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Social impacts of the securitized arrival experiences of in-Canada refugee claimants

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Table of Contents

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Overview

In this TSAS funded study, I conducted multi-site research that included qualitative interviews with nineteen in-Canada refugee claimants. Each of these individuals was declared a convention refugee after the implementation of the "new" immigration legislation on December 1, 2012. The research sought to answer two questions:

(i)   What are the effects of the securitization of migration policies insofar as perceptions of success in integration, and feelings of trust and belonging; and

(ii) Are there unintended policy consequences associated with rapidly changing securitized migration policies?

In this working paper, I will first provide an overview of the history of refugee policy in Canada, paying specific attention to the experiences of refugee claimants. Next, theoretical frameworks, refugee representations, and the literature on asylum claimants in Canada will be explored. Then, I will describe the methodology used in this study before presenting the results, which are divided into two sections: feelings of trust and belonging, and barriers to integration. I will identify the distinct barriers encountered by refugee claimants attempting to settle and integrate after a positive decision from the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) declaring them convention refugees, and thereby allowing them to remain in Canada indefinitely. In doing so, I will examine the unique position of social and economic limbo that this particular population experiences in Canada. In particular, the role of employment as an important contributor to feelings of integration and belonging will be discussed. Finally, I will conclude by focusing on the significance of these results, and offering generalized recommendations for addressing these important issues so as to prevent the alienation of migrants and foster an individual sense of trust and belonging. I make these recommendations in an effort to promote integration, to improve the way future policies and programs are designed and implemented, and to move forwards towards a more cohesive and just society.

Background — Canadian Refugee Policy

In Canada, the federal government has exclusive jurisdiction over Canada's immigration policy (Young 1991). This is administered by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), formerly known as Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA). These two organizations are responsible for the management of Canada's immigration policy at all points of service (in Canada, outside Canada, and ports of entry).

The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA, 2001) provides the legislative framework with stated aims to reap the economic, social and cultural benefits of immigration, while protecting the health, safety, and security of Canadians. The IRPA's objectives are achieved, in part, through a set of nine inadmissibility provisions that control the admission of individuals to Canada. The Minister of IRCC is responsible for six of these provisions (criminality, health, financial reasons, misrepresentation, non-compliance, and inadmissible family members), while the Minister of Public Safety is responsible for the remaining three (organized criminality, security, and human or international rights violations) (Canada Gazette, 2014). Complementing the IRPA, are the statutory provisions of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* (IRPR). In the Canadian context, changes to the IRPR are regulated by the *Statutory Instruments Act (1985)*, which provides for the examination, publication and scrutiny of statutory instruments and regulations. The IRPR is not the only means for bureaucratic policymakers to offer influence. Within each department there exists a set of written policies that interpret the IRPA and guide frontline bureaucrats in the course of their duties. In the Canadian immigration context, these are known as "the CIC manuals" which include 10 volumes: Citizenship Policy, Enforcement, Temporary Foreign Worker Guidelines, Immigration Legislation, Information Sharing, Inland Processing, Reference, Overseas Processing, Protected Persons, and Identity Management (IRCC, 2016a). Finally, in exceptional circumstances, policymakers may issue operational bulletins for one-time-only instructions or provide urgent instructions to staff for a brief period while the relevant operational chapters are being updated (IRCC, 2016b)

Immigration law in Canada has seen seven major revisions with new acts coming into force

in 1869, 1906 (with significant revisions in 1910), 1919, 1952, 1967 (with significant revision to include the points system in 1967), 1976 and, most recently, 2001, which has already undergone several significant revisions (CCR, 2000). Within Canada, a refugee determination system for inland claims was not formally established until the implementation of the 1976 Immigration Act (Becklumb 2008). In 1989, the Immigration and Refugee Board was created, and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) was passed in 2001.

