframe locates them in the second stage of the refugee adjustment as defined by Stein (1981), meaning they were all making great efforts to rebuild their lives and to overcome their losses, which was evident in the interviews. Leonard, Julia, Ana, Ezel, and Joseph were GARs from Syria. Ray was from East Africa³ and a PSR sponsored by a non-profit organization. Ana, Julia, Leonard, and Ezel resettled with parents, siblings, and some extended family. Joseph came with his wife and one small child, and a second child was born after his arrival. Ray came to Canada by herself. Table 2 summarizes the profile of the participants.

Table 2 *Sample profile*

Characteristic	Description
Age	18-27
Age at arrival	16-25
Country of Origin	Syria (5), East Africa (1)
Gender	Female (3) (Anna, Julia, Ray) Male (3) (Leonard, Ezel, Joseph)
Sponsorship	GAR (5), PSR (1), BVOR (0)
Time in Halifax	1.5-2 years

Recruitment. Recruitment of participants was a very challenging phase of this research. During the period of development of this research proposal, managers from two settlement agencies were contacted, informed about the goals of this study, and asked to

³ To avoid identification, the specific country of origin was omitted.

support the recruitment of participants. Letters of support from these agencies were attached to the Ethics Protocol.

The role of the settlement organizations during the recruitment process was to advertise the research amongst their clients during English classes and other events, and to email those who met the criteria. Information about the research was also posted in some of the agencies' Facebook groups that included youth from refugee backgrounds. These agencies were instructed not to share any personal information about their clients with the researcher. The clients who were interested in participating in the research had to contact the researcher directly to prevent them from being identified as participants by the organizations' staff.

The use of these strategies enabled the recruitment of five of the six participants; all GARs from Syria. As the strategies were insufficient to recruit the minimum number of participants aimed for this research, and as the diversity of cultural backgrounds was compromised, a complementary strategy was applied. This strategy consisted of contacting additional organizations in Halifax that could support the recruitment process and asking them to forward information about the research to their members. The organizations contacted were private sponsors, African descent service providers, students' societies at universities, and ethnic community associations. After this additional recruitment effort, an additional participant who was a PSR and from a different region (East Africa) participated in an interview. Although a minimum of participants was reached, efforts to find more participants were unsuccessful.

Limitations. The organizations involved in the recruitment process were mostly very supportive; however, due to a number of factors, it was not possible to find more

people and to get more diversity in the cultural backgrounds of the sample. First, it was not possible to provide interpretation, which prevented some interested youth from engaging in an interview. Second, due to the current context, most of GARs and PSRs served by the settlement agencies were from Syria, which made it more difficult to find participants from other countries. Besides, for all the participants, this was the first time they were taking part in a study. Even with some previous explanations by phone and email, it was only after they had met the researcher and gone through the consent form that they fully understood what their participation was about. For other potential participants, not knowing exactly what this research entailed may have been a barrier. Finally, to avoid identification of participants in such a small sample, interviews were not conducted in the settlement organizations to avoid people seeing the participants with the researcher and associating them with the research. The fact that they would have to meet someone unknown in an unknown location may have prevented some of them from being part of the study.

Ethics Protocol

This research was approved by Dalhousie University's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board. For consent forms, privacy and confidentiality, interview guide, risks, and compensation, please see Appendices E, F, and G.

Participants received a list with local resources that they could access in case they felt the need of support after the interview. Additionally, as part of the transformative framework, the youth also had space to debrief after the interviews were over and, in some cases, they used this moment to ask information they were missing as newcomers and were not currently accessing from their sources of support. When the researcher was

not able to give this guidance right away, or in the case she identified additional gaps when examining the data, a list of links with the information they needed was sent along with the interview transcripts.

Data Analysis

This study uses a combination of deductive and inductive analysis. The deductive analysis applied here is defined as content analysis according to Patton (2015). The content analysis identifies which kind of supports contributed to the integration of the youth participants as well as organizes and categorizes the sources of formal and informal supports in each focus areas (Patton, 2015). The pre-determined codes for this analysis, as defined in the conceptual framework for this research, are education, official language, employment, health, housing, and social connections (Ager & Strang, 2008; Esses et al., 2010; Hyndman, 2011).

The inductive approach is a combination of cross-case pattern and cross-case thematic analyses, as defined by Patton (2015). According to this author, the cross-case pattern analysis describes similar perceptions and experiences among the sample, which in this case is the youth from refugee backgrounds living in Halifax. The cross-case thematic analysis interprets and attributes meaning to these patterns (Patton, 2015). In this case, the themes emerge from the data based on the analysis of each information-rich case. These analyses were applied to understand how formal and informal supports were contributing to youth integration and if they were indicative of the existence of barriers that could increase their risk of marginalization. For these analyses, hand-coding was applied.

For the content analysis, the first step was the organization of concept maps. The

use of the maps helped to organize and categorize the data collected and to create a visual tool to make it easier to interpret the research findings. Coggle.it, a free online tool, was used to elaborate the maps (CoggleIt Limited). The use of visual tools to present data and findings is a trend in qualitative research; boosted by the availability of online tools that allow users to generate visualization of their own data (Azzam, Evergreen, Germuth, & Kistler, 2013; Novak & Cañas, 2006; Patton, 2015). According to Azzam et al. (2013),

Data visualization is a process that (a) is based on qualitative or quantitative data and (b) results in an image that is representative of the raw data, which is (c) readable by viewers and supports exploration, examination, and communication of the data. (p. 9)

In this sense, Azzam et al. (2013) suggest that to avoid manipulation or misunderstandings, the visual representation must clearly represent the data collected without omissions or overrepresentation of certain data. Moreover, data visualization must help to convert data into knowledge and relate to the research question (Azzam et al., 2013).

A concept map is a knowledge representation tool that has a hierarchical cognitive structure, starting from a central concept that subsumes related and more specific ideas (Novak & Cañas, 2006). According to Novak and Cañas (2006), “concept maps, as we use the term, show the specific label (usually a word or two) for one concept in a node or box, with lines showing linking words that create a meaningful statement or proposition” (p. 177). The concept maps used in this study organized the data collected in the interviews to answer the research objective related to which formal and informal supports youth from refugee backgrounds were accessing in Halifax.

Two basic models of concept maps were formulated. The first was an *individual map* that organized the content of the interview transcriptions related to formal and informal supports each participant accessed. The second model was the *integration area map* that compiled and organized the supports identified in each one of the *individual maps* by integration area.

Individual maps. The center of the *individual map* is the name of the participant. From there, each branch indicates the supports the youth accessed according to the integration areas outlined for this research (education, official language, employment, health, housing, and social connections). The second bracket in each branch indicates which kind of support the youth received: formal or informal.

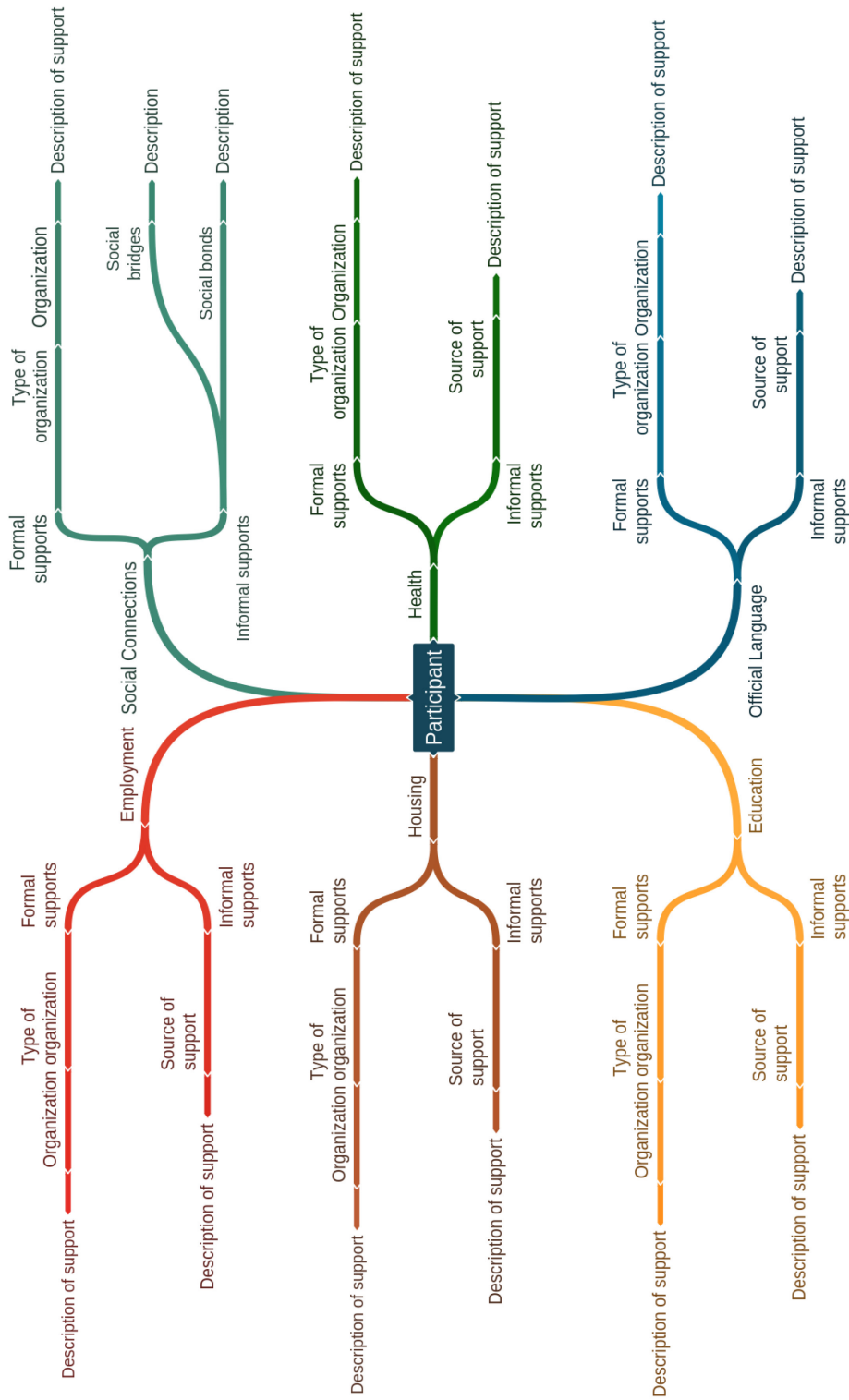
For formal support, the third bracket indicates what kind of organization the youth mentioned: community-based organization (CBO), private organization (PO), provincial government (PG), or private professional (PP). The fourth bracket describes the organization⁴ (i.e., settlement organization, public library, public high school, and so on), and the fifth briefly explains how they provided the support. For informal support, the third bracket identifies the source of support, and the fourth describes the how the youth received this support. When they did not mention any formal or informal support in a specific area, the third bracket indicates “not identified.”

In the case of the social connections category, the branch for formal support indicates the networks that the youth built with the support of an organization. In this case, the second bracket identifies the type of organization, the third describes the organization, and the last bracket provides a description of the services that helped the

⁴ The names of the organizations were omitted for ethical reasons.

youth to build their social connections. The bracket that indicates the informal sources of support within social connections category splits into two categories: social bonds (connections with people from same cultural background) and social bridges (connections with people from different cultural backgrounds, including people originally from the host community). Social bridges and social bonds brackets provide a brief description of how these networks were supporting the youth. With that, the basic shape of the *individual map* was designed as follows:

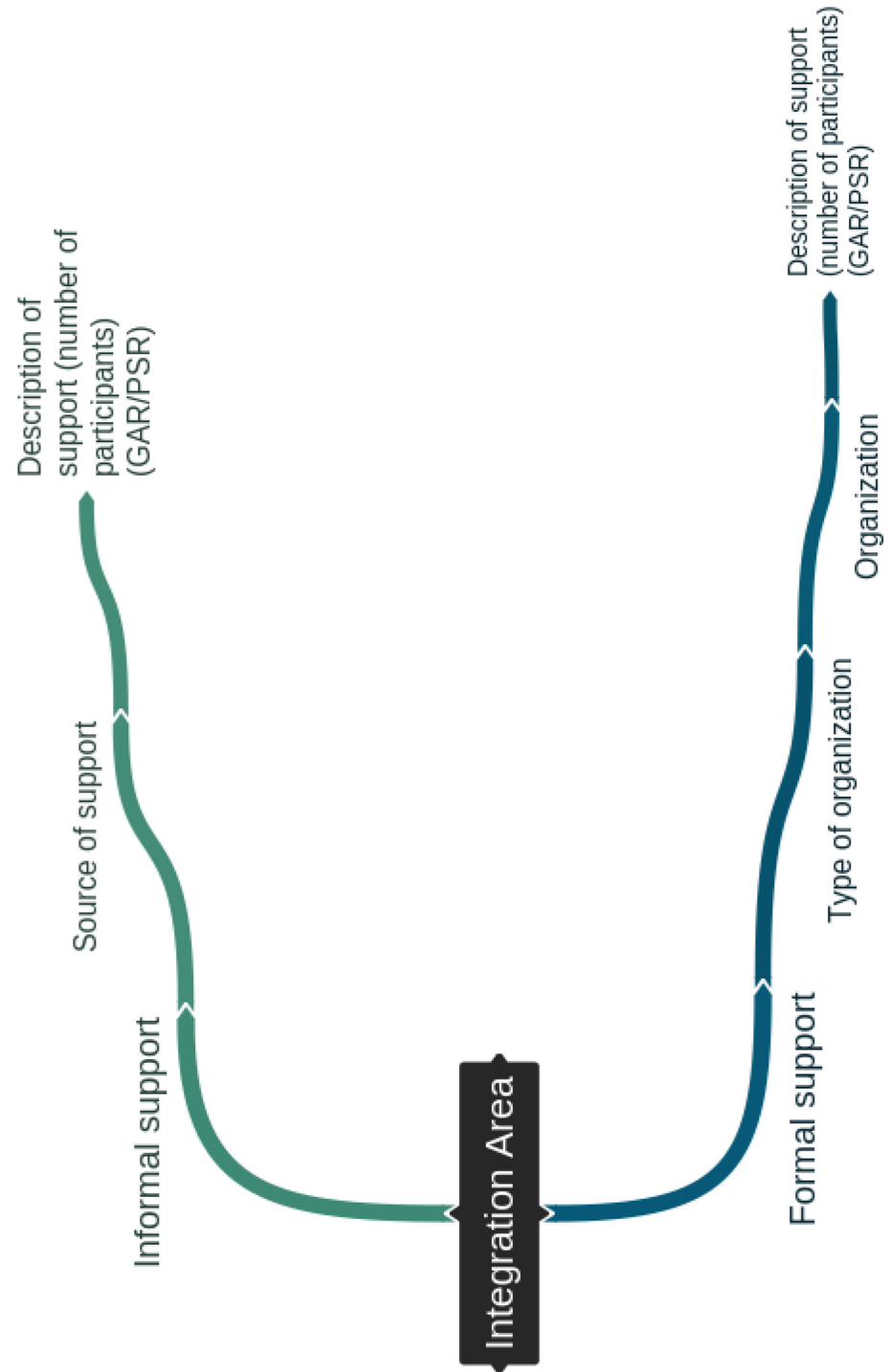
Figure 3 Individual map – Model



There were six *individual maps* formulated and examined in this thesis – one for each participant. Applying content analysis to the transcriptions, each support accessed in each area by each participant was identified. Visually, some *individual maps* were much richer than others as the number of brackets indicated how much support the youth accessed. Besides the visualization of supports accessed, the concept maps pointed out notions about the degrees of integration or marginalization of each youth. Brackets with “not identified” signaled some risk of marginalization and opportunities to improve services, which became clearer after the second step of content analysis, detailed next.

The ‘integration area’ maps. The center of this map is the integration area. Each one of these maps enabled the illustration of all supports mentioned by all participants per integration area (employment, education, health, and so on). They were, therefore, formulated based on the content of the *individual maps*. The first bracket indicates if the support accessed in the area is formal or informal. For formal supports, the second bracket indicates the type of organization; the third, the description of the organization (i.e., settlement organization, public library, public high school, and so on); the fourth bracket describes the support accessed. For informal supports, the second bracket indicates the source of support, and the third, a description of this support. At the end of each branch, the bracket indicates how many participants accessed that specific support, and their type of sponsorship. After this step, the basic model of the maps for health, housing, and employment is as follows:

Figure 4 Health, housing and employment – Basic model of map of supports accessed



The content analysis revealed that, for education and official language categories, it seemed more reasonable to analyze the supports according to the education level of the participants. As participants had, in pairs, similar educational experiences, these maps were organized according to the following categories:

- a) Regular high school students (Anna and Julia);
- b) University students (Ray and Leonard); and
- c) English only students (Joseph and Ezel).

That generated six maps (three for education, three for official language) according to the model showed in Figure 5. Lastly, for the social connections category, two maps were formulated; one for formal supports and one for informal supports (social bonds and social bridges). They are demonstrated in Figures 6 and 7, respectively.

Figure 5 Education and official language – Basic model of map of supports accessed

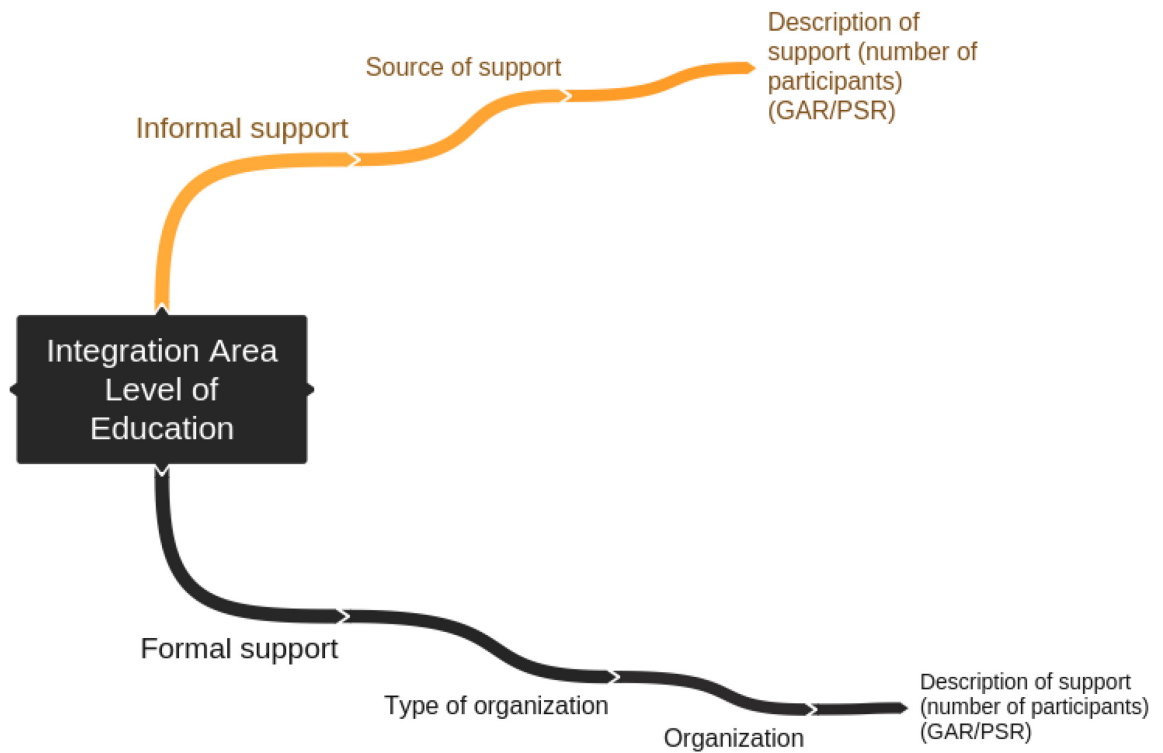


Figure 6 *Social connections – Basic model of map of formal supports accessed*

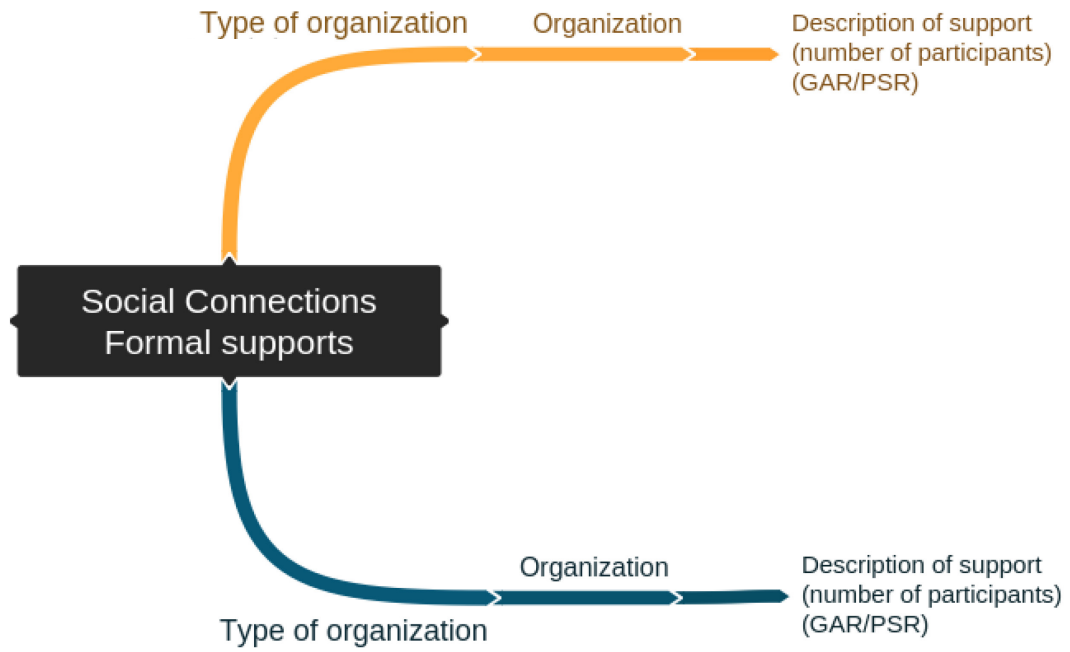
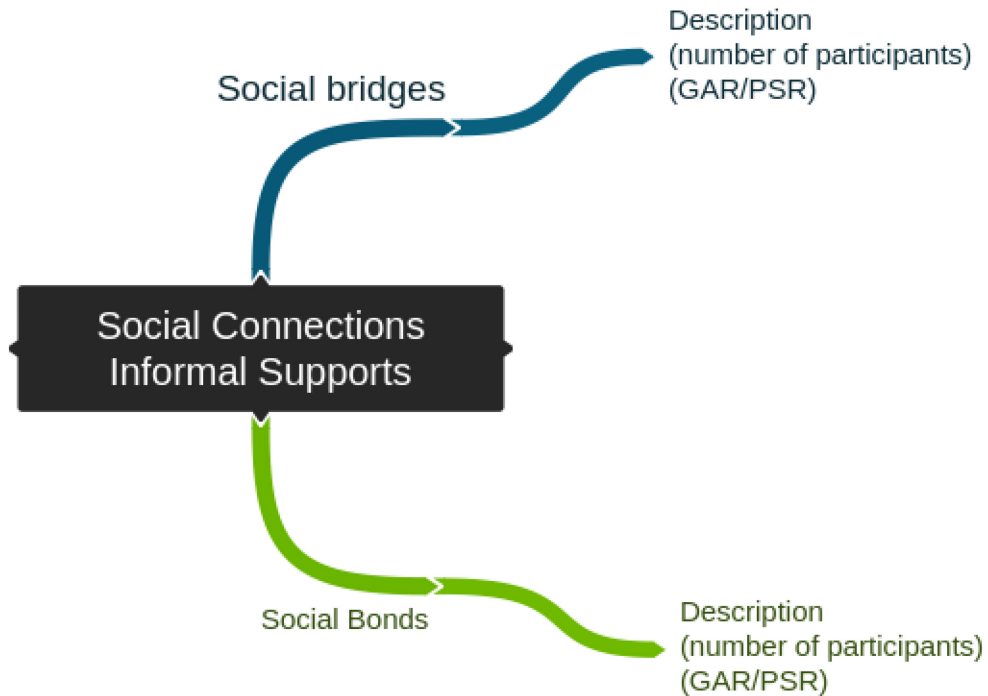


Figure 7 *Social connections – Basic model of map of informal supports accessed (social bridges and social bonds)*



Following this process, the cross-case pattern and cross-case thematic analysis attributed meaning to these maps (Patton, 2015). These analyses interpret the supports accessed and discuss the barriers and challenges identified in each area; seeking to understand the implications of the supports accessed for the integration process of youth and/or their risk of marginalization. With all these maps and discussions, it was then possible to reflect on the welcoming and unresponsive facets of Halifax.

Limitations for the use of the concept maps. The youth were not always able to identify or name all sources of support; especially those accessed in the first weeks and months of arrival when most of them did not have any English language skills. Still, most of the time, they were able to describe them. The descriptions enabled a post-interview

search that was often enough to identify the source of support they referred to. However, in a few cases, this identification was not possible, which means that the maps do not include some sources of supports.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the conceptual framework that guides this thesis in the analysis of the experiences of youth resettled in Halifax. This framework is informed by transformational, anti-oppressive, and structural perspectives. From these theoretical perspectives, this thesis critically reframes the conceptual discussion between integration (Ager and Strang, 2008; Hyndman, 2011), welcoming community (Esses et al., 2010), and marginalization (Billson, 2005; Dunne, 2005). The intersections of these three concepts, supported by the literature, contributed to identifying key integration areas explored in the experiences of the youth: education, official language, employment, health, housing, and social connections (social bonds and social bridges). In addition, this chapter introduced the concept of *unresponsive community* that is also part of this framework. This chapter also presented the research design of this thesis, the methods used for the data analysis, the recruitment strategies, and the formulation and use of concept maps to organize the data collected.

This research used two models of concepts maps: the *individual map*, and the *integration area* map. With that, six *individual maps* were formulated: one for each participant. Using the *integration area* model, 11 maps were generated in total: education (3), official language (3), employment (1), health (1), housing (1), and social connections (2). The use of concept maps enabled the visualization of formal and informal supports the youth accessed in each one of the six integration areas. Moreover, this process made it

easier to visualize the lack of supports in each area. The following chapters present the cross-case pattern and cross-case thematic analysis, which interpreted and attributed meaning to these concept maps.

Chapter 4: Education

From this chapter to Chapter 9, the findings of this research are presented. This Chapter presents the findings on education. First, it presents the educational backgrounds of the youth and their common resettlement experiences in this area. After that, three subsections organized by level of education (high school, English only, and university students) indicate the formal and informal supports that helped the youth to access education in Halifax as well as the main barriers and challenges identified. Figure 8 (high school students), Figure 9 (English only students), and Figure 10 (university students) illustrate the supports. Table 4 summarizes barriers and challenges. Then, drawing on the findings and on the conceptual framework, this chapter discusses the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth and how these experiences outlined Halifax as a welcoming and/or unresponsive community.

Backgrounds of the Youth

As highlighted in the literature review, education is one of the most relevant integration areas for youth from refugee backgrounds (McDonald, 1998; O'Rourke, 2011; Piper et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2010). Among the youth interviewed for this thesis, two participants had a secondary education before their resettlement in Canada – Leonard, GAR from Syria, and Ray, the PSR from East Africa. Both arrived here over the age of 19 and were already pursuing education at two different universities in Halifax. Anna and Julia, also Syrian GARs, arrived without secondary education, but were under the age of 19 and were pursuing education in public high schools. The other two participants, Joseph and Ezel, GARs from Syria, also arrived in Halifax without secondary education, but were over the age of 19 and being then unable to undertake

education at a regular high school or to apply for a college or university. Both were only attending English classes.

All the GARs (Julia, Anna, Leonard, Ezel, and Joseph) experienced years of education disruption during the pre-migration period due to the lack of educational opportunities in their refugee camps. This was not the case of the PSR (Ray) who could access education while being a refugee. The participants' educational profiles are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3 *Educational profile of participants*

Participant	Education Level	
	Before Resettlement	September/2017
Leonard (GAR), Ray (PSR)	Complete secondary	Attending university
Anna (GAR), Julia (GAR)	Less than secondary	Attending public high school
Joseph (GAR), Ezel (GAR)	Less than secondary	Attending only English classes

The first common experience among participants was the challenge of resuming education after years of disruption. Except for Ray, all the youth mentioned this experience as part of their lives in the pre-migration period, as exemplified below:

I lived in [country] three years... but, like... I didn't go to school... No school.

(Anna)

I left in the school and... maybe ten years ago. (Joseph)

I didn't... I didn't study anything, but when I ... I study grade, eight grade. (Ezel)

I didn't study Math for five years, since I left Syria. Now I'm taking Math courses and English. And the Math is not easy for me. I found it too much hard... five years, no Math, never.... (Leonard)

As Shakya et al. (2010) found, being resettled in Canada increases youth educational expectations. The expectation to resume education was also a finding of this research. Joseph and Ezel were willing to meet the application requirements for a college, which could give them better opportunities in the job market. Julia and Anna were planning to apply for college and university once they finished high school, and Leonard and Ray were already resuming their education at universities. When Anna was asked about her expectations about being resettled in Halifax, she expressed:

I felt like, something I would be like... [able to] complete my study at school... That's what I think. I was, like, so excited and... I was so excited to meet new people and learn English. (Anna)

Still in accordance with the findings of Shakya et al. (2010), studying was considered a priority over working for the youth. As illustrated by them:

I want to check for the job now, because before the [organization] tell me that "you want job?", I tell him "now no, because I want to learn English, and I want to go to school". (Joseph)

I didn't accept it [the job] because actually, like... my English is more important than work. (Leonard)

First I want... I need speaking. I need to speak English. I need to learn, yes... culture... yes, culture here. (Ezel)

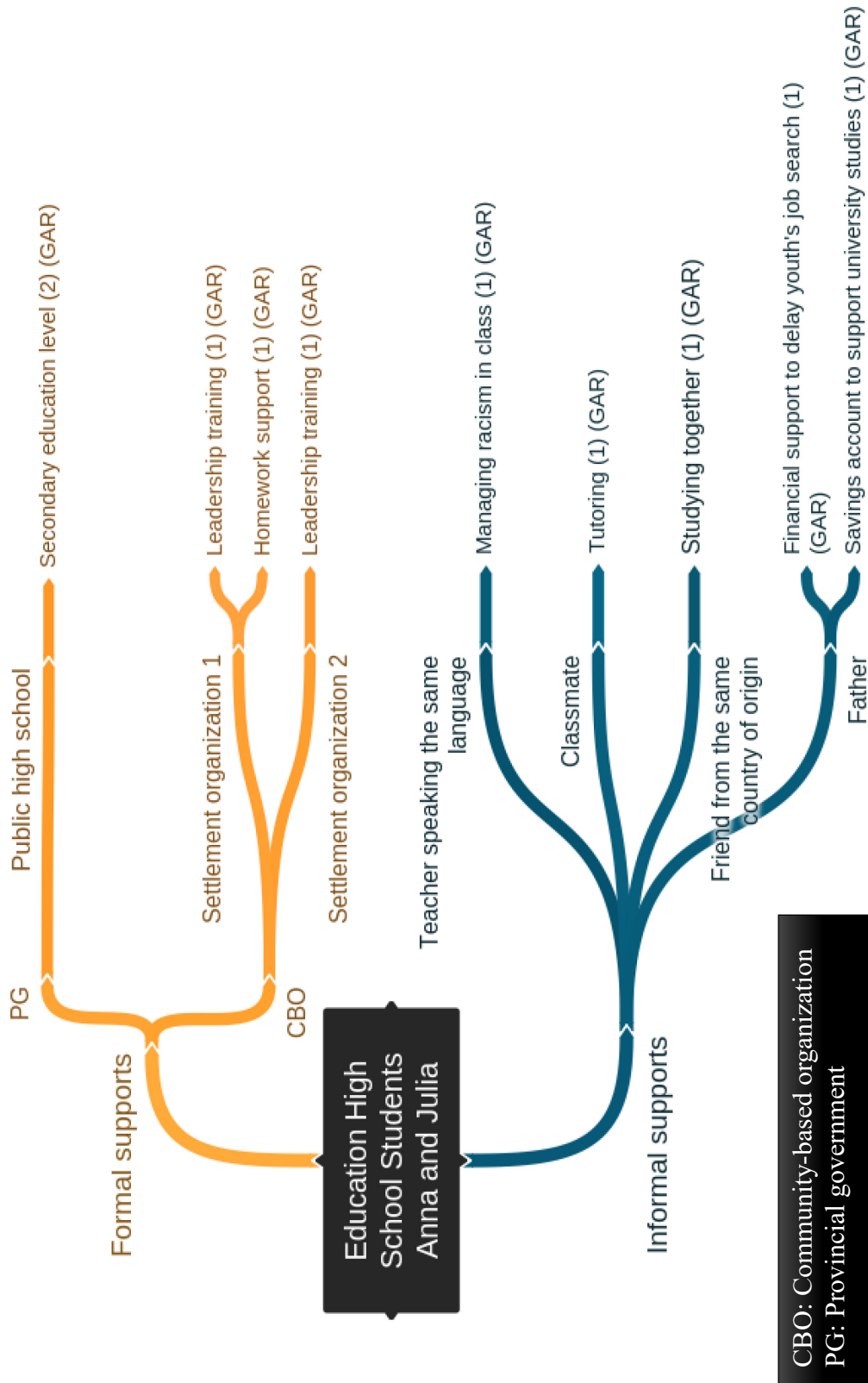
Finally, a last common experience for all participants was that the access to any

educational course or activity was at no cost, which also reflects the financial constraints that all of them were experiencing. In this sense, each opportunity to pursue education for free was extremely important to them.

High School Students

Formal/informal supports accessed. Anna and Julia had the opportunity to resume their education in public high schools due to their age upon arrival. With the support of a settlement organization, they were placed in grades ten and eleven respectively, which enabled them to pursue their secondary education in a regular pathway; although they were older than the age expected for these grades. Besides their quick insertion in the public educational system, community-based organizations provided other activities that enriched their educational experience such as support for homework and leadership training. Figure 8 illustrates these supports.

Figure 8 Education – High school students – Supports accessed



Informal supports coming from a diversity of sources were identified. A teacher speaking the same language helped Julia to manage a conflict situation involving some classmates who were being racist towards her (Piper et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2010; Shields et al., 2006; Stewart et al., 2008). Classmates and friends from the same country provided her support and company to study:

I get help from classmate... She was come after school... or during summer... during lunchtime... to help us with like, if we need help with the science, English, everything you want. (Julia)

Finally, Anna's father was trying to prevent her from working. He was also saving some money to support her future studies:

My dad, he saved some money... when we come to Canada, my dad say, "First thing I will do, like... I save some to your school and your brother's school..." (...) He don't wanna, like... anyone to work now, just studying. (...)

Like, he tell me, "Study, that's your choice. If you need, you like to help me and work, you can work...", like... "How you feeling, do it". (Anna)

Anna's experience illustrates what Nunn et al. (2014) found about family support as an important factor in keeping youth studying for longer before seeking employment (Nunn et al., 2014). In this case, Anna's father was an important source of informal support for her to resume education.

Barriers and challenges. Lack of guidance and orientation about the new educational system was a challenge identified in several studies regarding educational pathways of youth from refugee backgrounds (McDonald, 1998; O'Rourke, 2011; Shakya et al., 2010). This information gap was also identified among the participants of

this research with specificities according to their level of education. Among high school students, both Anna and Julia's interviews indicated the lack of guidance about how to finance their studies. Anna and Julia were both planning their careers in health professions based on their vocational aspirations. However, neither of them had a clear idea about how they would pay for their education, as exemplified by Julia:

Like, working and get money... Maybe, there is something called student loan...Maybe.... (Julia)

Anna was also planning to work to pay for her studies as she had no idea about scholarships or student loans.

A second challenge identified in this group of students was the experience of racism at school, reported by Julia when describing her relationship with classmates:

It's a good relationship, like, if somebody needs help, I help, I help and if I need help, I ask people to help me... But not all the people, because... some people at school... like, there's... a... I face a challenge... at school with like, you know... teenager... So, there's a bit of a racism.... (Julia)

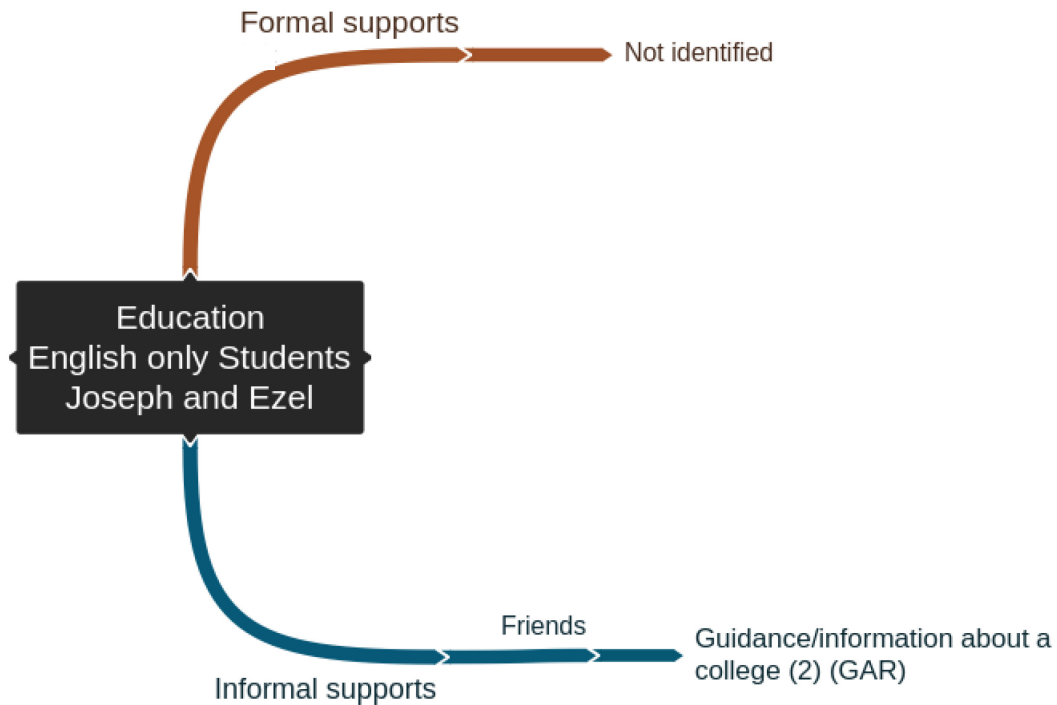
Although these challenges were part of their experiences, overall Anna and Julia reported positive experiences and aspirations regarding education. As discussed in Chapter 2, Shakya et al. (2010) also found that educational expectations of these youth in Canada are high and help them to overcome educational disruptions experienced during the pre-migration period.

English only Students

Formal/informal supports accessed. The age of arrival of Ezel and Joseph, associated with their incomplete secondary education, placed them in the most vulnerable

situation among participants regarding education. The map of supports of this group of students illustrates their vulnerability, as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9 Education – English only students – Supports accessed



The only source of informal support identified were friends attending a college who provided the youth with information:

Actually I listen to my friend. He told me about [college]. I thinking about that is very good. I want to find job easy to get job, I can easy to get job. (Ezel)

My friend learning in the mechanics, tell me “you want to learn anything in the [college] or...” “yes, I think”, I told him “I think next two months, next two years, when I learn English I go to [college].” (Joseph)

With that, important challenges were present in their experience.

Barriers and challenges. Like the other students, Ezel and Joseph had

educational aspirations. Still, it was not clear if they were aware that to apply for college, they would have to first go through an adult learning program or a General Educational Development (GED) test to obtain a high school diploma (Government of Nova Scotia, n.d.). It was also unclear if they were receiving support and guidance for this process.

When asked about what they needed to access a college, Ezel answered that:

I want to study... I think I want to go to [college]. I know something about [college]. How can I go, or ... what I want to find about the program of [college]. But I want to study level... I want to learn English level six, and then I can go.
(Ezel)

When asked a second time about what he needed to go to a college, Ezel pondered:

I want to find a job, part time. That is very, very important, first. If I didn't find job, that is difficult about me. I can't go. (Ezel)

Even when directly asked about the high school diploma, he did not identify this as a requirement. Besides, Ezel and Joseph did not have any information about student loans, scholarships, and community services support. They did not mention any formal sources of support that provide them with orientation about the educational system. Although they were attending English classes every week day, Ezel and Joseph lacked orientation and assistance regarding the next steps to be taken on their educational path.

These challenges jeopardized their integration process in a very sensitive area for youth from refugee backgrounds. As discussed before, education and job access were closely related in their plans (Shakya et al., 2010). In contrast to the high school students, Joseph and Ezel's career aspirations relied on their employability. The lack of assistance

for their educational goals could potentially affect their access to the job market as qualified workers; increasing their risk of marginalization.

A settlement agency in Halifax identified similar experiences among the youth with a profile similar to Ezel and Joseph's – resettled older than 19 years and lacking a high school diploma (Mulligan, 2016). More research is needed to better situate the magnitude of this issue; however, the possibility that a larger group of youth may be facing similar challenges indicates an urgent need for improvement on their resettlement assistance.

University Students

Formal/informal supports accessed. For this group of students, tertiary education access relied on the support of scholarships. Both Leonard and Ray were studying at no cost with different financial sources. As formal support, they mentioned the private sponsor and academic services; the latter provided through a university advisor and support for math classes. Additionally, Leonard could participate in a workshop offered for free by a university student society.

Again, the importance of accessing free education is an essential part of their academic path. This is not limited to the regular classes at the university, but it includes academic support. In the case of Leonard, the extra math classes he received for free were important to compensate for his education disruption:

I didn't take Math at high school. They have class just for the situation. They help me with it. They give me a class free for a month. (Leonard)

For Ray, orientation from an advisor was important to help her to choose the courses she would take. Besides, she felt the need to approach some teachers to clarify her questions as she was not comfortable in sharing them with the other students:

University is one thing. Big classes. So many classes, big classes, and it is not easy unless you go... unless you go and see professor by yourself. This class that I was taking chemistry, biology classes, physiology classes... We have so many students in the class. So, yes there is some professors, in general, when you go them, when you go to them and ask them questions, yes, they are good professors.

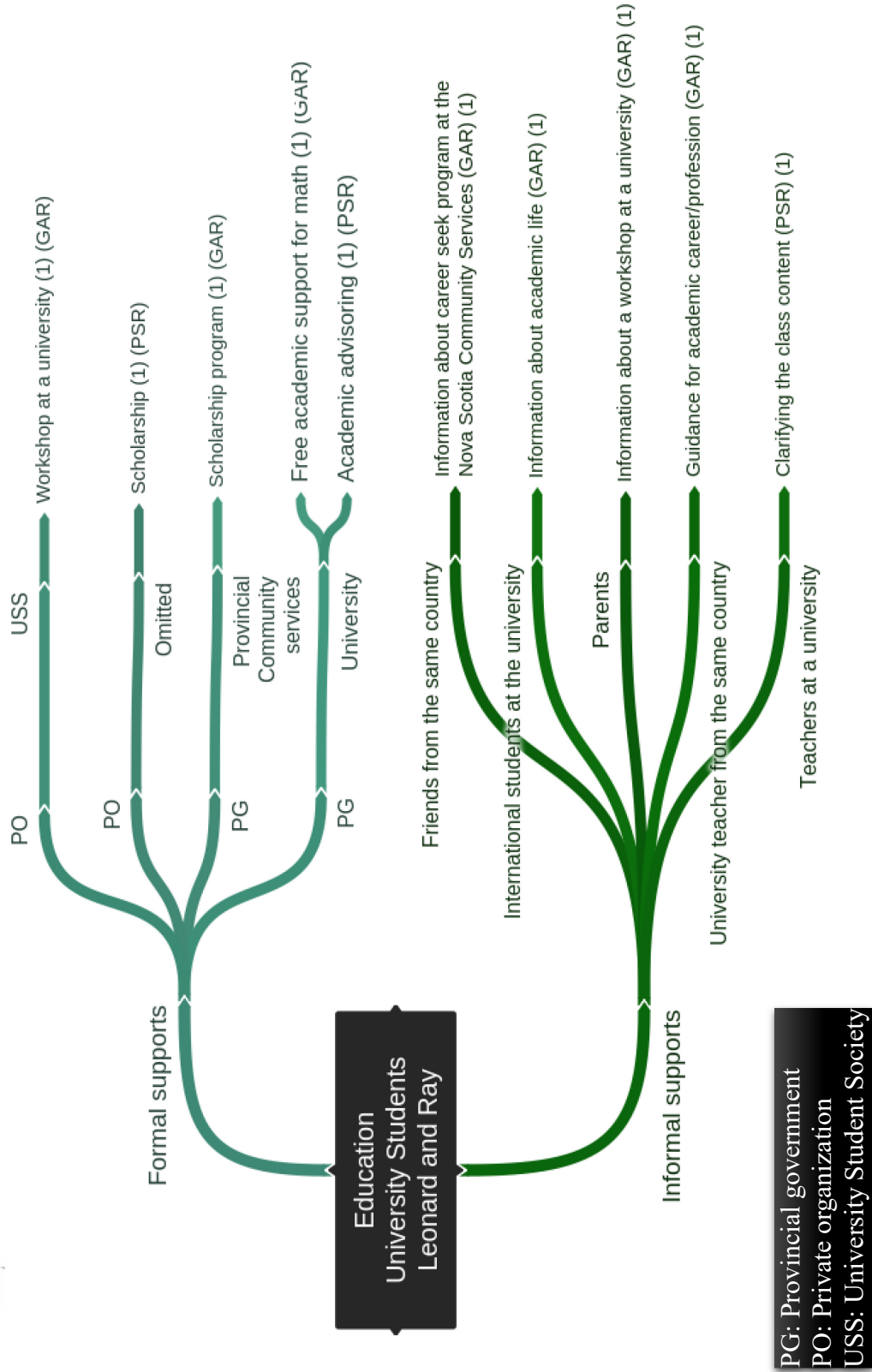
(Ray)

Informal supports were mostly identified in Leonard's experience. They came mostly from people from the same country of origin, including friends, parents, and a university teacher. International students were important in giving him some notions about what the academic life looked like. Leonard accessed all the information regarding educational opportunities through his social bonds. The way he obtained information about a free workshop run by a student society exemplifies the importance of this type of social connection for him:

My father told me... He met someone and gave his phone number... My mother then told me... I talk with the person... And he said, "We have a program for two months." (Leonard)

Ray mentioned some informal support from professors. Figure 10 indicates the supports accessed by these students.