Under current legislation, potential refugees may enter Canada through one of four streams: as an inland refugee claimant (RC), as a Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR), through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees programme (PSR), or as a Blended Visa Office Referral (BVOR). GARs, PSRs, and BVORs are deemed to be Convention refugees pursuant to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol (CIC 2012b). GARs, PSRs, and BVORs are legally considered to be Convention refugees while living outside of Canada by virtue of their designation as such by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). In contrast, RCs arrive in Canada by their own means and typically make a refugee claim at the respective ports of entry upon arrival or at an inland CIC office (since implementation of the Safe Third Country Agreement—STCA). Through a process that at one time took years and has now been reduced to months, refugee claimants will have their case heard by the IRB. In this administrative tribunal hearing, an individual member will determine whether they will be accepted by Canada as Convention Refugees.

The decade following 9/11 saw significant changes to Canadian border enforcement. In discussions among Western democratic nations, the mobility of the border became the focus, and in November 2001, Canada implemented its Multiple Borders Strategy, which incorporates a number of strategic interdiction and deterrence measures aimed at increasing the layers of interdiction and reducing the number of asylum seekers able to reach Canadian borders. This has frequently been termed as the "pushing out" or "increased mobility" of the border (Mountz 2010). Michelle Brown (2010) asserted that the significant financial, technical, and political investment that states direct towards the fortification of border security functions theatrically with the purpose of advertising an image of "sovereign state power" (25). This power of the federal govern-

ment exerting itself as a sovereign state reaches its apex in immigration law allowing lawmakers to determine how particular modes of mobility are enabled, given license, and facilitated while others are forbidden, regulated, and prevented (Stumpf 2006; Cresswell 2006). At every level of analysis, then, we can see how immigration restrictions allow the state to classify, intercept, and de-mobilise non-citizens (Silverman 2012, 682).

The Multiple Borders Strategy included implementing strategic partnerships with local law enforcement officials in countries that are typically used for refugees in transit to Canada. By stationing International Liaison Officers (ILO) in these high-risk places, the state is able to extend their enforcement capacities beyond Canada's sovereign territory. There are currently 63 ILOs in 49 countries worldwide (Arbel and Brenner 2013:4). ILOs actively engage in training local airline staff in visa and document screening techniques to help identify fraudulent documents and refuse boarding to individuals carrying these documents, subsequently preventing claimants from reaching Canadian territory (Arbel and Brenner 2013). The Canadian border has been extended to the point of overseas check-in where claimants can be effectively denied asylum without ever speaking to a Canadian bureaucrat. This is what Varsanyi (2008) called the "rescaling" of immigration control with its delegation to state, provincial, and municipal authorities as well as supranational institutions and market actors, whether it be airlines, travel agents, or private security firms (Amoore 2006; Coleman 2007). Along with increased training of overseas airline staff, increased penalties to carriers are also enforced. Under IRPA, if an airline transports an inadmissible person to Canada they may be charged a fee of $3,200 if the person's arrival in Canada has resulted in substantial costs to the Canadian government. In fiscal year 2009–2010 the Canadian government recovered nearly $825,000 in airline penalties (Arbel and Brenner 2013). These practices are tightening not only Canadian borders, but also the borders of all Western democracies.

The past few years have been characterized by unprecedented changes to immigration policy with the passing of a number of bills including the Balanced Refugee Reform Act (BRRA) in 2010, the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act (PCISA) in 2012, the Faster Removals of Foreign Criminals Act (FRFC) in 2013, and the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act (SCCA) in 2014 (Huot et al 2015, 133). PCISA (2012) significantly altered the in-Canada processing of asy-

lum claimants in Canada. The text of the bill included the establishment of Designated Countries of Origin (DCOs) in Canadian legislation. The Citizenship and Immigration Canada website stated:

> The aim of the DCO policy is to deter abuse of the refugee system by people who come from countries generally considered safe. Refugee claimants from DCOs will have their claims processed faster. This will ensure that people in need get protection fast, while those with unfounded claims are sent home quickly through expedited processing
>
> *CIC 2015*

The new legislation significantly reduced timelines for refugee claimants by implementing required hearings in 45 days for claimants from DCO countries and 60 days for claimants from non-DCOs. Prior to this, claimants waited an average of eighteen months to two years for a hearing. Additionally, the legislation secured the ability of the Minister to designate Irregular Arrivals and impose mandatory detention (with legislated mandatory detention reviews), and included appeal restrictions barring claimants from DCOs, or those who came by way of irregular arrival from accessing the new Refugee Appeal Division (CCR, 2012). Perhaps more than any other migration policy, this legislation was met with significant resistance by legal advocates. Ongoing constitutional challenges may offer potential avenues to recognize and learn from the possible unintended policy consequences of legislation rushed through development and implementation. This will be an area of focus in the findings of this research.