Figure 10 Education – University students – Supports accessed



Again, lack of guidance from formal sources of supports was also present in the university students' experiences; however, they had specific challenges associated with this level of education.

Barriers and challenges. For the university students, finding sources of income was a common challenge. As opposed to the other two groups of students, their education was not free. Although they were awarded with scholarships, this support would not cover all their years of study. Therefore, finding a job and applying for student loans was a necessity, although their dedication to studies could be affected by the need to work. This conflict was expressed by Ray:

Yes, university you have to, you have to try to balance everything because you can't go to school without working, and then if you say, 'let me study', and then you don't work, where will you, like... how are you going to live? I try as I am living now, as I am speaking... my student loan is not yet here. I applied for a student loan, I don't know what happened, it took so long.... (Ray)

Despite oriented to apply for student loans, both Leonard and Ray were unsure about how this process worked. They reported stressful feelings associated with this lack of information, as the previous quotation by Ray demonstrated. Instead of bringing some relief, Leonard described the need to apply for student loans as scary:

I have to apply for my student loan... And they asked me at (university) "why you don't apply for student loan?" I didn't... I am scared... because I didn't know myself... I will pass or not... Because if I will not, how can I give this money back, for student loan? (Leonard)

Another issue regarding the university students was the difficulty to understand

the university system. Ray expressed her frustration at not having been accepted in the course she was expecting to:

I thought that I was going to do [course] program. When I came here it was a different thing that we were supposed to do: do the pre-requisite, I did the pre-requisite (...) I finished recently, I applied, I didn't get it. So I just shift and now I am in [another course]. But still I haven't given up. (Ray)

Leonard was also trying to familiarize himself with the university world. As in the case of student loans, feelings of fear were associated with this new experience:

Is like a bridge between two cities...The English course, like a bridge... We're in city and want to move other, but we don't know anything about the other city... We just move, just move that bridge now... (...) But what's new here... we don't know...I am scared about that.... (Leonard)

Both Ray and Leonard's experiences indicated that sources of support were not able to provide them with guidance about the issues that were upsetting them. As O'Rourke (2011) identified, the unfamiliarity with the educational environment among university students persists for years as a consequence of the lack of guidance and information. Table 4 summarizes all the barriers and challenges identified in the educational area.

Table 4 *Education – Barriers and challenges*

Integration Area	Education level	Barriers and Challenges
Education	High school students	Learn English while studying other subjects.
		Discrimination at school.
	English only students	Lack of high school diploma.
		Lack of guidance about the new educational system.
	University students	Resuming education after years of disruption.
		Understanding university systems.
		Balance between study and work.
		Understanding student loans.

Discussion

The resources Julia and Anna accessed clearly fomented their integration in education. Both formal and informal supports contributed to inserting them in the educational system and enhancing their career aspirations. The host community in these cases was equipped and able to meet their immediate educational needs. As a result, they were doing well at school and making plans to pursue further education in colleges and universities.

In the case of Ray, formal sources of support enabled her to access the university as soon as she landed in Halifax. Leonard, accessing a combination of formal and informal supports, could take advantage of a flow of resources that enabled him to access the university with financial support and receive additional academic support at no cost. People from the same cultural background were a central piece of his experience of

integration in education.

In the mentioned examples, the youth found a welcoming community that enabled them to access several resources and that fostered their integration. Formal supports and social bonds were the main sources of support. The existence of social bonds fostering the integration of some youth in education is a finding that reinforces the importance of the personal relationships of immigrants in shaping their access of resources, which is discussed by Kazemipur (2006) and Landolt and Goldring (2015). A first important aspect of these experiences indicating a welcoming community was the existence of opportunities to pursuing education at no cost. A second relevant aspect was that this community supported their immediate needs in education, which enabled them to quickly resume their education.

On the other hand, as a limitation for the welcoming facet of Halifax, the youth had limited knowledge of resources that could enable them to achieve their long-term educational goals. Anna and Julia manifested a lack of guidance about how to access and finance their education at colleges or universities. This challenge indicated that the community was not able to provide them with enough information about the local post-secondary educational system. This is a recurrent finding in the literature, as in the case of the study of Shakya et al. (2010). Julia also experienced racism and discrimination at school, which indicated the existence of unfriendly attitudes towards youth from refugee backgrounds at local schools; a finding present in the research of Stewart et al. (2008). In these situations, the community revealed itself unresponsive and lacked resources to support the integration of these youth.

Other experiences of the youth indicated that the community was unresponsive in

different aspects for each of them. The barriers and challenges identified in the experiences of Joseph and Ezel clearly jeopardized their integration process and were pushing them towards marginalization. After more than one year living in Halifax, they still lacked information about the educational system, did not meet the requirements to resume their education (English level and high school diploma), and did not have expectations to do it in the short term. Formal supports were not identified, and the access to educational resources was very limited. In their cases, they did not have their educational needs met, which outlined Halifax as very unresponsive for them.

Ray and Leonard's experiences indicated that the opportunity to be a sponsored university student in the initial years is a gateway, but not a guarantee, of integration in the long term. In their cases, school completion was a challenge, especially due to their financial situation. The lack of cultural sensitivity from university teachers and classmates was also a challenge for both of them and indicated that the community was not well prepared to deal with cultural diversity within universities. It is unknown if Leonard and Ray will have enough support to overcome the challenges they were facing as university students at the time of the interviews, remarkably the use of academic English, the academic performance, the approval of a student loan, the capacity of conciliate working and studying if they find a job, and ways to finance their education in the short term. In their cases, the community initially was very supportive and welcoming in enabling them a sponsored access to university, but unresponsive in giving them enough conditions for the completion of their studies, which they express in association with feelings of frustration and uncertainty.

Conclusion

As McDonald (1998) discusses, youth from refugee backgrounds are a heterogeneous group, and their pre-migration experiences shape their pathways. The participants of this research illustrated this heterogeneity. Yet, all of them were eager to pursue further education and access the labour market as qualified workers. These expectations are similar to the findings of Piper et al. (2015) and Shakya et al. (2010) when examining youth educational experiences. However, not all of them were getting the necessary support to achieve their educational goals. Barriers and challenges identified by O'Rourke (2011), McDonald (1998) Piper et al. (2015), and Shakya et al. (2010) were also present in this research, as summarized in Table 4.

Overall, access to free education was crucial for fostering the youth integration process in Halifax. The existence of programs that cover the costs of education, at least in the initial years, were essential to enable the youth to resume their education. Informal sources of support were also relevant in facilitating their access to education.

The high school students were better supported than the other participants. The university students accessed many supports but also struggled with barriers and challenges that could potentially prevent them from concluding their studies in the long-term, such as financial constraints. Finally, the English only students were the most vulnerable group identified, facing barriers and challenges that jeopardized their integration in this area.

Chapter 5: Official Language

This chapter first presents the background of the youth regarding the English language acquisition process. After that, three subsections are organized by educational level: high school, English only, and university students. They indicate formal and informal supports accessed that helped the youth to learn or improve their English language skills in Halifax as well as the main barriers and challenges identified. Supports are illustrated in Figure 11 (high school students), Figure 12 (English only students), and Figure 13 (university students). Table 5 summarizes barriers and challenges. Then, drawing on the findings and on the conceptual framework, this chapter discusses the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth and how these experiences outlined Halifax as a welcoming and/or unresponsive community.

Backgrounds of the Youth

Acquiring the official language is a central piece of the integration process (Ager & Strang, 2008). Consequently, the early provision of support for the language acquisition process is essential to promoting the integration of newcomers (Ager & Strang, 2008; Esses et al., 2010; Hyndman, 2011). The shortage of this service limits the opportunities of integration in all other integration areas. Ager and Strang (2008) also suggest that the access to translation and interpretation services in the initial period is very important.

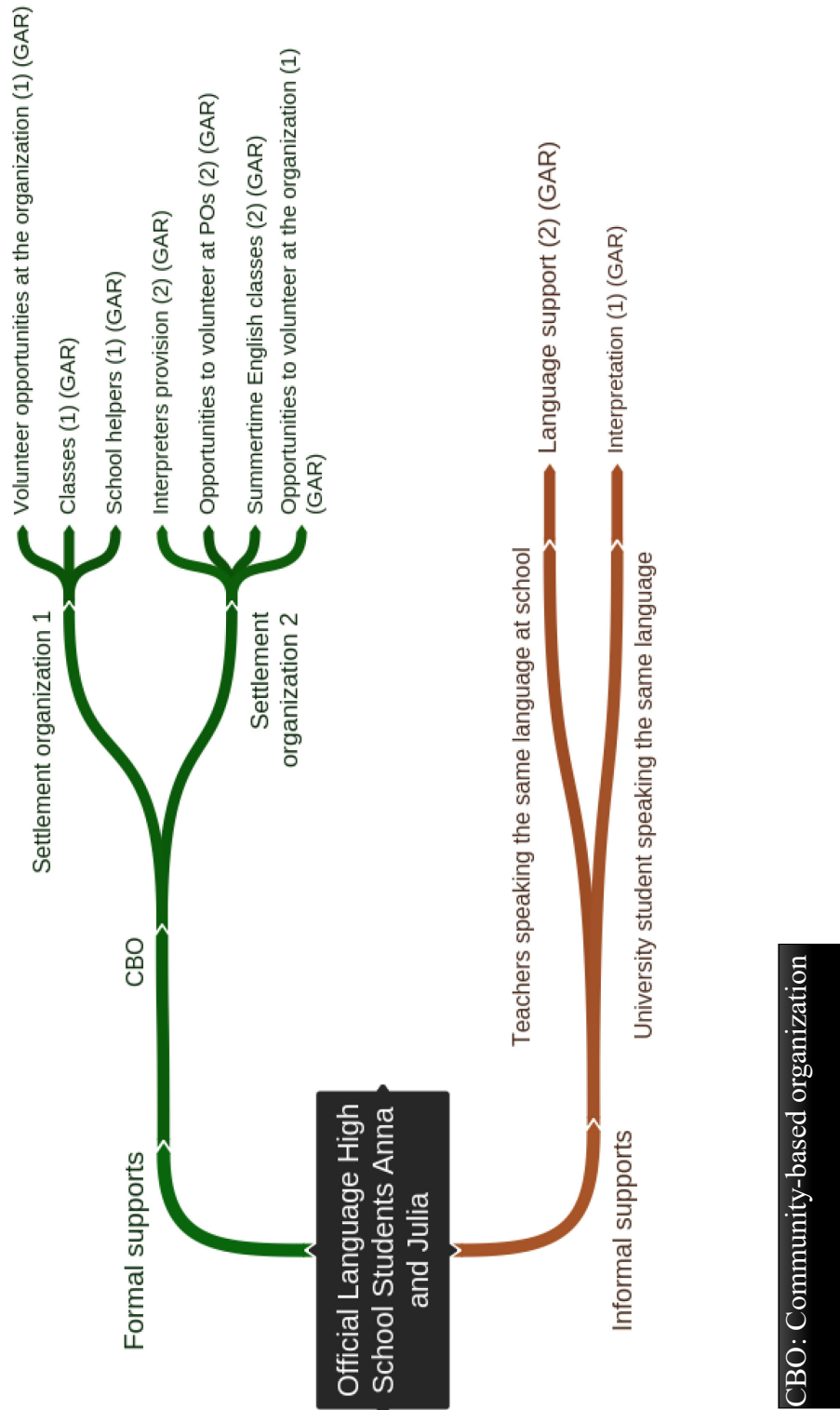
With the exception of the PSR, all the GARs participants were in the language learning process, starting at the very basic level. Before Ray (PSR) resettled in Canada, she had lived in countries where English was one of the official languages, and she had studied English at school. In addition, being proficient in the language was one of the

requirements of the private sponsor for her resettlement in Canada. For those in the English learning process, the time to access the first English class after their arrival varied between three weeks and six months.

High School Students

Formal/informal supports accessed. Anna and Julia were placed in a public high school within a month of their arrival and accessed English classes in a very short time. Among the GARs, they were the most supported students, having access to different sources of formal and informal support, as Figure 11 shows.

Figure 11 *Official language – High school students – Supports accessed*



Formal sources of support were basically community-based organizations. The services they provided in this case were access to interpretation, language support at school, and English classes at the organizations. Volunteer opportunities were important for practicing the language and connecting with the community. Relevant informal sources of support were also identified. Notably, teachers speaking the same language and people from their communities were helping these students to understand and to communicate, which enhanced their integration process into this area. As a result, Anna and Julia reported very positive experiences in the learning process:

Learning English... It's so... Like, I'm so happy... to learn English, because I love English... Like, before I come to Canada, I always say "I need to learn English..." And then I come and I learn. (Anna)

When I came to Canada, my language was zero. So, I started working my language at school, and when the school's finished, I asked somebody in [organization] to provide me, like, class, during summertime, and I get classes with my friends... to learn English, and my level language, 'cause... from zero to five, during summertime just... And I start looking for a volunteer.... (Julia)

Volunteer experiences enabled these two students to gain confidence in their language use. As Julia noted,

Volunteering is really... helped me a lot with my English.... (Julia)

Esses et al. (2010) point out that this experience among newcomers benefits not only the language acquisition, but it also fosters the development of social networks and knowledge about the local culture.

Both of the students mentioned the support from teachers, which helped them

understand classes in the first weeks of school:

First day I was, like... just I looking at everybody... I can't understand... But the teacher, he give it to me like a list for the word he use it... in the class, and I learned.... (Anna)

My teacher helped me a lot to... to understand. (Julia)

These diverse supports enabled language acquisition in a short period of time. Moreover, it helped these youth build confidence in communicating in the official language, while remaining aware that they still needed to improve their skills. They both expressed satisfaction with their English skills, as exemplified by Anna,

I feel like my English is good... (...) Yeah, I feel so comfort to all to speak.... (Anna)

Barriers and challenges. Although Anna and Julia mentioned accessing several supports for the English learning process, a special challenge arose in the interviews, which deserves attention. They were placed in public schools and started to receive language support at the same time. That means that for the first weeks, understanding the lectures and communicating with teachers and classmates who did not share their first language resulted in stressful experiences for them. As Anna explains:

I... first I was scared... like, because I can't speak any English. I can't understand the people, what they're saying. (...) Like, [after] one month, and then I start to understand everything. I was fast understanding, but I scared to talk... because like, I was say, like, "If you... I talk it would be wrong spelling or wrong speaking..." I was scared a little bit. But I take the scare out and then I try to

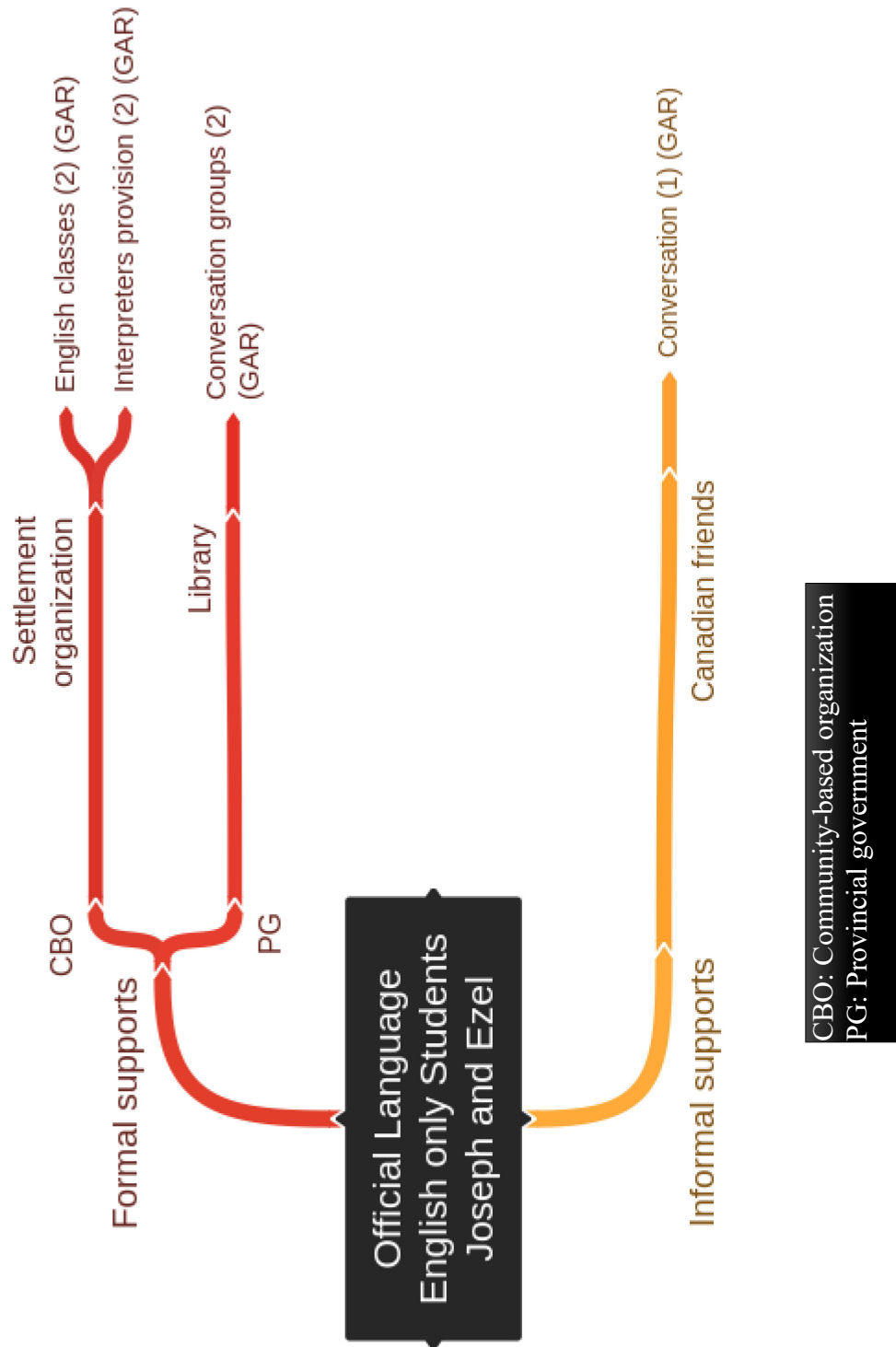
... speak. I speak English, I try to speak, with, like, touching thing... I need something, I touch. I need this, I push my hand in this thing... like, I need this... Like, he [teacher] tried to help me, "this is sharpener... this spells like"... he tried to tell me the name and then he teach me. (Anna)

Even though this initial moment was described as scary, Anna and Julia were able to use and understand English after a few weeks at school.

English only Students

Formal/informal supports accessed. For Ezel and Joseph, the map of supports indicates that a settlement agency was the only resource available to access English classes and interpretation, as illustrated in Figure 12.

Figure 12 *Official language – English only students – Supports accessed*



Their experiences illustrate how relevant it is for newcomers to have access to interpretation services in the initial resettlement period. As Ezel described, the support provided by interpreters was essential in enabling him to accomplish daily tasks:

*I want talk, I can, I called interpreter. I ask interpreter. Yea..., everything.
Interpreter. In, in five months, I ask interpreter. (Ezel)*

Similar to the high school students, for Ezel and Joseph, the period in which they were unable to understand English is remembered as scary. In the same way, access to English classes increased their autonomy:

Oh, my God. I feel very, very nervous. And I feel, for example, worried 'cause I didn't know anything here, and I don't know English, never, never, never. Yea..., but when I go to school I know English now. Nothing, I don't have any problem here. (Ezel)

*Because I am here and... no speak English. Any people that talk to me and speak English, I answer for that: no, I don't speak English. Just this. (...) I am now studying, good for that, on the learn English. Because I... I scared for my life.
(Joseph)*

These experiences reinforce the importance of the acquisition of the official language for the integration process. Conversation groups available in public libraries in Halifax were also an important formal support to help these youth build their confidence and advance their language skills.

Barriers and challenges. The biggest barrier identified in this area for Ezel and Joseph was the delay in gaining access to English classes. McDonald (1998) also

identified that shortages in the provision of this service caused a delay in the access of the educational system. Ezel and Joseph had to wait three to six months to start their language classes, and their experience illustrated how this delay might affect the integration process. The following quotation illustrates the limitations experienced by Ezel while waiting for a place in English courses:

Difficult, very difficult. Very, very difficult. I can't. I couldn't go anywhere. I couldn't go in the bank ... I couldn't go in the Sobeys, or Walmart, or anywhere because I don't know English. And when I, when I want to go anywhere, I feel nervous because I don't know English. (Ezel)

This delay and lack of alternatives in the language acquisition process jeopardized the integration of the youth within this educational profile. Because the RAP financial assistance lasts for one year, proficiency in English is crucial for their employability and further education. When asked why he waited so long to attend the first English class, Joseph explained that:

Because maybe not space, this here, because too much peoples here... in Canada, because I came here with 300 peoples. Yes, too much.... (Joseph)

The increased demand for English classes surpassed settlement organizations' capacity to meet newcomers' needs, with important consequences for the youth. For those aiming to complete a secondary education, the longer they take to develop their language skills, the later they will be able to access further education and become more qualified for jobs. This barrier was identified by Ezel when explaining his educational plans:

I want to study... I think I want to go to [college]. I know something about [college]. How can I go, or ... what I want to find... about the program of

[college]. But I want to study level... I want to learn English level six, and then I can go. (Ezel)

At the time of the interview, the achievement of English Level Six could still take one to two more years according to the youth. This length of time was another challenge in their integration process, considering their educational goals.

University Students

Formal/informal supports accessed. Coming to Canada with a complete and recognized secondary education changed the perspectives and possibilities in the resettlement country, as illustrated by the experiences of Ray and Leonard. Still, due to the differences in proficiency of the official language, very different challenges were reported.

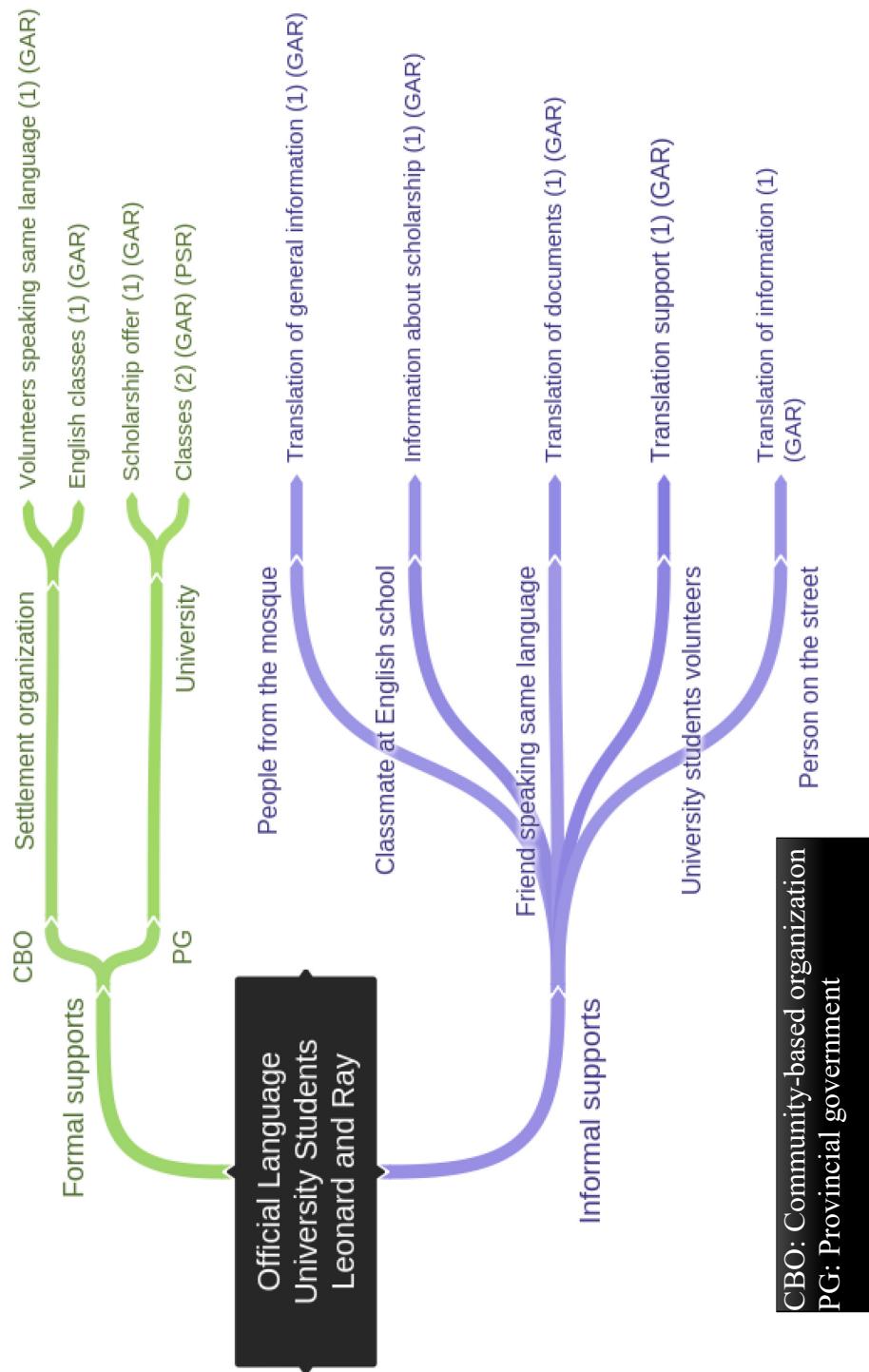
Leonard had an interesting pathway. A combination of formal and informal supports gave him singular opportunities that enhanced his integration. Because of information from a friend from the same country, at the English classes in a settlement agency, he was able to access a scholarship offered by a university to study English. With that, he developed his language skills much faster compared with the other participants because the educational system at the university was different than the one offered by the settlement agency. In addition, the university was preparing him for the use of academic English. In one year and a few months, Leonard achieved the minimum English level required to apply for the university, while Ezel and Joseph took between three and six months to access their first language class. Friends from the same cultural background also helped Leonard translate and prepare all the documents he needed to apply for the scholarship. Leonard was aware of his special pathway. He demonstrated gratitude for all

the opportunities he had, which quickly enabled him to access the university. As he expressed,

Why I need it... or why is it important? Without the first scholarship, I wouldn't speak English [in] just one year and two months... Because [organization] schools... it's... that's not as in (university) or (another university). Completely different, the system... the education system is different. Everything [is] different. You can't compare. You can't compare with (university) or (another university), [organization] with (university) or (another university), because if (university) and (another university) is three months, but (university) is two months, but in [organization] [it takes] six months [referring to the length of each English level]. Look how much, how long... Yeah... For [level] eight... I have to have eight levels to be... study at (university) or (another university). That's eight [level] would take three years... three years! Yeah... And not academic. That's other thing. Maybe you have to get other course. (Leonard)

Other sources of informal support helped Leonard navigate different systems in the beginning of his life in Halifax. People from his mosque, volunteers, and even people on the street were able to give him some assistance regarding the acquisition and use of the official language. In the case of Ray, although she was already proficient, she had academic English classes at the university subsidized by the private sponsor. Figure 13 illustrates the informal and formal supports accessed by the university students.

Figure 13 *Official language – University students – Supports accessed*



Barriers and challenges. In the experience of Leonard, the development of the English language to the academic level and the limitation of his vocabulary configured his main challenges. As discussed in the literature, O'Rourke (2011) also found that a weak vocabulary was a challenge for university students from refugee backgrounds in New Zealand. Leonard demonstrated confidence in the use of the language, but was aware of the need for improvement. In his words,

First, I can ask for what I want, but not in the right way... like, Canadian way... You can see that, I can tell you what I want, I can understand what you want, but not as Canadians do, because there are some... some level or way they talk and I do not... I take it from them now... I'm learning now, how they speak, their vocabulary.... (Leonard)

Some difficulties regarding communication with teachers were also mentioned, indicating that his university teachers needed to increase their awareness about cultural diversity in class and develop skills of cultural sensitivity. As Leonard pointed out:

English course, the teachers are different, 'cause they know we don't speak English... But the... now at the... I don't know what's different or how can I say it... My teacher... they don't know, like, how I arrived here and how much my English is good... Some of them know, I talked to them, "I just graduated from [English course] two months" and they understand my situation... But other talk really quickly... Yeah... really quickly... I felt like... [they treat me as if] I have been here for ten years and... that's like... [as if] my first language is English... They didn't pay attention.... (Leonard)

As he was just starting his university studies, it was not possible to identify

further challenges in this area. Table 5 summarizes the barriers/challenges that emerged in the interviews.

Table 5 *Official Language – Barriers and challenges*

Integration Area	Education level	Barriers and Challenges
Official Language	High school students	Communicating/understanding classes in the first weeks.
	English only students	Delay in accessing English classes.
		Access to further education and jobs depends on their language skills.
	University students	Acquiring academic level of English.
Lack of cultural sensitivity of teachers.		

Discussion

Julia and Anna’s experiences indicated that a welcoming community provided them with resources to learn English, such as school support and volunteer opportunities. Their confidence in the use of the language indicated that the supports were effective and fomented their integration in official language. Although they experienced some challenges at the beginning of their lives in Halifax, the support they received helped them in overcoming the challenges they faced and keeping them in the pathway to integration in the English learning process.

Leonard also accessed important resources that fomented his integration in the acquisition of the language. In his case, people from the same cultural background were an important piece of his pathway towards integration, which indicated a welcoming aspect of the community in relation to his social bonds. The resources he accessed were

able to help him quickly acquire not only English skills, but also English skills at an academic level, which accelerated his pathway to the university.

Despite the fact that Joseph and Ezel faced important barriers and challenges in the official language learning process, the community was able to provide them with some opportunities to learn and practice their language skills, which is an aspect of a welcoming community that Esses et al. (2010) point out. In their cases, public libraries played an important role in supporting their learning process at no cost, which reinforced the relevance of these institutions in the promotion of a welcoming environment for newcomers. On the other hand, Joseph and Ezel's experiences also revealed unresponsive aspects of the community in relation to their needs in acquiring the official language. The delay in accessing English classes and the slow pace of the course were important barriers limiting their access to resources and compromising their autonomy. Their integration in areas such as employment and education was also undermined by their low language skills.

Ezel and Joseph's experiences in official language well illustrate how a community can be welcoming and unresponsive at the same time, and how access to resources affects the youth's pathways towards integration or marginalization. Access to free English classes and conversation groups was important but not enough to prevent them from marginalization. The slow pace of the courses and their lack of high school diplomas were factors interacting with the opportunities to learn English and produced a situation in which they were very vulnerable. More efforts from the community were necessary to accelerate their language acquisition. Among the participants, Ezel and Joseph were in the longest process of language acquisition and in more need of doing it

quickly to be able to resume their education and increase their chances of finding a job.

Conclusion

Supports and barriers/challenges identified for language acquisition varied according to the level of education of the youth. For those who started learning English in the post-migration period, the lack of language skills was associated with stressful feelings in the first months following their arrival. This communication gap also limited their access to basic services such as health care, and their mobility in the city. The provision of interpreters was then essential to enabling these newcomers to navigate the city while they were not confident in their language skills (Ager & Strang; 2008).

For the high school students, the quick insertion in public schools and the support received from community-based organizations enabled them to advance their language acquisition process in a short period of time. Help with translation and interpretation from teachers and people from the community were also mentioned as important informal sources of support.

For the English only students, the lack of a secondary education and the delay in accessing English classes placed them in the most vulnerable group in this area. Both factors were barriers for their plans to pursue further education and to qualify for jobs. In contrast with the high school students who had access to diverse formal and informal supports, English only students relied on overwhelmed settlement organizations to start attending English classes.

As it can be noticed in the experiences of these youth, time and age at arrival were sensitive elements for their integration process. They need to be able to support themselves after one year. At the same time, they were eager to resume their education

and become qualified workers. The diversity of experiences reported by the participants reinforced the need for the development of programs that address the specific needs of youth from refugee backgrounds and place them on an adequate educational path as soon as possible.

Chapter 6: Employment

This chapter first presents formal and informal supports that helped youth in acquiring knowledge about the local labour market and in the job search. These supports are illustrated in Figure 14. Then, the chapter discusses barriers and challenges identified in their experiences and summarizes them in Table 6. Drawing on the findings and on the conceptual framework, this chapter discusses the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth and how these experiences outlined Halifax as a welcoming and/or unresponsive community.

As discussed by Nunn et al. (2014) regarding employment, many challenges arise as a result of the intersection between being young and coming from a refugee background. Among the participants, Julia was the only one working; she had a part-time job. Anna was planning to start looking for a job to help her family. Ezel was trying to find a job, but receiving no adequate support to do so. Joseph was willing to work, but aware that his English skills still needed improvements. Ray was intensively trying to find work anywhere, and Leonard was postponing the job search due to the challenges of balancing university and work.

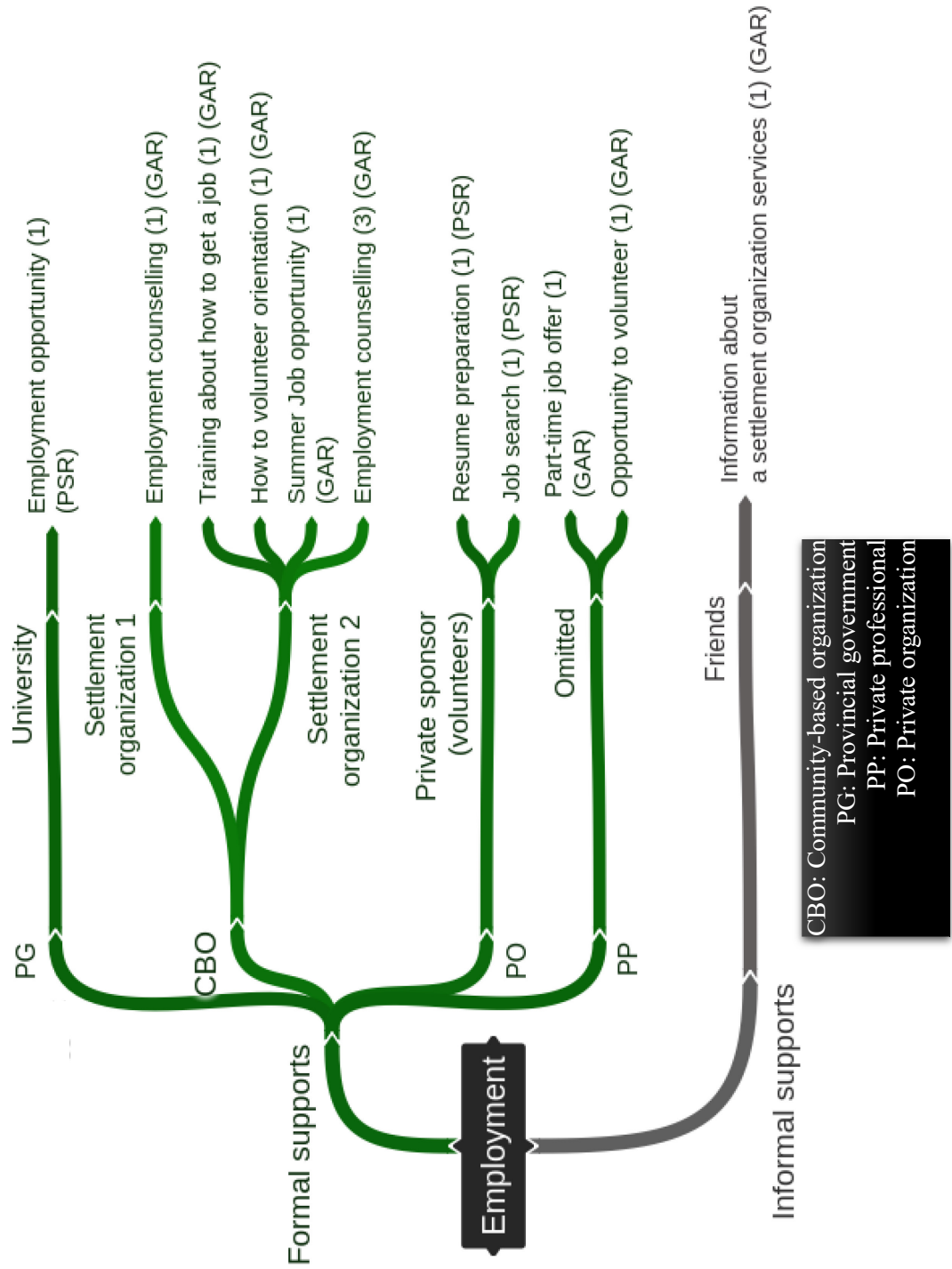
Formal/Informal Supports Accessed

Although there are a number of resources offered by community-based organizations, government, and universities to support people in their job search, among the participants seeking a job, Julia was the only one to receive adequate formal support. Figure 11 indicates the supports the youth accessed. Julia received online training, employment counselling, and orientation to volunteer as well as participated in a program that helped her to find a summer job. In this process, she was offered a position by a

private professional in one of the places she was volunteering. Julia's experience highlights how positive the outcomes can be when youth access adequate support in the job search process:

*I worked during summertime. The job was provided to me by [organization].
Counselling at [organization]. So, I did the training, I learned how to do my
résumé... I learned how to do interview, everything about the job and the
Canadian culture job. After that they help me to find a job. It was a summer job.*
(Julia)

Figure 14 *Employment – Supports accessed*



Anna was starting to look for a job, but at the time of the interview she had only accessed employment counselling at one settlement organization. In a different settlement organization, Joseph and Leonard had also accessed employment counseling, but both decided to prioritize their studies – although Joseph was planning to start seeking a job again.

Ezel was trying to find a job without any formal guidance, and he experienced discrimination from the staff at one organization. From friends, he received the information that another organization could support him with that, and he was planning to explore this resource. These friends were the only source of informal support identified in the employment area.

Finally, Ray received some support from the private sponsor volunteers in the first year. She was able to find a casual job at the university during the school year; however, barriers and challenges also affected her experience, as discussed next.

Barriers and Challenges

As Nunn et al. (2014) point out, insufficient access to support and information concerning employment is one of the barriers that youth from refugee backgrounds face in a resettlement country. This was the experience of Ezel. Insufficient support reflected the scarce informal sources he accessed. This scarcity could be a result of the limitations of Ezel's social networks, indicating that his personal relationships were not able to provide him with support in the job search. It could also be an indication that Ezel was marginalized in relation to social bonds and social bridges. For Ezel, the lack of guidance was so significant that he did not even know that he could look for jobs on the Internet:

I don't know at the Internet I can find job. I don't know. (Ezel)

Ezel had no previous work experience and was still in the English learning process. After more than one year living in Halifax, he also had no volunteer experience, which could have helped him to improve his English skills and start making some social connections. As he did not know how to find a job by himself, he was trying to use the resources that were available to him, including his (limited) personal networks:

Sometimes I ask people if, if you have... if you have work tell me. No problem. I work with you. (Ezel)

In the case of Anna, although her father was making efforts to prevent her from the need of work, family responsibility and financial needs were pushing her into the labour market; a situation that Shakya et al. (2010) also identifies in their study in Toronto. As Anna mentioned:

I'll looking for a job part-time after the school... I need help my dad... (Anna)

As Nunn et al. (2014) identified, family can support youth to resume education and postpone the need of working; however, for that, parents must have conditions that allow them to sustain their children. As Anna's experience illustrates, without financial stability, the need to help the family prevails, which may potentially affect her educational pathways and career aspirations (Nunn et al., 2014). At the time of the interview, she had not yet started her job search, so further challenges could not be identified in her experience.

The need to work while studying raises another issue for this group of youth. As they all prioritize education over work, it is really challenging to find a job that does not conflict with their school time. They were mostly trying to find part-time jobs. This is particularly evident among the university students, Leonard and Ray, as their school

workload was considerable and demanding on their time:

*Some [people ask me if] I want to work... That's good question, because the first thing – I just graduated from [English course] two months ago, and... now, how can I study and work? I don't know, like, I have to work with my English... (...)
Plus, I don't have time for it... From eight... From nine to three-thirty [university classes], is full-time. And your homework... That's no any time for work.*

(Leonard)

Yeah, looking for job. I had one... I was working, I had one [job], that was great, but it was colliding with my studies. My classes are in the morning and I couldn't do it. (Ray)

For Ray, even though she was a university student, she was not finding any job opportunity. As Nunn et al. (2014) found, “education does not necessarily mediate the ability to find a job” (p. 1215). She was hired for one part-time and one casual position at the university in the first year. Then, although she made some effort to find a summer job, she was not successful. As she also did not receive any guidance to volunteer, her summer time in Halifax was mainly an experience of isolation and boredom. Just before the summer was over, she found a position at one organization, but had to leave it because of her class schedule. At the time of the interview, she was waiting for the approval of her student loan and depending on the savings she earned during the first year to support herself. She was, then, intensively trying to find any job that could help her with the new rent and food expenses, as the private sponsor was not responsible for her housing provision anymore. Besides the lack of guidance and class schedule, other barriers were affecting her ability to find a job:

People need experience, but my question was like, people need experience but whatever, something that you did that before they wouldn't recognize you. So, it was so hard for us to get a job. There is the most experience, now where will we get this experience if you've never been to Canada? (Ray)

Ray had a rich background in terms of working, studying, and volunteering during her pre-migration period. She also had Canadian experience working at the university. However, none of these experiences were recognized as assets:

So, you have to really look for something. And wherever you go, they say experience. That is one of the hardest thing that, well, most of us are facing here: getting jobs, and like, carrying yourself, supporting yourself... it's one of the hardest thing. (Ray)

Ray's experience revealed aspects of discrimination and racism in the local labour market (Mullaly, 2007; Dominelli, 2003; Shields et al., 2006; Stewart et al., 2008), although she did not identify any explicit experience regarding these issues. Apart from the conflict of schedule, her English skills, local experience, and level of education were not a problem. In comparison with the other participants, she was the most qualified. Still, she was facing significant barriers in her job search. She was lacking guidance even on the employment resources within her university, such as information about jobs typically offered for students, which could have given her more flexibility in terms of schedule. All of these elements raised a question about whether 'Canadian experience' was being used as an excuse not to hire her. With so many obstacles, Ray projected her expectations of a better life in Canada to post-graduation from school:

My first thing is just to graduate, to get my education because that's... that's one

thing I'll feel when I graduate and get a good job: then my life will change...

(Ray)

In the case of Ezel, discrimination was a more explicit experience, and indicated the existence of stereotypes towards Syrian people from refugee backgrounds in one organization. In looking for employment support, he was told by a member of staff that Syrian refugees prefer to stay at home rather than work, as this dialogue revealed:

Ezel: I go, I went to... to the agency to find job. I tell, I tell them I want to job, I want to find job.

Interviewer: And they were helping you?

Ezel: Not yet, but, because... I understand for them, that is no easy. Difficult to find job. And some Syrian find job and after two, after one week, or two week, or one month, they don't like that job. They... "I want to stay at home", she said.

Interviewer: She said this to you.

Ezel: Yes, they [Syrians] want to stay at home. That is very difficult and...for example... Agency feel I work just two week, or one week, or two week, and I want to... I don't want to work [meaning they think he does not want to work after some weeks].

Ezel was having a really hard time trying to find a job; he had no informal supports, and the formal support he was accessing was not meeting his needs. As a result, he was not being successful in his job search. Table 6 synthesizes barriers and challenges identified in this research regarding integration of youth from refugee backgrounds in employment.

Table 6 *Employment – Barriers and challenges*

Integration Area	Barriers and Challenges
Employment	Lack of guidance. Conflict of schedule classes/work. Family responsibilities. Lack of pre-migration experience. Pre-migration work experience not recognized. Insufficient English skills. Discrimination. Lack of local experience.

Discussion

Through formal and informal sources of support, Julia accessed important resources in employment. These supports fostered her integration, which indicated a welcoming community for her. In her case, social bridges played a relevant role in offering her a job opportunity. This experience highlights the importance of programs that provide employment support for youth and that foment networks between these youth and local employers.

Several indicators of an unresponsive community emerged in this area. Ray lacked supports to provide her with guidance and/or opportunities to work. The requirement of a ‘Canadian experience’ was still a barrier for her even though she had gained this experience at the university. This was a strong indication of discrimination, as Shields et al. (2006) discuss. In the case of Ezel, discrimination was also a barrier identified, as he reported the existence of stereotypes towards Syrians from refugee backgrounds in a formal source of support. Formal and informal supports as well as social bonds and social bridges were unresponsive to their needs in this area.

Although experiencing some challenges, Ana, Joseph, and Leonard had limited use of supports in employment at the time of the interview due to their wish to prioritize their education. Still, it was possible to identify an indicator of an unresponsive community in Ana's experiences because her need to work pointed to a precarious financial situation of her family.

Conclusion

When it comes to looking for a job, the youth participants in this research illustrated a diversity of experiences that brought important indications of how welcoming Halifax was for each one of them. In accordance with the findings of Nunn et al (2014), no pattern was identified here. Their level of education did have an influence on their employment situation but did not appear to determine their opportunities – a low level of education was not a barrier for all of them, and a higher level of education did not increase the possibilities of finding a job. In this sample, the support they received (or did not receive) after their landing was more significant for their integration than their work and/or educational backgrounds. Other factors such as country of origin seemed to interact with their job opportunities, once more reinforcing the idea that the community was more welcoming to some groups of refugees than to others, as identified by Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014).

Julia's experience illustrates how relevant formal employment support is for youth from refugee backgrounds. She was young, with no previous work experience, still in the English learning process, and on the way to completing her secondary education. She accessed all the support she needed and received a job offer that was compatible with her school schedule in the end. Her experience indicated that the community may be very

welcoming to some youth, even though they do not have a high level of fluency in the official language, work experience, and/or qualifications.

Similarly, Ezel's experience illustrates how inadequate formal support and lack of informal support may affect the outcomes in employment. Discrimination was a finding in his case, although he did not recognize it as such. Negative stereotypes about Syrian people from refugee backgrounds worked as a barrier for him when he accessed a formal source of support, which affected the quality of the service he received. The impact of discrimination from a service provider may be noticed in his impressions of how difficult it was to find a job in Halifax. These findings on discrimination are in consonance with those discussed by Shields et al. (2006) and Stewart et al. (2008).

Leonard and Joseph, although planning to work, were postponing their job search due to their studies. For Leonard, being at the university was a big challenge due to the work overload related to academic tasks. For Joseph, improving his English skills was a priority. Anna exemplified how family responsibilities may affect these youth. Her father was trying to avoid it, but she had already realized that working was a necessity and a responsibility for her.

Ray's experience presented another situation. Even though she was fluent in English, had work experience and was qualified, she was not able to find a job that did not collide with her studies; even within the university. Whether this was due to the lack of guidance, or because of racism/discrimination, or a combination of both, was something to be pondered.

In contrast with the Nunn et al. (2014) study that identified personal networks as a source of support for employment, youth participants of this research did not mention

informal sources of support helping them in the job search. Similar to Kazemipur's (2006) findings, this finding signaled that their personal networks were very limited or that people within those networks were also struggling in the employment area and, therefore, were not able to offer any help to the youth.

Chapter 7: Health

This chapter first indicates the formal and informal supports that helped the youth in accessing health services in Halifax, which are illustrated in Figure 15. Then, it discusses barriers and challenges identified in their experiences, which are summarized in Table 7. Lastly, drawing on the findings and on the conceptual framework, this chapter discusses the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth and how these experiences outlined Halifax as a welcoming and/or unresponsive community.

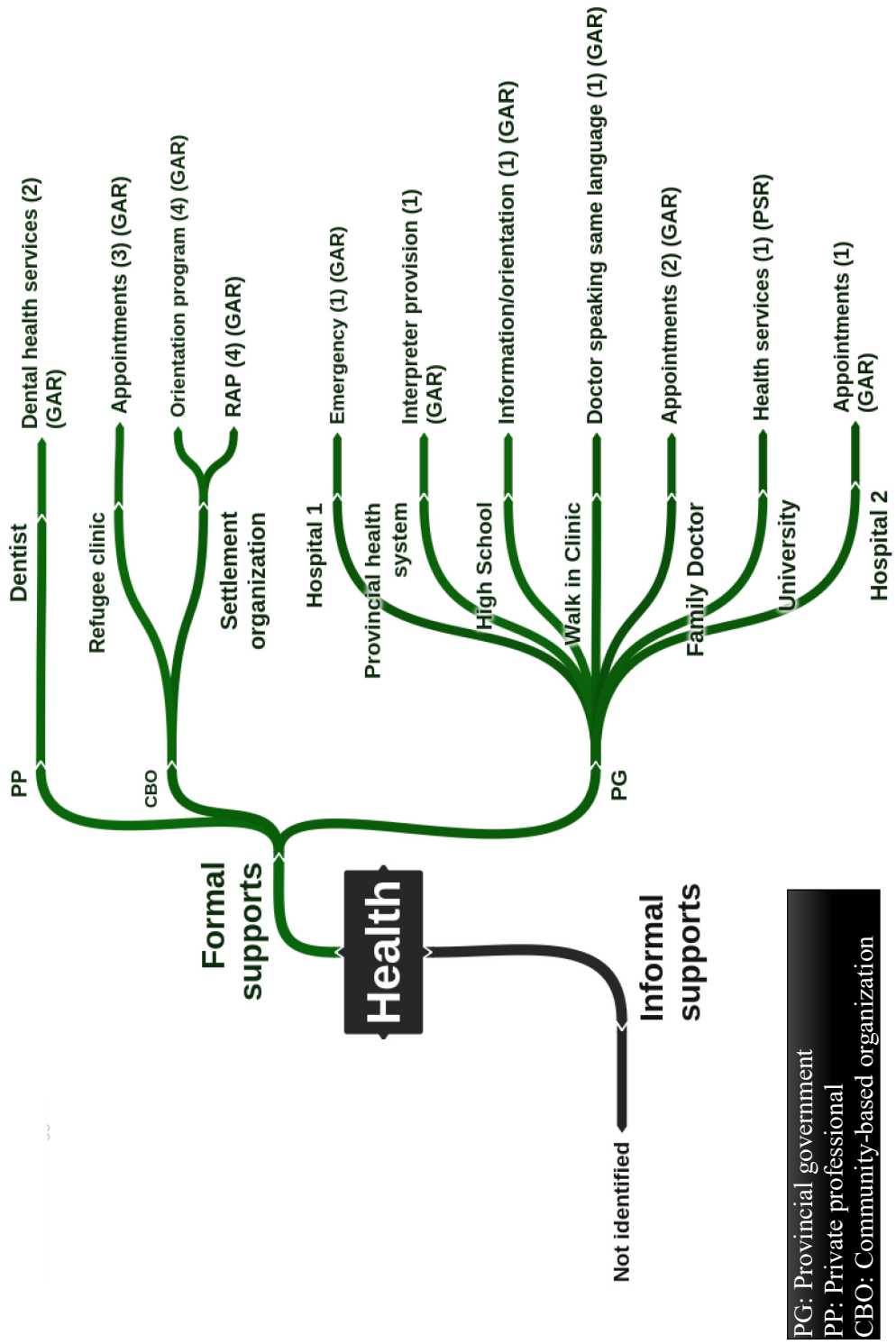
The experiences the youth reported in health were remarkably different between GARs and the PSR. While GARs were receiving assistance as part of the RAP and a settlement organization orientation program, the PSR was unaware of other sources of health services available other than those provided by the university. Some of the youth interviewed also demonstrated a connection between health and social supports accessed (or not accessed). Among these social supports, they mentioned family, friends, and community-based organizations as having an important role in their wellbeing (Edge et al., 2014).

Formal/Informal Supports Accessed

Figure 15 indicates that the youth accessed a wide range of health services. Formal supports mentioned by GARs were the services that settlement organizations provided to help them in navigating the local health system. These services were part of the RAP, which included interpretation, guidance to access health facilities, and appointment arrangements (IRCC, n.d.-b). The youth also accessed interpretation through the provincial health system. Public schools provided high school students with information and orientation about the health system navigation. These supports were

important to removing barriers in accessing health care, such as communication and unfamiliarity with the services available (Preston-Thomas, 2015). However, only GARs were accessing these formal supports. The PSR received medical assistance from the university health services, and sometimes she went to a hospital for tests.

Figure 15 Health – Supports accessed



The experience of the GARs youth reinforced the importance of the initial support to help newcomers in accessing the local health system. As Julia said,

First, when we came to [organization], like... they were doing our appointments, and after, like, long, long time, around five months... six months... we start to do everything by ourselves. (Julia)

Still, part of the basic services for GARs, which is the provision of interpreters, is an essential aspect of the health system accessibility. This was especially true for those experiencing a delay in accessing English classes; interpretation was fundamental to complete basic daily activities, including those related to health. As Ezel described,

Yes, I called [organization], I want interpreter. I want to go, for example, I want to buy... I want to buy food, (...) I want to go to blood clinic, or I want make an appointment.... (Ezel)

Another interesting aspect of access to health services was reported by Julia. As discussed by Preston-Thomas (2015), under-immunization is a common issue among resettled refugees. In this sense, Julia mentioned the assistance that she and her family received, but she could not understand exactly why:

Since we were in town we went to the hospital to do some blood collection and... vaccines? Vaccines...! Yeah... We did a lot of vaccines... Because, like, when you are new in Canada, so you have to do that, I think.... (Julia)

These examples indicated that, even still feeling lost in the system, GARs received enough assistance to access health services. There was no complaint identified in the interviews about the way health professionals treated the youth. All of them reported that professionals were nice and kind and that usually they had their health needs

met. No informal support was identified in this area. The youth received all the information and guidance to access health services in the city from formal sources of supports.

Barriers and Challenges

Some important issues emerged from the interviews regarding access to health services. Among GARs, challenges in accessing the health system included the price of dental treatments and the long waiting hours in the emergency at a hospital. The PSR experienced unsuitability of the services. Table 7 summarizes the challenges/barriers identified in this area.

Table 7 Health – Barriers and challenges

Integration Area	Barriers and Challenges
Health	Delay in receiving emergency assistance at a hospital. Expensive dental treatment. Lack of informal supports. Unawareness of public health system (PSR). Unsuitable health services (PSR).

Regarding dental health services, only Julia and Leonard reported that they had accessed it. Still, Leonard expressed concerns about the price of his treatment, which was preventing him from receiving all the assistance he needed:

Here the health... health service are good, but there are teeth... For example, my Dentist... [I] Called him... Now, if I want to fix my teeth here, I have to pay, like, twenty thousand... This number, for a student... That's... I can't... I can't do it, of course... And it's very important. (Leonard)

Leonard had also experienced the need to access emergency services at a hospital, and the long waiting hours for assistance were something unexpected. He also considered the access to doctors limited and difficult in comparison with his home country. As he pointed out,

This problem not just for refugees, for all the people in Halifax... If you... Now that I go to the emergency, you can see people wait four, five hours... We don't have this in Middle East or in Syria, either In Syria, like... (...) that's easy to find doctor... For example, you cross my neighbourhood and here's doctor, here's doctor, the doctor... And here we can't find doctors, just hospital or centers....

(Leonard)

Finally, Ray was having a hard time trying to solve her health problem using the university assistance. Still, she did not have enough information about how to navigate the public health system. As a result, she was unable to find alternatives for her situation⁵. She went to a hospital only to do a couple of tests, as referred to by the university doctors. As she described,

They say there was nothing. And I say, "what was disturbing me then?" I went, like, three times, I went to the hospital. But they say it was nothing. And I say, what is it, then? It's not even better.... (Ray)

Deficiency in the private sponsor's guidance associated with the lack of informal support prevented Ray from autonomously navigating the public health system and receiving adequate care.

⁵ The health problem was omitted to avoid identification of the participant.

Discussion

The existence of formal sources of support helping all the youth who were GARs to access health care is indicative of a welcoming community. These supports were part of the RAP and removed barriers that newcomers usually face in accessing health services, such as communication barriers, unfamiliarity with the system, and difficulty in making appointment arrangements, as Preston-Thomas (2015) points out. At the time of the interview, none of them mentioned any problems in relation to the health professionals that served them, which was also a positive sign in relation to the community. Their satisfaction with the health care was an element fostering their integration.

As a GAR, Leonard also received guidance to access health care. He also accessed dental care, but the cost of the treatment prevented him from concluding it. This indicated that the community was welcoming when providing him with enough support to navigate the health system, but unresponsive when the treatment was not part of the public service provision and should be financed at his own expense. In addition, Leonard did not access information about alternatives and more accessible oral health care services available for people from refugee backgrounds.

Ray did have access to health services, but they were not able to meet her needs. She was not receiving information about alternative health services from any source of support. Her frustration with the services and the persistence of her symptoms also reinforced the unresponsive aspect of the community in relation to her health needs.

Conclusion

Among GARs, formal supports were an essential part of their navigation in the

public health system. Access to interpretation, guidance to the facilities, information about the services operation, and appointment arrangements were fundamental to familiarizing them with the system and building their autonomy in accessing it. Youth reported important challenges; remarkably the price of dental treatments and long waiting hours to access emergency service at hospitals. In this sense, even though they did not mention any informal support, this absence was not making them vulnerable in relation to access to health services.

For the PSR, the lack of guidance from her private sponsor to access the public health system was preventing her from finding alternative services that could meet her needs. She did not mention any informal source of support, such as other university students. In this way, this lack of support was clearly increasing Ray's vulnerability in comparison with the assistance provided for GARs. Regarding health, the lack of formal and informal assistance was affecting her integration process and presenting a risk of marginalization.

Chapter 8: Housing

This chapter first indicates the formal and informal supports accessed that helped the youth and their families in finding a place to live in Halifax, which Figure 16 illustrates. Then, the second session identifies barriers and challenges youth faced, which are summarized in Table 8. Finally, drawing on the findings and on the conceptual framework, this chapter discusses the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth and how these experiences outlined Halifax as a welcoming and/or unresponsive community.

According to Ager and Strang (2008), Esses et al. (2010) and Hyndman (2011), the access to affordable, secure, and suitable housing is a vital part of the integration process for newcomers. For GARs, the support to find a permanent residence and basic furniture is part of the RAP, and was provided by a settlement agency. For PSRs, housing provision is a private sponsor's responsibility during the first year of resettlement. The experiences that the youth reported in this area varied from feeling very satisfied to fearing homelessness. This wide range of perceptions indicated strengths and limitations of the supports available in the city.

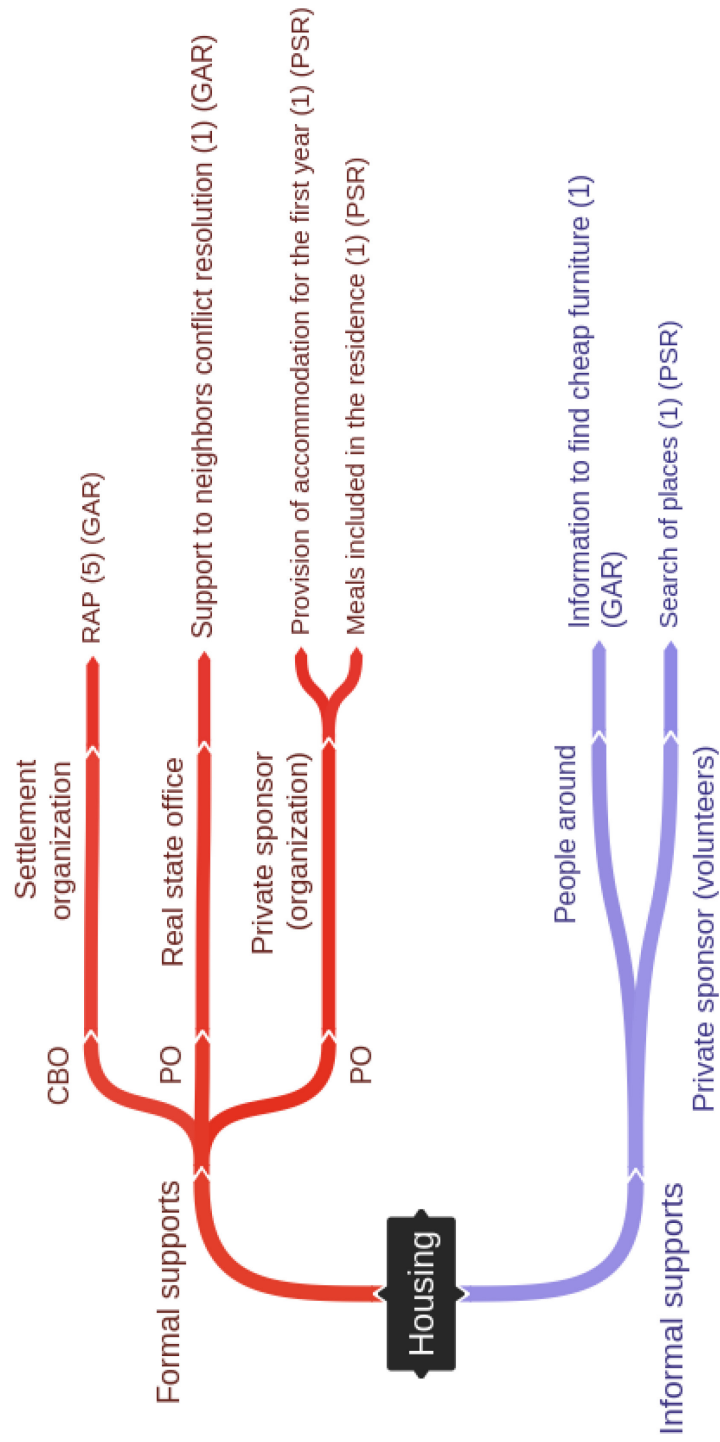
Formal/Informal Supports Accessed

Figure 16 indicates that formal sources of support provided the youth with housing as part of RAP and a private sponsor's responsibilities. As an additional formal source of support, Leonard mentioned the real estate office as being responsible for mediating conflicts among neighbours due to the noise of his family's children.

A few informal sources of support provided some of the participants with information about how to find furniture and search for a new place to live. Because of

that, those who were trying to move to a place that better met their families' needs were facing many challenges to do so. When it comes to accessing suitable and affordable housing, the needs of the youth were being partially met.

Figure 16 *Housing – Supports accessed*



PP: Private professional
 CBO: Community-based organization

As part of the RAP, GARs were hosted in a hotel during the initial period, and then placed in a permanent residence. They mentioned a settlement agency as the only formal source of support in this area during their first year of resettlement. For the PSR, the private sponsor provided her with a university residence including meals at no cost during the first year, and this was also the only source of formal support she mentioned.

All participants found a permanent residence within the first two weeks of arrival, which indicated that the organizations were able to provide adequate support in a short period of time. In this sense, for the first resettlement year there was no indication of lack of service provision. For Anna and Ezel, the opportunity to see and agree with the house they would live in before moving in, the adequate size of the place for their family, and the perception of the neighbourhood as a friendly and safe space made their experience very positive. They did not mention the wish to move to another house. As they expressed:

I like it so much, everything... like, every people helpful... When I first come to these places I go, like... I need to go outside... I [got] lost...I don't know how to go home... back to home. I ask for a sir, and then he helped me... Yea... they're so helpful.... (Anna)

Yes [I like it]. Too much because is so quiet. It's a big house. Big house. I have space. I have my room. (Ezel)

Ray mentioned this initial provision as an important support for her new life in Halifax:

Basically, when I came for the first, one year that I stayed like, in the residence, the life there was not hard because there was a supper that they gave you from the

school. (Ray)

However, some of the participants experienced the lack of choice and suitability of the places they were living in. Also, after the first year was over, Ray had to face some challenges regarding her housing situation.

Barriers and Challenges

The perceptions of Ezel and Anna about the place they were living in was quite different from the perceptions of the other participants. Among the barriers and challenges experienced by the youth, Leonard and Julia did not have the opportunity to see their houses before moving in, which indicated the lack of assessment of their needs. As illustrated by them:

We didn't see the home, so... Just went there and nothing at home... [...]And it takes around one year to find what, like, everything you want... [referring to furniture]. (Julia)

They didn't show us the house... they said, "That's been, like... You have to move...." (Leonard)

As a result, for Leonard and Julia the housing experience was a combination of lack of choice and unsuitable accommodations. Julia also reported that her place did not meet the needs of people with disabilities in her family. As they explained,

Here... small... and is old, kind of old... My town house is old. (Leonard)

It's small... and it's not comfortable. (Julia)

Unsuitable housing was also experienced by Joseph, who had a second child after his arrival. With that, finding a bigger place to live was a common demand among these three participants, as illustrated by Joseph:

Maybe I want to leave my apartment because I want two rooms, three rooms, because my family... I have to share the rooms. (Joseph)

Regarding security, only Leonard indicated some issues that prevented him from feeling safe in his neighbourhood. As he described:

Not always [I feel safe]. Sometimes I see people drink, or... And then they sit on the stairs and, you know that, I don't know what they will do, because their mind out. And [in] four months... three or four cars [had their] glasses broken.

(Leonard)

For the youth unsatisfied with their residences, some barriers prevented them from finding a better place. First, the difficulty of finding a bigger house at an affordable price, as Leonard mentioned:

We tried to find other apartment, we couldn't... And now, like, every day, I check online or... Kijiji... It's like, one thousand eight hundred... one thousand... It's really expensive... (Leonard)

Julia mentioned an additional challenge due to the wish to keep studying in the same school, which was limiting her search to certain neighbourhoods. Another barrier as a newcomer was that getting information about houses available in the city was not an easy task. She also faced difficulties when consulting different formal sources of support about this issue.

Here in Halifax, I wanna to stay, like, in the same school, because I like the school... So, I asked my friends, I look at on-line, like, websites, to find a home, and we asked [organization] if we can get help from them to move to a new home... They said, "It's hard", like... "because you're new". We are a big family.

*So, it's hard to look, to find a home. No...So, now we have to... Still looking...
Still looking for home. (Julia)*

Finally, for Ray, after the first year was over, she had to look for another place to live as she could not afford to pay for the university residence. Although she mentioned some support from volunteers of the private sponsor organization, this change caused her some problems. First, she would have to pay the rent, which also meant finding other sources of income:

I had to now survive by my own. I had to look for apartment, to pay. I had to look for a job, and this is way it was so hard. (Ray)

Second, the university residence where she was living included meals, which meant that leaving there also resulted in having additional expenses of food. Additionally, she could not find affordable housing close to the university, which meant more time spent on transportation. As she reported:

*I just wanna move near..., even near the school is expensive, I still want to move near the school because I find it is so hard working because where I stay, I have to walk like seven minutes to take the bus. And I find it so hard during wintertime.
It's very hard for me. So I am thinking I might move near the school. (Ray)*

Moreover, as she was struggling to find a job and she did not have an answer about her loan application, she could not visualize how the costs with rent would be paid in the short term. Finally, in this uncertain context, she still had to maintain her academic performance. All these aspects together were a great source of stress, as illustrated below:

Now I feel like any job that they would give me, I would do because I need to survive. I need money to cover my... my rent and to survive because there is... if I

don't have that, then I'll, I'll be homeless. (Ray)

Among the participants, Ray represented the most vulnerable situation identified in this research in relation to housing. The social isolation, lack of information, and difficulty in finding a job were pushing her into a complex situation that was clearly threatening her integration process and increasing her risk of marginalization, even being a university student. As she was not aware of other formal sources of support, such as settlement organizations and services available at the university, the feeling of isolation and the fear of homelessness were part of her experience as a newcomer in Halifax.

Table 8 summarizes the findings regarding barriers and challenges in accessing affordable and suitable housing in Halifax:

Table 8 *Housing – Barriers and challenges*

Integration Area	Barriers and Challenges
Housing	<p>Lack of assessment of the youth family's needs.</p> <p>Lack of opportunity to choose a place to live.</p> <p>Availability of suitable and affordable housing.</p> <p>Availability of affordable housing close to the university/school.</p> <p>Lack of formal sources of support to find another place after the first accommodation was provided.</p>

Discussion

Regarding housing, Anna and Ezel experienced a welcoming aspect of the community that fostered their integration. They could choose their houses, which were adequate for their families' needs. Although no informal support was identified,

settlement organizations provided the assistance they required and found good options for them. Both expressed feelings of satisfaction, and safety reinforced the existence of an adequate service provision for them.

Conversely, Julia, Joseph, Ray, and Leonard struggled with accessing suitable and affordable housing. Formal supports were able to initially provide them with a place to live; but after that, these supports were no longer responsive or able to meet their needs. Feelings of frustration and the persistent search for other houses illustrated that the barriers and challenges were compromising their integration. In the case of Ray, this lack of assistance associated with barriers and challenges she was facing in employment added the fear of homelessness to her experience as a newcomer in Halifax. These elements were a strong indicative of a marginalization process in an unresponsive community.

Conclusion

Based on all these experiences, it is possible to identify that, at least for the first year of resettlement, formal sources of supports had the capacity to provide housing for GARs and the PSR for an affordable price, although the accommodations were not always suitable. Most of them felt safe in their neighbourhoods. Financial challenges were, again, affecting their lives, and preventing these youth from finding a more suitable place in which to live. However, GARs did not mention the fear of homelessness. In both cases (PSR and GARs), there was limited access to information and to sources of formal supports in this area, especially after the first year. The youth did not mention other sources available in this city, such as programs run by Housing Nova Scotia. Those unsatisfied with their housing conditions were making efforts to improve their housing condition; however, they were not getting enough support from the host community in

accessing enough information or finding affordable and suitable places available.

As Hyndman (2011) states, based on a review of several studies on housing issues affecting refugees in Canada, “the main message appears to be that affordability of housing in the most expensive Canadian cities puts resettled refugees at the economic and social margins of society” (p. 20). Halifax is not among the most expensive Canadian cities (Brannan, 2017); yet, four of the six interviewed youth were struggling to access suitable and affordable houses. For GARs, this situation was likely a consequence of the number of refugees resettled in Halifax in 2016, which was much higher than usual (ISANS, 2016). This demand pressured settlement organizations and challenged their capacity of finding affordable and suitable housing for all their clients (which in some cases was still possible).

Chapter 9: Social Connections

The structure of this chapter slightly differs from the others in the findings of this thesis due to the existence of two categories of informal supports: social bonds and social bridges. Therefore, the first session examines the formal supports that helped the youth to connect with people. Then, the second session explores the social bonds, followed by an examination of the social bridges for the youth. Finally, drawing on the findings and on the conceptual framework, this chapter discusses the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth and how these experiences outlined Halifax as a welcoming and/or unresponsive community.

Social networks may be an important way for newcomers to access important resources and information in a new country (Kazemipur, 2006; Nunn et al., 2014; Shakya et al., 2010). The youth participants of this research did not know anyone living in Halifax or Canada before their landing. This means that all of them had to rebuild their social networks. However, Ana, Julia, Leonard, Ezel, and Joseph had their families included in the resettlement process. Ray came to Canada by herself, meaning that her relationships in Halifax relied essentially on secondary networks, as defined by Esses et al. (2010).

Formal Supports Accessed

Through community-based organizations and schools, the youth were able to establish social networks that, in some cases, were essential in providing them with support and guidance. For Julia, Ana, Ezel, Leonard, and Joseph, all GARs from Syria, the first contact with local people and people from the same cultural background was at the hotel where they were initially hosted as part of the RAP. Due to the high number of

refugees arriving in a short period of time, volunteers from different organizations welcomed them and helped them in communicating in English. In some cases, the youth were not able to identify where people helping them at the hotel were from. This experience at the hotel helped them to build a good impression of the city and the people who lived here. As Leonard and Anna said:

There are many volunteers. I know a person... What's his name...? He was a volunteer. [Organization], too, and other people. They helped us, you know, like, [speaking the] same language. And that's good people. (Leonard)

There is so many people helping, like, interpreters, people speaking Arabic... And the hotel, they [were] staying at the hotel all the time, and helping us... There is people, like, they was there volunteering... They [were] good people. They try to make me not scared... like, excited, happy to be here... They make me so happy, and they helped me so much.... (Anna)

After this initial moment, organizations were an important way to support youth in making new social connections. As Anna's interview revealed, most of her social activities were promoted by community-based organizations and her school. She participated in multicultural groups, camping, skiing, kayaking, canoeing, and an exchange program that enabled her to meet youth from another city. As she described:

I have friends... like, at the [organization] ... at the [another organization] ... I meet them, like, they important for me, I love them, they so good. (Anna)

Leonard and Joseph, also through a community-based organization, were meeting people from their own as well as other countries (Arabic speakers) to play soccer weekly. The involvement in different community gardens was also a way for Julia and Leonard to

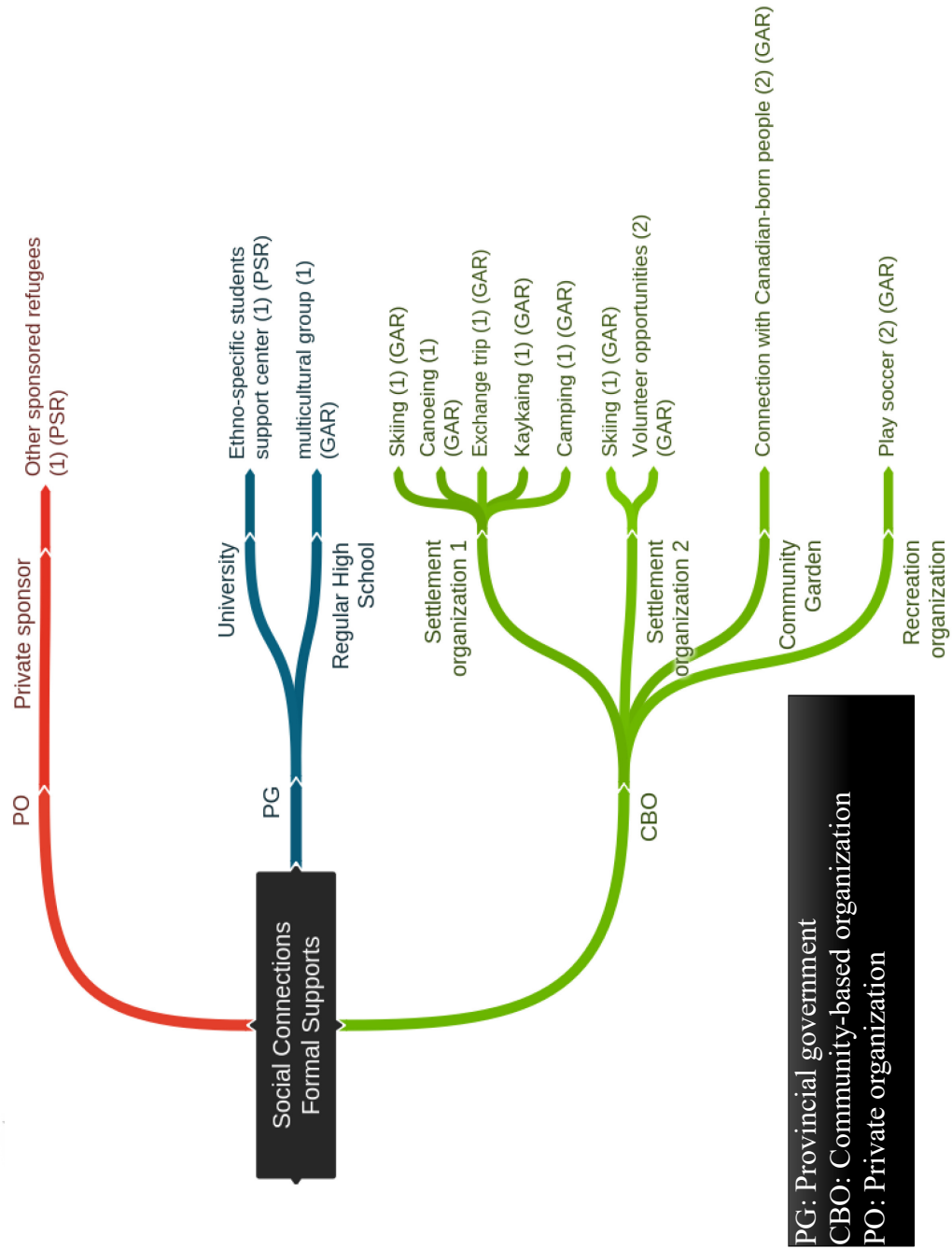
meet people. Through this activity, they were able to connect with some Canadian-born people, which was one of the biggest challenges identified in social connections.

For Julia and Anna, the guidance to access volunteer opportunities was important for them to connect with different people in addition to developing their English skills. Among the participants, they were the only ones with volunteer work experience in Canada. As she said,

I have to communicate with people in another language... So, I start volunteering. That's help me to communicate with people, and to know, like, people. I know a lot of people to help me. (Julia)

Finally, for Ray, the support from an ethno-specific support center at the university was an important resource to connect her with students from a similar cultural background. The private sponsor was also a gateway to connect with other PSR youth. Figure 17 illustrates formal supports that helped the youth in building social networks in Halifax.

Figure 17 *Social connections – Formal supports accessed*



Informal Supports: Social Bonds

For the youth who were GARs, the wave of Syrian refugees resettling in Halifax in the same year created a good context to build relationships with people from their same cultural background. As Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) highlight, the context of resettlement has significant influence in the relationships that refugees build among themselves. In the case of the Syrian youth resettled in Halifax, they started building social bonds at the hotel, which was at the very beginning of their lives in Halifax. In the case of Anna, she re-encountered people she already knew in the asylum country (refugee camp):

Some people, we come together to Canada. Like, we meet each other at the hotel... And some, I know them before... In [asylum country]. Like, we come together. (Anna)

All the youth who were GARs came with their families, which were identified by them as an important source of emotional support in this new stage of their lives:

My dad and my mom is most important for me. (Anna)

My family... My sister and my nephew [are the most important people for him].

Because, I don't have any other people. (Leonard)

The youth emphasized the importance of these social bonds for their wellbeing. Benefits of having friends from similar cultural backgrounds included the opportunity to speak their own language, to share religious beliefs, and to have their own cultural food. As Anna, Julia, and Ray exemplified:

All my friends, they are speaking Arabic. (...) It's make me more comfortable....
(Anna)

If I need help, they help me with... [with] language, maybe to find a place... maybe if I need something, ask my friends... if I need help with, like, studying... job...anything, they help me. (Julia)

In fact now, when they... this people from your country, they make you feel at home, “Yea, we eat this one...”, “Now, we know that you came to Canada. They have different kind food... so come home. Feel... Feel free...”, “Yea! Come and cook whatever you want...” So, you have a variety of choices to do. They cook also and then eat.... (Ray)

We are all Christians, yes, but not from the same church (...) They have different churches, but yes, we meet. But, even if they have different churches, we still worship the same God... So, we got to read the Bible, the same Bible that we always... And we always encourage one another, this is how it is... Oh yes, that’s one thing that has helped me so much... Good help meet them, yes.... (Ray)

In the case of Leonard, as discussed in chapters five and six, social bonds enabled him to access information about scholarships and free training, access to university, translation services, and other supports that he was not accessing through organizations. As Kazemipur (2006) and Landolt and Goldring (2015) point out, social interactions have an important role in shaping immigrants’ access to resources, and in Leonard’s case they were essential to foster his integration. As he explained:

For example, I listen people in the mosque, after time we become friends... If I have any question, I ask him or have any help to translate, to go... People in the mosque... Sometimes, they said, “We don’t know, ask [organization].” (Leonard)

In his case, social bonds were so strong that even the use of English could be neglected

for most of his day:

Sometimes I speak English with some people... muslims, like... I met in... For example, today I met a person in the prayer room at [university]. He doesn't speak Arabic. I speak in English [with him]. If I have to speak in English, I speak English. (Leonard)

Anna and Julia mentioned teachers speaking the same language as an important source of support and guidance during their initial period at school. Teachers helped with translations, vocabulary acquisition, education system guidance, information about the city, and even management of discriminatory situations in the classroom. Again, youth perceived the opportunity to use their own language in different environments as an important resource to make their adaptation easier and less stressful. However, when it came to connecting with people from other cultural backgrounds, or Canadian-born people, some challenges arose.

Informal Supports: Social Bridges

Building social bridges turned out to be a more difficult task for the youth. They reported good and bad experiences indicating that more support was necessary in this area. For Julia, the job offer coming from a Canadian professional corroborates the findings of Kazemipur (2006) and Landolt and Goldring (2015) regarding the importance of social networks in exposing immigrants to more resources and shaping their pathways in the host community. Also, Julia's experience once more reinforces the importance of promoting volunteer work for youth from refugee backgrounds to enhance their socialization process (Esses et al., 2010).

In contrast, Julia also reported discriminatory behavior from students at her

school; a finding that the study of Shakya et al. (2010) also identifies. This situation was mitigated by a teacher speaking the same language who supported her and her Syrian classmates (social bond). Still, the school was an important place for Anna and Julia to build relationships with youth from other cultures. This contact was happening not only by attending classes, but also by participating in multicultural groups and other initiatives promoted by their schools.

In the case of Leonard, the help received in the hotel was not limited to the staff and volunteers of the organizations. Guests were also supportive and reinforced the good impressions that he had experienced during his first days in Halifax. As he shared,

My experience was in the hotel here. We meet people... Canadian people came to the hotel, talk with us, help us... And not just me. I remember a friend, or after that we become like a friend... He wants to learn some Arabic and he want, like to help, for somebody. (Leonard)

Leonard also explained that some Canadian-born people approached his family after they moved into a house. According to him, they became friends of his parents and they regularly visited his family. Besides contributing to their socialization, one of these people helped Leonard's family to register their children at the school.

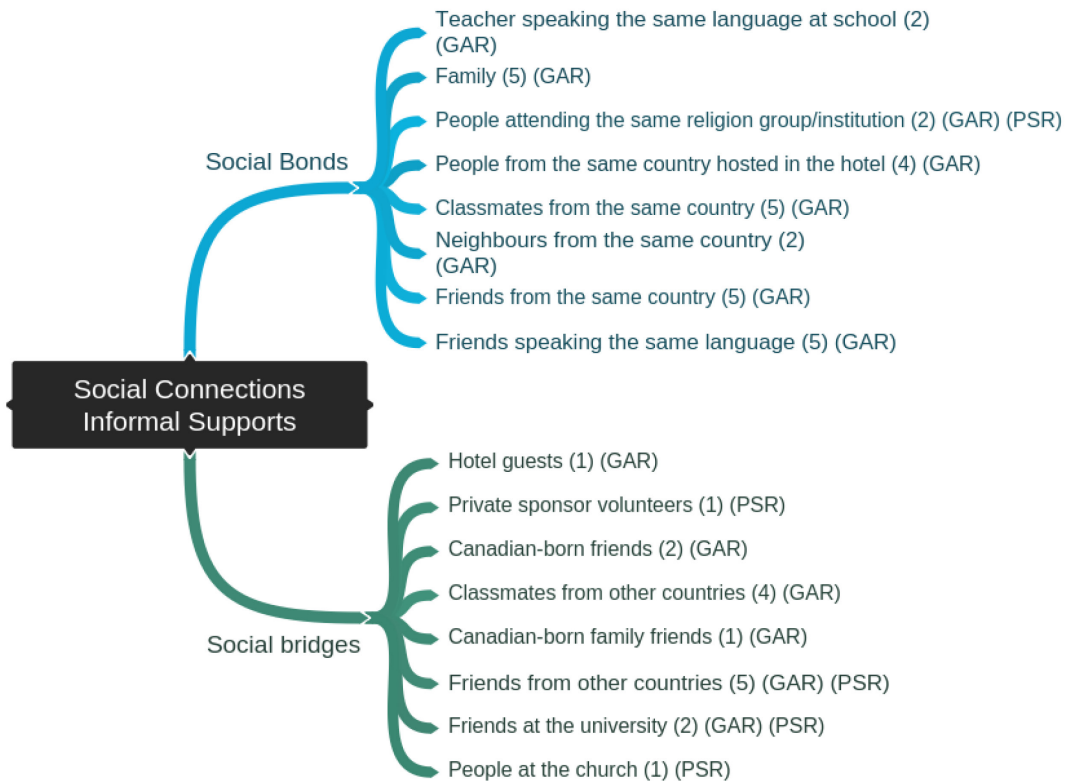
Joseph was intensively trying to connect with Canadian-born people. He had many social connections in Halifax between social bonds and social bridges. Through his social bonds, he connected with people originally from the host community and increased his social networks:

My friend here, from Syria, he have friends, people Canadians... [I asked] "Can we meet your friends?" "Sure." I meet them and speak with them, maybe one day

in the week, I tell them [meaning that he has conversations with these Canadian friends], anyway. (Joseph)

For Ray, attending a church was a way to meet people from different cultural backgrounds; however, the encounters with this social network were limited to the church masses. In terms of social bridges, Ray had a very limited network composed of some students and teachers who were not really close. This contributed to her feelings of social isolation. Figure 18 shows the map of social bonds and social bridges of the youth in Halifax.

Figure 18 *Social connections – Social bridges and social bonds*



Barriers and Challenges

For those learning English, the language barrier was an issue that was preventing them from making more connections with local people. As Julia described,

First, it was hard, because the language is not good, but I tried. When I... when my language get better, so I tried to make friends and to do volunteering and training. So, this is how I make friend and come and get to the people. (Julia)

Although some of the youth were connecting with Canadian-born people, building meaningful relationships with them was really challenging. Besides the language barrier, cultural differences were also restricting their relationships with people originally from the host community:

I think I didn't meet any, like, who were born here... like, just my teacher at the [organization]. (Anna)

I don't have any friend Canadian... I speak with Canadian. But I don't have any friend Canadian, or I can say, not yet. Not yet. But I have friends Syrian, I have. (Ezel)

The people who I know, from Syria... like, same culture, same language... But, other people, like Canadian people... so I... so I have to learn about their culture, their background and the language... and how to connect with the people. (Julia)
I don't have other Canadian friends... I mean, you if... Because, I don't know them... I see them, like, with their friends... How can I be, like, inside their group? And I don't know any one of them.... (Leonard)

For Ray, apart from the students' Christian group she was attending, it was not possible to identify strong connections that provided her with emotional support. When asked about who the most important people were for her in Halifax, she vaguely mentioned teachers, volunteers, and some classmates:

Those... [private sponsor] students and some other students that I met and then they get to know me better, they get to know who I am... Yeah, they also, they are also supportive. (...) Then the professors... I met some good professors. (Ray)

This common challenge among the youth pointed out the existence of barriers in Halifax regarding social bridges between newcomers and people originally from this host community. With a few exceptions, these connections were not happening.

Finally, in contrast with the youth who were GARs, Ray did not come to Canada with her family. She mentioned a few friends from similar cultural backgrounds as

important people for her, which was something substantial for GARs. Such social isolation, in addition to other frustrations in other integration areas, were affecting her wellbeing.

Again, she was the most vulnerable situation identified among the participants.

As she expressed,

I started thinking of the people that I left behind and now. I had never stayed in such a house alone, and I was here alone. So bad... at least during the day time I was with people, but when you go back to the residence, I stayed alone.

Sometimes I could cry. (Ray)

Table 9 summarizes challenges and barriers identified in this area.

Table 9 *Social connections – Barriers and challenges*

Integration Area		Barriers and Challenges
Social Connections	Social bonds	Social isolation (PSR). Lack of family support (PSR).
	Social Bridges	Approaching Canadian-born people. Developing deeper relationships with Canadian-born people. Language barrier (GARs). Discrimination.

Discussion

Clearly, for Leonard, Joseph, Ezel, Ana, and Julia, all GARs from Syria, it was much easier to build social bonds, especially because all of them resettled with their families and with many other refugees from the same country in the same period of time. In many situations, these social bonds expanded their flow of resources and fostered their

integration, as exemplified by Leonard's experience in accessing education. For Julia, her connection with a local professional (social bridge) opened an opportunity to work. These are indicative of a welcoming community that was related to their country of origin and period of resettlement. In this case, being from Syria and resettling in the years of the Syrian refugee crises were important factors that facilitated their integration among their social bonds. This highlighted the influence that the resettlement context had in the social connections of the youth, as Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) identify in the experiences of resettled Colombians in Canada.

Conversely, for Ray, the PSR, the construction of both social bonds and social bridges did not happen easily. Ray also lacked references of available formal supports for permanent residents and people from similar cultural background, such as settlement and cultural organizations that could foster her social connections in Halifax. Ray did not find a community as proactive and interested in contributing to her socialization, as Leonard and Julia did. Once more, similarly to Riaño-Alcalá and Goldring (2014) findings, this indicated that the Syrian conflict was likely influencing the social relationships that the youth were developing in Halifax and making the community more welcoming and solidary to Syrian refugees than to refugees from other countries. In Ray's experience, the community was very unresponsive and her social isolation was pushing her towards marginalization in the social connections area. Depressive feelings were also an indicative of an unresponsive community. Ray's experience in social connections was also related to her kind of sponsorship. As opposed to the youth who were GARs, she was not resettled with her family, and her perceptions indicated that the community was not adequately equipped to support a youth who resettled privately and alone.

In relation to social bridges, all the youth reported that it was difficult to approach and build meaningful relationships with Canadian-born people. Although the youth demonstrated interest in expanding these networks, clearly more support was necessary to remove barriers and promote these connections. Thus, in relation to social bridges, they indicated that Halifax needed to make considerable improvements in promoting social interchanges and meaningful relationships between newcomers and Canadian-born people. This could help the city to move from being an unresponsive community to a more welcoming one.

Conclusion

The youth built part of their social connections with the support of community-based organizations. By promoting social activities, volunteer opportunities, and recreation, these organizations exposed the youth to a range of social networks. Some of these networks were very supportive and created new opportunities for them.

Connecting with people from similar cultural backgrounds or from other cultures (not Canadian) was in general much easier and provided the youth some comfort in the adaptation period. Later on, the social bonds were an important source of emotional support and sometimes guidance that enabled them to access more resources in the city.

On the other hand, connecting with Canadian-born people was much more challenging. Although the youth were willing to have more significant relationships with people originally from the host community, most of them struggled with approaching these people, which indicated the existence of barriers. Differences between the youth who were GARs and the PSR emerged from the interviews. Ray, the PSR, did not resettle with family members, and this increased her feelings of social isolation. She also

struggled more than the other youth with building meaningful relationships, whether they were social bonds or social bridges.

Chapter 10: I Could Stay Here Forever... if I Find a Job: Experiences of Integration and Marginalization of the Youth

This chapter integrates the discussion and findings of this research to deeply examine the factors that shape Halifax as a welcoming and unresponsive community, understanding community as the context in which the youth experienced integration and marginalization through the interaction with the actors that compose this community. The chapter also discusses the factors identified that intersect with the experiences of the youth in different integration areas, such as age and level of education, and that contribute to their integration or marginalization process. Furthermore, it analyzes the relevance and outcomes of each area in the integration process of the youth. Thirdly, it discusses the association of the experiences of the youth with a set of feelings and perceptions. Finally, it presents a review of the conceptual framework to incorporate all these analyses.

Youth and the Context of Reception

The youth formed a heterogeneous group and their experiences as newcomers in Halifax were very diverse in each integration area and in relation to their social bonds and social bridges. The youth were in the early stages of adjustment, as discussed by Stein (1981) and CCR (1988).

In most cases, supports, challenges, and barriers occurred in all the six integration areas analyzed in this research. Sometimes, they accessed more resources than struggled with barriers and challenges. Sometimes, the supports they accessed were not enough to remove the barriers and challenges they faced. As a result of the equation involving supports, barriers and challenges, they were more integrated in some areas than in others.

In terms of patterns of integration, it is too soon to define which pathways these youth will go through in the long-term and how this will affect the following generations in terms of social classes, as Porter and Zhou (1994) examine. Still, it is possible to identify that the access to resources varied depending on the combination of the age of the youth, level of education prior to the resettlement, country of origin, and type of sponsorship. These elements affected their level of integration and marginalization in each one of the six integration areas. In this sense, their integration/marginalization process was not linear or absolute, and these nuances between integration and marginalization were relevant to outline Halifax as a welcoming and unresponsive community. As a result, Halifax oscillated to different degrees between being a welcoming and an unresponsive community. The way the community responded to the needs of the youth affected their access to resources and shaped their pathways towards integration or marginalization.

As Portes and Borocz (1989) discuss, a multitude of contexts of reception are possible in the experience of newcomers. This thesis highlights that the context of reception was not the same for each youth even though they were living in the same community and at times accessed the same organizations and used the same services. The factors that made Halifax act as a welcoming or unresponsive community are discussed next.

Halifax as a welcoming community. Esses et al. (2010) list a range of factors that characterize a community as welcoming. At times and in relation to some of the youth, Halifax met these criteria. Regarding education and official language, the community was able to provide a quick insertion into the Canadian education system and

opportunities to learn English in three situations: (1) when the youth arrived without high school diploma and without English skills, but younger than 19 years old; (2) when the youth arrived older than 19 years old, without English skills, and with a high school diploma; and (3) when the private sponsor coupled the resettlement process with a university scholarship, selecting youth with secondary education and English proficiency overseas.

The first situation, illustrated by Anna and Julia, actually did not require much effort from the community because the structure of the educational insertion was already available for all young people under the age of 19, citizens and permanent residents, from refugee backgrounds or not. It was the age of the youth that determined their access to this resource, and they followed the flow of the system once they were part of it. Still, it is questionable if this educational structure was prepared to deal with the needs of the students from refugee backgrounds who did not speak English and if it had enough budget to deal with the influx of Syrian children during the refugee crisis (Tutton, 2016). Conditioned to the access to high schools, community-based organizations also provided support in the English learning process, indicating that: (1) the schools, themselves, did not have a structure to teach English for the youth; and (2) other formal supports were available in the community to fill this gap.

The second situation, illustrated by Leonard, is a bit more complex. The community itself did not have a structure available for all the youth in a similar situation. Leonard was not oriented to apply for a university as soon as he arrived in Halifax. He accessed a unique opportunity that was offered in a unique context for youth from the same country as him. A local university sponsored Syrians from refugee backgrounds as

English students in its language school. Not Africans, not Asians, only Syrians.

Furthermore, the information about this opportunity and the support to apply for this course were not accessed through formal sources of support. Leonard's social bonds played an essential role in fostering his education. Having people from the same cultural background within universities opened free educational opportunities for Leonard more than once, corroborating the discussions of Portes and Borocz (1989) and Kazemipur (2006). Otherwise, he would spend much more time to achieve the minimum level required to access the university (a situation that Ezel and Joseph faced). This was not a permanent structure, and it was not available for youth from refugee backgrounds from all nationalities. It may become a permanent structure if universities start offering sponsored English courses for youth from refugee backgrounds that have a high school diploma so they can learn English and access the university faster. Therefore, in this case, the community was temporarily and selectively welcoming, especially due to the existence of people from a specific cultural background that had educational resources to share. This situation illustrates the importance of having social connections for a better integration of newcomers (Kazemipur, 2006; Portes & Borocz, 1989; Riaño-Alcalá & Goldring, 2014).

The experience of Ray illustrates the third situation. It was shaped by the kind of sponsorship. Issues related to access of education and official language learning were eliminated because secondary education and fluency in English were a requirement for the kind of sponsorship she received. That means that the community did not have to make any effort to promote supports in this area in this particular situation because it selected someone that would be easier to integrate. Still, the opportunity to start

university as soon as she arrived in Halifax was an indicator of a welcoming community and will hopefully give Ray better conditions to integrate in other areas the near future.

Independent of the educational background, the community provided opportunities to learn and practice language skills in three cases: (1) free English classes in settlement agencies; (2) opportunities to volunteer; and (3) conversation groups at public libraries. These three types of support were structured and tend to be available for the youth in a systematic way as long as the involved organizations keep receiving funding from the provincial and federal governments.

In relation to employment, Halifax was able to provide youth with opportunities in two situations. (1) Providing Julia with several resources, guidance, and volunteer opportunities, which resulted in a job offer; and (2) opening to Ray the opportunity to work for one year at her university. In the first case, Julia accessed services addressing specific needs of youth, which produced a good outcome in this area for her. The experience of Ray did not lead to more positive outcomes: the opportunity was punctual and was not enough to open other opportunities for her within the university. Economic independence was not an outcome and the access to basic needs was compromised. The welcoming facet of Halifax in this area was very limited and not systematic.

When accessing health services, the type of sponsorship was an important factor that affected the experience of the youth. The public health system was available for all of them. The resources and guidance to access it were not, which reinforced the persistence of this finding as identified in the literature review in Chapter 2 (McDonald, 1998; Piper et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2010). GARs had this access facilitated by the RAP and the work and structure of settlement agencies. This is relatively permanent,

systematic, and is not distinctive of the country of origin, which was a strong aspect of Halifax as a welcoming community.

The access to suitable and affordable housing also indicated a limited welcome aspect of the host community. The kind of sponsorship was, again, relevant in this area. Among GARs, two of the five youth were satisfied with their living conditions. The structure available to provide them with housing – settlement agencies – was the same, but was not able to meet their needs in a context of high influx of refugees in a short period of time. For the PSR, the structure offered by the private sponsor was good during the first year, but her level of vulnerability after that revealed that the community was structured to guarantee good living conditions, or even a place for her to live, only in the short-term.

Finally, in terms of social connections, the youth who were GARs found a welcoming community in relation to their social bonds. This was facilitated by the kind of sponsorship that included their families, and the high presence of people from similar cultural backgrounds – living here before or being resettled in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis. The presence of these social networks, fostered by the federal policy towards Syrian refugees, was an important aspect of their integration in this area.

In conclusion, although Halifax was able to promote opportunities in many situations, the factors that made Halifax welcoming were not always derived from structured and systematic supports. At times, these welcoming conditions were available through fragile, unique and/or restricted opportunities that may not repeat for other youth. The welcoming attributes of this community were at times temporary and selective; available at the beginning of the resettlement process or for a particular group of

refugees. In contrast, the unresponsive facet of Halifax revealed to be more systematic and structured.

Halifax as an unresponsive community. Halifax revealed several elements of unresponsiveness, creating barriers and not providing enough resources to overcome challenges the youth faced. In the educational area, the most remarkable examples were Joseph and Ezel's experiences shaped by their age and educational background. The community simply did not know how (neither did they) and/or was not making any effort to insert them in the educational system, although there was an availability of adult learning education courses. This demonstrated (1) lack of guidance and (2) lack of structure in the adult learning education system to support youth from refugee backgrounds that are not English speakers. If the youth younger than 19 could learn English while resuming their education, why did Joseph and Ezel had to wait at least three years to achieve an English level that would enable them to access further education?

In the employment area, Ray and Ezel's experiences revealed that the historical discrimination and racism towards non-white people were still present in the immigrants' experience in Halifax, whether subtly (in the case of Ray) or explicitly (as for Ezel). As discussed in Chapter 3, marginalization, as a form of oppression, may result from intentional and unintentional actions (Dominelli, 2003; Mullaly, 2007). The roots of discrimination and racism in the Haligonian context are strong and have historically prevented immigrants from accessing employment opportunities, which is also one of the reasons that makes Nova Scotia lose its newcomers to other provinces (Ekpo, 2000; Etowa et al., 2017; Ramos & Yoshida, 2015; Rutland, 2011; Webster, 2017). In this

context, barriers in this particular area have the potential to significantly threaten the integration process of all the youth, especially those with a low level of education. Findings in the literature indicate that youth from refugee backgrounds have lower rates of employment in comparison with other groups of immigrants and Canadian-born youth, and that barriers in employment are related to racism and discrimination (Stewart et al., 2008; Wilkinson, 2008). At the time of the interviews, there was no evidence that these youth found a consistent structure in Halifax that promotes job opportunities, which makes it very likely that, for most of them, the insertion in the job market (if it happens) will be precarious, in the same way that Portes and Borocz (1989) point out in relation to newcomers in a context of low receptivity. Within this group, the experience of Julia configured an exception, which was favoured by a temporary positive context of reception towards some Syrian refugees.

In relation to health care, the private sponsorship proved unable to provide Ray with basic information about the health system, revealing once more an unresponsive trait of the community. Although she did not have the language barrier, which was a common issue for the GARs, the lack of guidance was preventing her from accessing adequate health care.

The housing conditions of Leonard, Julia, Ray, and Joseph indicated different ways in which Halifax was unresponsive, and was related to the kind of sponsorship. In relation to the GARs youth, the influx of Syrian refugees seemed to decrease the ability of the settlement services in evaluating family's needs before their accommodation in permanent residences. Even being proactive and trying to better their living conditions, the youth were dealing with a community that did not have affordable and suitable

housing options to accommodate them and their families, and there was no evidence that this situation could change in the short-term, which indicated the existence of structural barriers in this area. However, they at least had a place to live. The unresponsiveness of the private sponsor in this area was once more pushing Ray into a vulnerable situation, reinforcing the finding that “foreign-born individuals are vulnerable to homelessness to a greater extent than Canadian-born individuals, with refugees being particularly at risk” (Esses et al, 2010, p. 30). Therefore, not offering opportunities to access adequate housing for immigrants from refugee backgrounds also outlined a strong unresponsive feature of Halifax.

Regarding social connections, the difficulty in developing social bridges with people originally from the host community was another aspect of the unresponsiveness facet of Halifax that seems to be persistent and reproduces the racial segregation that characterizes this specific context (Ekpo, 2000; Etowa et al., 2017; Rutland, 2011; Webster, 2017). The fact that the social bonds of Syrian refugees were not always able to provide them with resources (as in employment and housing) is in accordance to what Kazemipur (2006) and Landolt and Goldring (2015) point out when discussing that social connections, by itself, does not guarantee a better integration of newcomers into the host society. Again, the kind of sponsorship was an important aspect of the restricted social bonds and bridges, indicating once more the private sponsorship made the development of social networks more difficult and precarious for Ray.

Experiences of Integration and Marginalization: Feelings and Perceptions

When sharing their experiences, the youth also expressed feelings and perceptions about the city. For example, when describing the period when they did not understand or

speak English, they mentioned feeling scared. When discussing her experiences about looking for a job, Ray was at the same time angry, disappointed, and worried about the consequences of this situation. Anna and Ezel had very positive feelings and perceptions in relation to their houses, and Julia was proud of her achievement of finding a job.

This set of feelings and perceptions was compatible with the kind of experience they described, similar to what Billson (2005) finds in the case of cultural marginality. When the youth pathways were towards marginalization and they experienced unresponsiveness from the community, these feelings and perceptions were negative; when the pathways were towards integration and they accessed enough support, feelings and perceptions were positive. Table 10 synthesizes the set of feelings and perceptions associated to the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth in each integration area.

Table 10 *Feelings and perceptions of integration and marginalization*

Integration Area	Marginalization	Integration
<i>Education</i>	Uncertainty	Plans and Aspirations
<i>Official Language</i>	Scare	Confidence
<i>Employment</i>	Scarcity Anger Worry Intention to move to another city	Pride Intention to stay in the city
<i>Health</i>	Frustration Inaccessibility (price)	Satisfaction
<i>Housing</i>	Discomfort Pressure	Satisfaction Excitement
<i>Social Connections</i>	Social Isolation Low Mood Racism Discrimination	Comfort Contentment Gratitude Relief

Integration Areas: Outcomes and Priorities for the Youth

In analysing the findings, it was identified that the integration areas were affecting

the experience of the youth in different ways. Although related to each other, experiencing integration or marginalization in each of these six areas did not have the same outcomes for the youth. These areas were then grouped in three dimensions considering the outcomes they were associated with, as Figure 19 illustrates: qualification, wellbeing, and retention. Figure 20 illustrates the relationship between these three dimensions and how they move one another, as discussed next.

Figure 19 *Integration Areas - Outcomes*

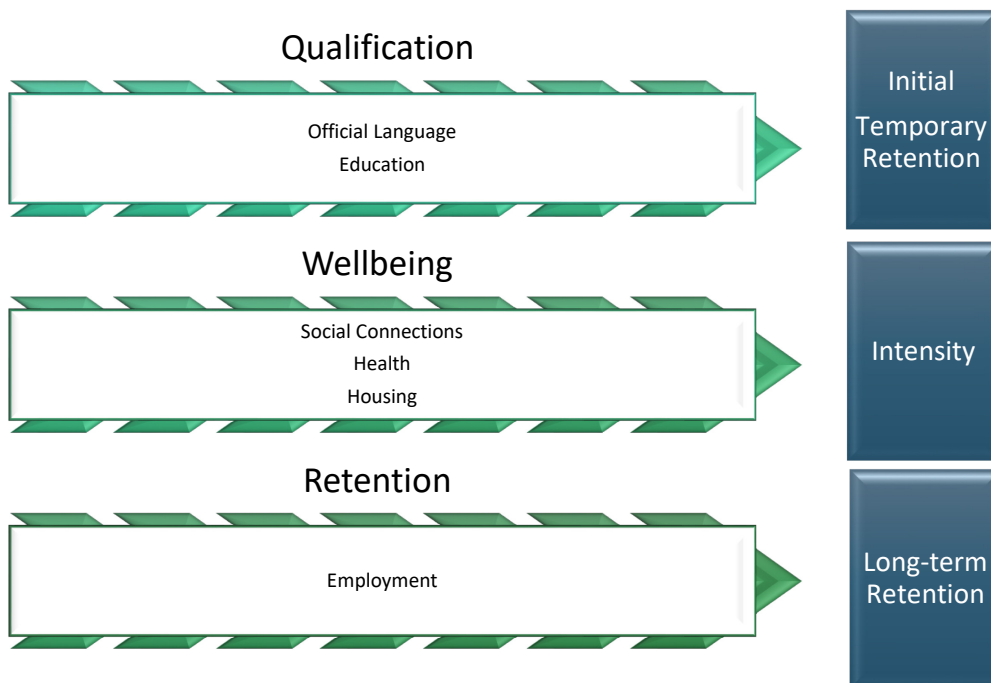


Figure 20 *Relationship between integration areas*



Qualification: Education and official language. As identified in the literature review, these two areas proved essential to prepare youth for the challenges and barriers in integrating in a new context. Qualification, for the youth, was a priority. When possible, all of them postponed the job search to work on their English skills and improve their level of education. These two areas must be a priority not only for the youth, but also for the policies and service providers (Esses et al., 2017). Qualification initially and temporarily retained all the youth in the city, even when many experiences of marginalization were present in the other two dimensions, as exemplified by Ray's experience in the university.

Wellbeing: Housing, health, and social connections. In the experiences of the youth, these three areas were related to the promotion of their wellbeing. The youth did

not mention the desire to move from Halifax when experiencing marginalization in these areas, but they did relate them to an emotional aspect. A good house, health, and the presence of social bonds were important to make them feel good about their experience, although these areas were not enough to retain the youth in Halifax. In the same way, unsuitable housing, health problems, and poor social connections were associated to poor emotional states, but again, this was not enough to make them leave the city. These areas affected the intensity of the marginalization or integration aspects of the experiences of the youth but did not determine their qualification process or their retention in the city. Qualification could still happen, even with a poor wellbeing, as in the case of Ray.

Retention: Employment. As a result of the youth's integration and marginalization experiences in Halifax in all six integration areas, all the youth were willing to continue living in the city. This means that, despite the barriers and challenges they were facing, they were enjoying their experience here, as exemplified below:

I'll stay here. I don't wanna move! Halifax is not, like, so big, it's not busy... I love it. It's just quiet places. Like, it has some many places beautiful and, the people here is friendly, like... is helpful... I love Halifax, I don't wanna move from here. (Anna)

[I feel] Very comfortable, I feel it's my home now. (...) I'm planning to stay here. (Julia)

I want to stay here. Yeah. Because, I told you, the people. About me [meaning: for me], very important meet people [who are] friendly. I don't want people [who are] bad. Yes, and here in Halifax, most people in Halifax, they are friendly. (Ezel)

However, except for Anna and Julia (high school students), all other participants

were contemplating the possibility of moving to somewhere else in Canada as a way to increase their chances of finding a job. As they expressed:

Living in Halifax, I want to continue my education, not if I want to work... This city... hard to find job... (Leonard)

When I graduate, I can apply for a job anywhere in Canada. So, I actually don't choose where the job will lead me... As long as, if there's anything Ontario, Calgary, in a way that I can get a job, I'll go... I will go. Right now, Halifax is like my home, I'm attached to Halifax because everything I'm doing is here. But if you talk of when you graduate, and you... when you apply for a job and then you don't get in Halifax, what will you do... what will you do? You have to... to look for the other thing... You have to move forward. Just try your chance all over. (Ray)

Halifax, it is... it is so good, and the people, they are very friendly. But, about work, I want, I think I want to visit Toronto. I want to know about Toronto. Here may be difficult to find job. Yea, but about people, about quiet here, is very, very, very beautiful city. (...) I can stay here. I can stay here, forever. (Ezel)

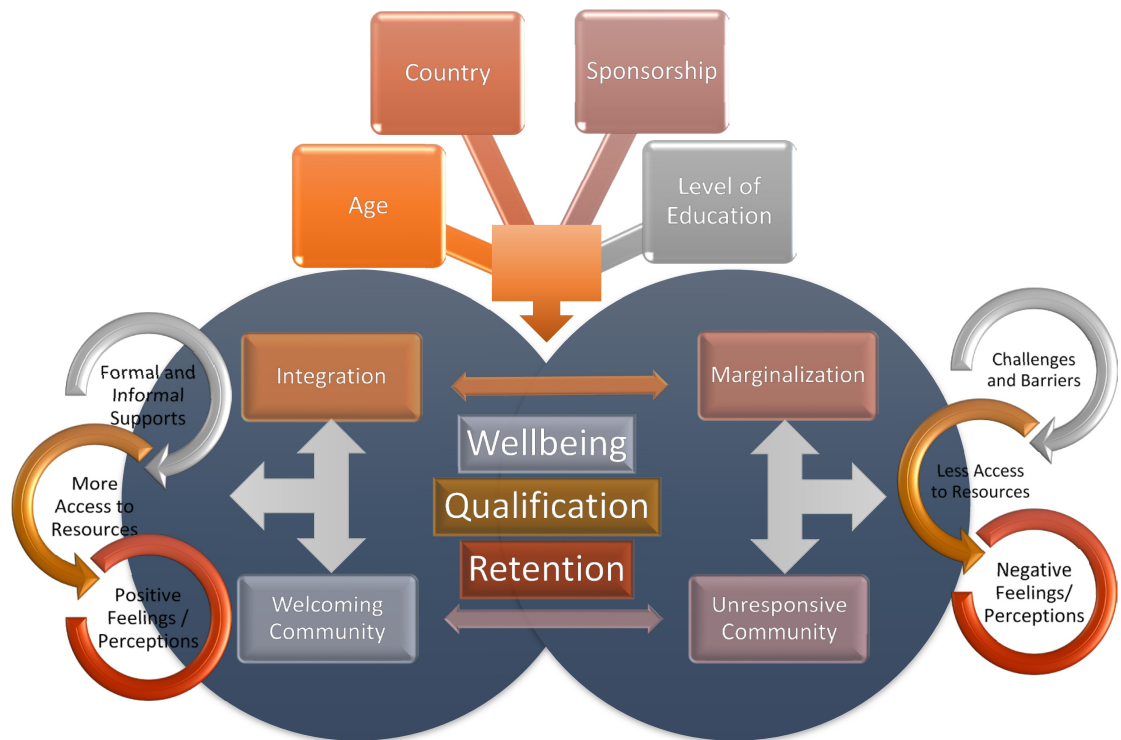
The contrast between the wish to stay and the need to find a job once more reinforces the perspective that Halifax oscillates between a welcoming and unresponsive community depending on the integration area, age of youth, country of origin, and kind of sponsorship. Despite the fragility of the factors related to the welcoming facet, in general, the community was able to offer an environment that the youth perceived as friendly and where they felt welcomed and comfortable. In the same way, challenges and barriers regarding education, official language, health, and housing were not enough to make them change their good impressions of the city. However, the barriers and

challenges the youth faced in the employment area made them keep their eyes very open for the opportunities they could have in other Canadian cities, reinforcing what Dobrowolsky and Ramos (2014) point out in relation to the difficulty in retaining newcomers in this city. As Esses et al. (2010) discuss, the existence of employment opportunities is a key aspect of a welcoming community and it indicates the capacity of the community to retain newcomers. In fact, after all, job opportunities would be a determinant to define the youth pathways in this city. This area would also define Halifax's ability to retain these newcomers.

Conceptual Framework Review

In conclusion, it is important to highlight that, within the conceptual framework, the oscillations between the experiences of integration and marginalization/welcoming and unresponsive community in different areas were affected by factors such as age, country of origins, kind of sponsorship, and level of education. Specifically, in relation to employment, these experiences resulted in the intention of staying or moving from Halifax. All in all, this intention pointed to the capacity of the host community for retaining the youth. Youth also expressed these experiences associated with positive or negative feelings and perceptions (e.g., confidence in speaking English, satisfaction/frustration with housing conditions and health services). Considering these findings and the discussions in this chapter, a review of Figure 2 was necessary to capture these other elements influencing the integration and marginalization process of the youth in different areas, which is indicated in Figure 21.

Figure 21 *Review of the Conceptual framework*



In this sense, the youth are so proactive in their integration process, that instead of accepting their marginalization in an unresponsive community, they plan to move to a more welcoming community that could be more capable to meet their needs.

Conclusion

In each integration area, the youth reported a variety of experiences, some of them indicating that Halifax acted as a welcoming community. In these cases, youth accessed adequate resources that met their needs, which led to positive feelings and perceptions in relation to the integration area. On the other hand, the risk of marginalization was present when the access to supports was restricted by barriers and challenges and the needs of the youth were not met. Formal supports that did not provide the youth with adequate

services also increased the risk of marginalization for the youth. In these cases, their experience indicated that Halifax was an unresponsive community.

Overall, the youth felt welcomed and comfortable in this city, described by them as their home, a beautiful, and friendly place with friendly people. Most of them were willing to stay here after completing their education, as long as they could find a job. Their perceptions and experiences indicated that Halifax had the capacity to be a welcoming community in many aspects. However, challenges and barriers regarding employment were making most of them look towards other cities in the hope of finding more opportunities to work. Halifax was also failing to meet some of the essential needs of the youth, notably adequate housing, adult education, employment support, and the establishment of meaningful social bridges. The results of this equation between integration and marginalization, welcoming and unresponsive community will depend on the capacity of the local structures to provide these youth with job opportunities and promote significant social bridges.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

This research was inspired by my experience in a local community-based organization that serves immigrants and refugees in Halifax and developed in the period following the Syrian refugee crisis, which occurred in 2015-16. As part of a governmental program, Canada took in more than 40,000 Syrian refugees between November of 2015 and January of 2017 (IRCC, n.d.). For this period, local settlement organizations assisted at least four times more refugees than they used to do yearly (ISANS, 2016). Consequently, great challenges to promote the integration of this population arose.

In this context, this research explored the experiences of youth from refugee backgrounds resettled in Halifax between 2015 and 2016, within a transformational paradigm, an anti-oppressive and structural perspectives, and following a qualitative method with individual interviews. In doing that, the research first identified formal and informal supports the youth were accessing in the city, and barriers and challenges they were facing. Then, the identification of these two elements enabled the examination of the pathways of these youth towards integration and marginalization regarding their access/barriers to education, official language learning, employment support, access to health services, access to adequate housing, and the development of social connections. Finally, the experiences of these youth indicated aspects of Halifax that make this city a welcoming and unresponsive community, depending on a combination of different elements, such as age of arrival, kind of sponsorship, level of education, and language proficiency. Structural barriers, racism, and discrimination interacted with these factors and produced a context that was more or less receptive to the needs of the youth.

Contributions of the Study

This research found that the level of access to formal and informal supports were closely related to the level of integration and marginalization of these youth. None of them were completely integrated or marginalized; instead, they experienced different degrees of integration and marginalization in different areas as well as within a same area. As a result, this thesis found that Halifax, as a host community, was welcoming and unresponsive at once, depending on the integration area and factors such as age, level of education, kind of sponsorship, and country of origin of the youth.

In this sense, the conceptual framework proved to be consistent and adequate to analyze the complexity of the experiences of the youth in their endeavour to integrate. From a transformational, anti-oppressive, and structural perspectives, this framework reframed and coupled the extant conceptual discussion of integration, marginalization, and welcoming community. In addition, this thesis introduced the notion of unresponsive community, not as opposed but as complementary to the concept of welcoming community.

The use of concept maps in the analysis of the experience of the youth was also an element that this thesis introduced. These maps were a tool to facilitate the identification of vulnerable situations that hindered the integration process as well as areas in which the improvement of services was necessary to better meet the needs of the youth.

All in all, the elements listed above were contributions of this research for the body of knowledge on integration of youth from refugee backgrounds, and for a better understanding of how this process occurs in smaller urban centers in Canada.

Limitations

During the development of this study, some factors restricted the range of data collected and the analyses of the findings.

First, the English level required to participate in the research was a factor that made the recruitment process more challenging and potentially excluded from the research youth in a higher level of vulnerability (considering they would be taking longer to learn the language). This was true in the case of one youth interested in being a participant, who had lived in Halifax for more than two years but could not communicate with me due to her low English skills.

The research also faced important challenges to recruit a more diverse range of participants in relation to their countries of origin. As the findings indicated, this was an important aspect influencing the experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth. However, the context of this research favoured the participation of a higher number of Syrians and made it more difficult to include those from other countries.

Third, this study involved five youth with different family compositions and one youth who immigrated by herself. The family structure flagged differences in terms of level of responsibility and vulnerability of the youth. However, as the focus was on their individual experiences, this study did not fully explore the relationship between the familiar context and the participants' experiences of integration and marginalization.

Finally, the research did not explore pre-migration experiences of the youth and how they affect youth's pathways after their resettlement. Therefore, it was not possible to identify if their migration history had impacts on their new lives in Canada. Moreover, the relation between recovering from traumatic experiences in an unresponsive context as well as its effect on youth's health and wellbeing were not examined.

Future Research

During this study, new research questions arose, and it may be worth to exploring them in further research:

- a) Considering the experiences of the youth based on their country of origin, did the media coverage and the Canadian government promotion of its resettlement program towards Syrian refugees have some impact on the community in relation to the promotion of a more welcoming environment for these specific refugees?
- b) What are the reasons that led the Canadian government to be more sensitive and proactive in relation to war crisis and refugees from a country than from other regions of the world? What are the impacts of this selective proactivity in the integration of refugees from different regions? Does this selectivity affect the funding of settlement and cultural organizations, and the structure of their services?
- c) How are volunteers and staff of private sponsor organizations being prepared to serve the complex needs of the refugees they are responsible for?
- d) To which extent are university teachers, teaching assistants, and other faculty members aware of the cultural diversity within local universities?
- e) Is there any way to develop a quantitative research that could measure and indicate how welcoming or unresponsive a community is for newcomers in relation to different integration areas? Could this enable comparisons between different cities?
- f) How will the youth who participated in this thesis research be doing in their

integration process in five years?

- g) What are the perceptions of Canadian-born people about newcomers and vice-versa in different environments in Halifax (schools, companies, health professional, and so on)? What do they say in relation to the barriers for the establishment of social bridges in this city?
- h) What does the experience of people from Africa and from refugee backgrounds say about the welcoming and unresponsive aspects of Halifax? What are the specificities of their experiences of integration and marginalization in different integration areas?

Policy Implications

Opportunities for the improvement of the service provision addressing youth from refugee backgrounds were identified based on the discussion of the findings of this research. As a general observation, it is important to reinforce that any governmental initiative that aims to take in a higher number of refugees must be followed by an increased financial support for organizations responsible to assist these newcomers. As identified in this study, overwhelmed services may have important impacts on the integration process for the youth and increase their risk of marginalization.

Challenges and barriers identified in education and official language indicated that youth from refugee backgrounds need to be better oriented about the Canadian educational system, especially regarding the access and structure of colleges and universities. Information about student loans, courses available and career pathways also need to be more accessible. Initiatives to connect university/college advisors with the youth could bring more clarity on their educational possibilities.

The educational needs of the youth should be assessed as soon as they arrive in the city. With the support of community-based organizations, they could develop a plan to define and achieve their educational goals. For those who do not have a secondary education and are older than 19 years, the possibilities to access adult education should be better disseminated.

There is space for more initiatives from the community to support the studies of these youth. More and regular bursary offers from university language centres for those who arrive with a secondary level would be a great contribution to shorten the time between the official language acquisition and the access to the university. The offer of free and regular English courses could be diversified among different organizations, and other strategies could be used to expand this service provision. As many of the youth experience years of educational disruption, initiatives that provide them with free extra academic and school support are welcome. University bursaries and scholarships addressed to youth from refugee backgrounds could also be a good way to enhance their studies. Expanding the opportunities for youth to volunteer is essential for their English language skills improvement.

Increasing the awareness of the academic community on the cultural diversity within universities may contribute to ease the adaptation of these youth to academic life. Staff, teachers, teaching assistants, can all be more exposed to training and other initiatives that provide them opportunities to reflect on their cultural sensitivity. This awareness could help to build better relationships among students, staff, and faculty members from different cultural backgrounds, including those from refugee backgrounds.

Guidance, training and information about employment is essential to increase the

possibilities for these youth to find jobs. The employment resources available in organizations need to be better promoted among these youth, or even adjusted to better meet their needs. Universities could target these youth when promoting supports available for employment and internal job positions typically reserved for students. Private sponsors need to be aware that their sponsored refugee youth need support to navigate the local job market. If sponsors assess that they are not prepared to provide this guidance, they should be aware of other resources and ensure that youth are accessing them.

Creating opportunities to volunteer also seems to be a significant measure to promote the employment of youth from refugee backgrounds. Promoting opportunities to volunteer that at the same time stimulates the creation of social bridges is also an important way to foster their integration process. Finally, it seems essential to increase the cultural sensitivity of staff involved in the provision of employment support for these youth. Any initiative that aims to prevent discrimination in the service provision is important and welcome.

In the health area, private sponsors may need to be better prepared to provide guidance to PSRs in navigating the health system, or to refer them to organizations that can provide this guidance. Any additional assistance to PSRs that helps them understand and access the local health services is important to prevent them from receiving limited or inadequate services.

Gathering and diffusing information about housing among people from refugee backgrounds seems to be elemental to increasing their possibilities of finding places in adequate conditions for their families. Yet, this measure may face structural problems

regarding the local real estate market that are above the capacity of intervention of community-based organizations. In this sense, the barriers identified in this thesis and in the literature indicated the need of improvement of social policies to make suitable housing more accessible to low income families.

Special issues emerged in this research regarding the combinations of being a PSR and/or a university student. These issues indicated that there is space for initiatives promoting the inclusion of students from refugee backgrounds in university residences for affordable prices. In this sense, universities have space to better integrate their resources for low-income students regarding employment, bursary offers, and housing. This combination of services could mitigate stressful situations in their financial conditions and risk of homelessness and build greater conditions to their academic performance.

Awareness regarding how to support the development of social connections for these youth from refugee backgrounds may need to be increased among private sponsors. This is especially important in the case of organizations that sponsor lone refugees, who might face increased risk of social isolation in comparison with those resettled with their families. Promoting social activities seems to be essential to expanding the social networks of these youth, which also contributes to their wellbeing. There is room to promote initiatives that boost the formation of social bridges. Initiatives that aim to build a welcoming community should be more supported and preserved.

Final Thoughts

In conclusion, it is important to remark that all the participants were very strong and empowered people, with very rich experiences, and were making huge efforts

towards their integration process in Halifax. All of them demonstrated the desire to stay in this city, although those willing to work were already attentive to opportunities in other Canadian cities. In sharing their stories, they contributed to building knowledge about the integration process of youth from refugee backgrounds in Halifax. Their stories also helped to highlight issues in which this city needs to promote initiatives to become a more welcoming community – especially in building meaningful social bridges between newcomers and Canadian-born people and in promoting job opportunities.

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Online tool for concept maps: CoggleIt Limited. <https://coggle.it/>

Appendix A: Recruitment Document

Recruitment letter sent by settlement organizations to prospective participants

Dear _____,

This is an invitation to participate in a study about youth from refugee backgrounds that are living in Halifax, conducted by Juliana Pontes.

Juliana is a Master student of Social Work at Dalhousie University, and she is studying how formal and informal supports are helping the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds in Halifax. Participation in her research is voluntary and involves taking part in one individual interview, which should last between 1 to 2 hours. She hopes that this study may contribute to the improvement of services addressed to youth from refugee backgrounds in this city. There is a gift card of \$25 in recognition of the time that you will take to participate in the study.

To participate in this study, you must:

- (a) Be between 18-30 years old;
- (b) Have landed in Canada as a government-assisted refugee (GAR), private sponsored refugee (PSR) or blended visa office-referred refugee (BVOR);
- (c) Have been living in Halifax since you landed in Canada;
- (d) Have been living in Halifax for at least 1 year and maximum of 5 years.
- (e) Have at least level 4 of proficiency in English, Spanish or Portuguese.

Please, see the poster attached to this message. If you have interest in participating in this study, **please directly contact Juliana Pontes** by email, message or phone call:

email: juliana.pontes@dal.ca

phone: 782 234 3868.

Sincerely,

Appendix B: Recruitment Document

E-mail to prospective participants that contact me during the recruitment

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research!

My study is looking into how formal and informal supports are contributing to the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds in Halifax. I feel this is a very important topic and I would love the opportunity to speak with you about this. We will meet face-to-face and the interview should last from one to two hours.

I have attached a copy of the complete consent form for you to review. This form explains all information regarding the study. Please, read it carefully and let me know if you have any questions. If you agree with the terms, we may schedule an interview. You can contact me by telephone or via email at your earliest convenience.

I will give you a \$25 gift card in appreciation for your participation in the interview, as well I will pay for the costs of transportation (up to \$5) parking (up to \$10) that you may have (Maximum of \$40 total).

I am asking participants to have at least CLB 4 English level, or similar level of Spanish or Portuguese. However, if you prefer or if you are not sure about your language level, we can have a brief informal meeting before the interview to check if we can understand each other well. If we cannot do the interview because of the language barrier, I still offer an up to \$10 reimbursement for expenses you may have with transportation and parking.

I am looking forward to hearing from you!

Juliana Pontes

juliana.pontes@dal.ca

782 234 3868

Appendix C: Recruitment Document

Poster



-
- **Did you come to Halifax as a refugee?**
- **Have you been living in Halifax for 1-5 years?**
- **Are you between the ages of 18 to 30 years?**
- **Are you willing to help us understand your experience about living in Halifax?**

If yes, we would like to speak with you.

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study about the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds in Halifax. We invite you to participate in one interview to talk about your experiences as a newcomer youth in Halifax. For more information, or to volunteer for this study,

please contact Juliana Pontes at: (782) 234 3868

Email: juliana.pontes@dal.ca

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a \$25 gift card.

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through Dalhousie University Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix D: Recruitment Document

Email to contact additional Organizations/Script to phone call

Dears,

I am a Master of Social Work student at Dalhousie. I am doing a thesis on integration of youth from a refugee backgrounds in Halifax, and I am interviewing youth from 18-25 years about their experiences as newcomers here.

This research is exploring how formal and informal supports are contributing to the integration of youth from a refugee backgrounds who landed in and have been living in Halifax within the past five years. I hope the results can contribute to a better understanding of their experiences as newcomer youth in accessing services and building social connections in this city.

I am seeking to include in this study the experiences of people from different cultural backgrounds. Is there any possibility that the (name of organization/association) could support me recruiting people for this study?

This means only inviting people that meet the profile required and letting them know about the research (see poster and recruitment email attached). Then, if they are interested, they should contact me directly. Please, do not share any personal information of them with me. The recruitment could be done by forwarding the poster for their emails, for example, or posting it in the organization's Facebook page. I can also bring hard copies of the posters to you, if you prefer.

I would be available for a meeting if necessary to talk in more details about the research with you, or you can just call me: 782 234 3868.

Thank you so much for your assistance!

Juliana Pontes.

Appendix E: Consent Form for Individual Interview



Project title: Integration of youth from refugee backgrounds: exploring formal and informal supports in Halifax

Researcher:

Juliana Gomes Pontes
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School of Social Work
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782 234 3868

Supervisor:

Sara Torres
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Dalhousie University
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Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study being conducted by me, Juliana Gomes Pontes, student at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada, supervised by Dr. Sara Torres, from the School of Social Work – Dalhousie University. This study is part of the requirements to conclude my Master of Social Work.

Be part of this study is entirely voluntary and you may decline to answer any question and/or withdraw from the study at any time. Before you decide if you want to take part, it is important that you understand the purpose of this research. The study is described below. The description tells you about what the study is about, the risks, inconvenience, or discomfort that you might experience. There will be no consequences if you decide not to participate in the research. Participating in the study will not benefit you directly, but it will contribute for a better understanding of how formal and informal supports are helping the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds living in Halifax. You should discuss any questions you have about this study with me, Juliana. Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have questions later, please contact me. You can also contact my supervisor at sara.torres@dal.ca.

Purpose and Outline of the Research Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how formal and informal supports are contributing

to the integration process of youth from refugee backgrounds in Halifax in these specific areas: employment, housing, health, education, language learning, social connections. It is hoped that more awareness about the youth experiences focusing on the integration process will contribute to improve policies and supportive services. The study has a qualitative approach, with individual interviews. It is expected a sample of 6 to 8 youth participating in individual interviews.

Who Can Take Part in the Research Study?

To participate in this study, you must:

- (a) Be between 18-30 years old;
- (b) Have landed in Canada as a government-assisted refugee (GAR), private sponsored refugee (PSR) or blended visa office-referred refugee (BVOR);
- (d) Have been living in Halifax since you landed in Canada;
- (e) Have been living in Halifax for at least 1 year and maximum of 5 years.
- (f) Have at least CLB 4 (English, Spanish or Portuguese).

If you are not sure about your English level, we can have a brief informal meeting before the interview to check if it will be possible for us to communicate well.

What You Will Be Asked to Do: Individual Interview

I would like to ask you a few questions about your experience as a newcomer youth in Halifax in dealing with issues such as accessing housing, employment, education, health services, building social connections and language learning. The interview should take between one to two hours. If you agree, I would like to audio record the conversation. If you do not agree, I will take notes and repeat and reflect back to you what I have heard. We can schedule and carry out the interview at an agreed time and place. You may also be asked if you know someone who might also be a potential participant in this study. If you do, you might be asked to pass on an information sheet to them about the study, if you agree to do so. Once the interview is transcribed, if you want I may email or delivery a copy of the transcription to you for you to review and you can provide me with any feedback. This may take an additional 1-2 hours. This study is taking place in Halifax.

Possible Benefits, Risks and Discomforts

The risks associated with the study are considered minimal and include the possibility that you may find discussing your personal experiences emotionally upsetting. There is a chance that an interview may bring up past issues that are still unsettled. In such a case, I will be prepared to indicate counselling and other supports if desired. A list with supportive services will be provided for you in the beginning of the interview. Feel free to skip any question you do not want to answer, or to interrupt the interview at any point. Participating in the study might not benefit you, but we will learn about how formal and informal supports are contributing to the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds in Halifax.

Incentive / Reimbursement

To thank you for your time, we will give you a \$25 gift card when you engage in an interview session. You will also be reimbursed for expenses you may have with transportation and parking to participate in the study. Transportation reimbursement limit is up to \$5 per person, and parking up to \$10. Incentive and reimbursements are granted even if you decide to withdraw from the study without completing the interview. Reimbursement for transportation and parking (up to \$10 total) will also be offered in the case we decide not to carry out the interview due to communication barriers.

How your information will be protected:

Interviews will be strictly confidential. Each interview will be audio-recorded (if you agree) and a pseudonym will be used instead of your name to ensure confidentiality. If you do not agree, I will take notes and repeat and reflect back to you what I have heard. Your name will not appear on the interview guide, recording media, the transcription or direct quotations. My supervisor and I will be the only people to access the transcription, unless you request a copy of it. Recordings will be deleted once transcription have been made. Transcription and signed consent forms will be carefully stored, according to the guidelines of Dalhousie Ethics Review Board, and will be destroyed once this research is concluded (May 2018). In reporting findings through reports, presentations, quotations and publications, all names and any characteristics that might identify you will be removed, and your pseudonym will be used instead. To ensure that no one but me will know who you are, the interview will be conducted in a place where other people cannot hear the conversation or associate you with the research.

Limits to Confidentiality

I will do everything possible to maintain your confidentiality. However, be aware that some limits to confidentiality are imposed on researchers due to legal obligations. That means that I will not disclose any information about your participation in this research to anyone unless compelled to do so by law. Therefore, in the case of disclosures involving suspected child abuse or neglect, or the abuse or neglect of an adult in need of protection, I am required to contact authorities. Please, be aware that in case you ask a copy of your interview transcription, it is up to you to maintain its confidentiality. I can only ensure that my copy of the transcription will be carefully stored.

If You Decide to Stop Participating

You are free to leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating at any point in the study, including during the interview, you can also decide whether you want any of the information that you have provided up to that point to be removed, or if you will allow me to use that information. You can also decide for up November 15th, 2017 if you want me to remove your data.

How to Obtain Results

You can obtain the results of this study by including your contact information at the end of the signature page and giving me permission to keep this information with me in order to receive a report of the research.

Dissemination of results

The results from this study will be reported in a written research thesis as well as during my oral thesis defence. Since the research thesis is a public document, information could be used in future literature and can also be found online. If you agree, direct quotation of your interview may be used.

Questions

If you have any questions about the study, or in the event that you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, please feel free to call **Juliana (782 234 3868)** or **Sara Torres (902 494 2094)**. You will receive a copy of the consent form for your records. If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-1462, or email: ethics@dal.ca

**Consent Form
Signature Page**

Project Title: Integration of Youth from refugee backgrounds: exploring formal and informal supports in Halifax

Researcher:

Juliana Gomes Pontes
Faculty of Graduate Studies
Master of Social Work student
Dalhousie University
juliana.pontes@dal.ca
782 234 3868

I,

_____, have read all the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to take part in this study. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I am aware that I have to decide and inform for up to November 15th, 2017 if I want my data to be removed from the study. I am aware that if I request a copy of my interview transcription it is up to me to maintain its confidentiality.

I agree to be audio recorded:

yes no

I agree to allow direct quotations from my interview to be used:

yes no

I agree to provide contact information in order to receive a copy of the results:

yes no

I agree to provide contact information in order to:

receive a report of the study.

receive a copy of my interview transcription.

Contact information:

Signature

Date

Appendix F: Interview Guide

Pseudonym:

1. Introduction
 - a. Can you tell me about when you came to Nova Scotia?
- i. What was your age?
 - b. For how long have you been living here?
 - c. Who sponsored your application?
- i. Government or private sponsor?
 - d. Did you know anyone else in Nova Scotia/Canada before you came?
 - e. Who would you turn to if you needed someone to talk to and how would you reach them?
2. Official Language
 - a. How was the experience of learning English?
 - b. Where did you find support to practice it?
3. Housing
 - a. Where are you living now?
- i. How did you or your family make the decision to live there?
 - b. Have you moved since you arrived here?
- i. Why?
 - c. How do you like the place you live? (House, neighbourhood, size, security, etc.)
- i. Would you like to change anything?
- ii. What could make these changes possible?
4. Education
 - a. What courses or any other educational activity have you accessed since you arrived?
- i. How did you find out about them?
- ii. Why did you decide to take them?
 - b. How was this experience?
 - c. How did you manage/ are you managing the costs of these courses (if there is some)?
 - d. Is there any course or activity that you would like to engage but you could not?
- i. Why did this happen/is this happening?
- ii. What do you think that could help you to get it?
5. Employment
 - a. Are you currently looking for jobs or are you working?
 - b. How was the experience of looking for a job?
 - c. How long did you take to find a job?
 - d. How did you get incomes meanwhile?
 - e. How did you learn about where to look for them, how to prepare a cover letter, a resume, for the interview, etc.?
 - f. How do you like the job you got?
- i. What changes would you like to see?
- ii. What could make these changes possible?
6. Health

- a. Have you ever needed to use any kind of health service here?
- b. How did you find out about them?
- c. How was this experience?
- d. How did these services meet your needs?
- e. If they did not meet your needs, what could change?
- 7. Social Connections
 - a. Tell me about the experience of making friends here.
 - b. Have you had opportunities to connect with people who have a similar cultural background since moving to Nova Scotia?
 - i. How is your relationship with other people from the same cultural background than you?
 - ii. How did you meet them?
 - iii. How often do you meet them and for which activities?
 - c. Have you had opportunities to connect with people who have different cultural backgrounds since moving to Nova Scotia?
 - i. How is your relationship with them?
 - ii. How did you meet them?
 - iii. How often do you meet them and for which activities?
 - d. Do you belong to any association or groups?
 - i. If so, what kind?
- 8. Conclusion
- 9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix G: Confidentiality Agreement of Transcription Services

Integration of Youth from refugee backgrounds: exploring formal and informal supports in Halifax

I, _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regard to any and all audio recordings and documentation received from Juliana Gomes Pontes related to her study. Furthermore, I agree:

- To hold in strictest confidence, the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-recorded interviews, or in any associated documents;
- To not make copies of any audio recordings or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts;
- To store all study-related audio recordings and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
- To return all study-related transcripts to Juliana Pontes in a complete and timely manner.
- To delete all electronic files (i.e., audio recording, transcripts) containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) _____

Transcriber's signature _____

Date _____