These policies were not developed in a vacuum. As Antje Ellerman (2009) in her book *States Against Migrants* offered, there has been significant policy transfer between Western democratic nations. She posited that many of the pieces of the policy package enacted in Canada from 2004–2012 virtually mirror the migration policies of Germany in the early 1990s. In June 1993, the government in Germany amended the constitution in Basic Law, Article 16 to include three amendments: to deny access to the asylum application provisions of any individual entering from a "safe third country", to deny access to asylum to individuals from "safe countries of origin", and to ensure an expedited removal process for those individuals whose claims are determined to be "manifestly unfounded" (59). The German government saw immediate results with a decrease in asylum applications of over 70% between 1992 and 1994. Ellerman (2009) noted that

this decrease in asylum seekers lasted through to 1998 at which point the numbers hit a ten-year low. The German policy mandate has since been overshadowed by year over year increases in asylum seekers with 2013 seeing a 25% year over year increase in asylum applications (UNHCR 2013 Global Trends).

The German outcomes of declining asylum claims during the 1990s were replicated in the Canadian context. According to the UNHCR report Asylum Trends 2012, in 2008 Canada placed second in the world's top fifteen refugee receiving countries. Six short years later, the UNHCR Asylum Trends 2014 Report shows Canada no longer holds a place in the top ten, and now ranks fifteenth in the world (UNHCR 2012; 2014). From a statistical perspective, it is fairly easy to quantify the effects of these legislative amendments, but these reports fail to acknowledge the lived experiences of asylum claimants in Canada. This research attempts to highlight the individual narratives of refugee claimants in Canada.

Literature Review

Immigration lawmaking is a major object of modern governmentality; there is considerable moral and political investment in overseeing and regulating mobility for some, while enforcing immobility for others. It is an exclusively sovereign project (Goldring, Berinstein, and Bernhard 2009). In order for a nation to exist, it must have both members and boundaries. Through this lens migration laws are seen as essential to the construction of nations and serve to draw a line between members and others, making the border meaningful for people attempting to cross it (Dauvergne 2004). Much of the literature on migration reveals the objective of migration management as intending to promote economic competitiveness by facilitating and recruiting the best and brightest, while simultaneously restricting access to those that are considered undesirable or burdensome. In Canada, representations of immigration policies often suggest a dialectical relationship between a welcoming and generous multicultural nation and a racialized, criminal, and diseased foreign immigrant "Other" that would seek to abuse Canada's "generosity" (Pottie-Sherman and Wilks 2016, 81). As the number of people admitted as family-class immigrants and refugees has dropped, the number of people admitted as economic immigrants has grown

considerably. The preoccupation with economic competitiveness in migration policy has rendered the economic contributions of those in the low-wage sector of the Canadian economy (family-class migrants and refugees) ignored, as they occupy positions as building cleaners, agricultural workers, and employees in ethnic restaurants and supermarkets (Bragg and Wong 2016, 49). This has taken place within an international context of global capitalism and neoliberalism and accelerated with the election of the Conservative Party as a minority government in 2006 and as a majority government in 2011 (Bragg and Wong 2016, 46).

In the past thirty years, neoliberalism has emerged as the dominant global economic, social, and political ethos, and has become firmly embedded and articulated at various scales in Canadian public policies by both left and right wing political parties (Mukhtar et al. 2016, 391). A neoliberal paradigm has placed emphasis on economic citizenship and the productive viability and capacity of citizens. Those unable to fulfil responsibilities of self-determination may likewise be deemed failed citizens or a burden on the social system. Citizens are framed as having a duty to contribute to the broader society and social inclusion is achieved mainly through paid employment (Huot et al. 2015, 140). Both government and media discourses tend to dichotomize the "good and bad immigrant" (Pozniak 2009, 178). While "good immigrants" are skilled, hard-working, quick-to-adapt newcomers who never require government assistance, "bad immigrants" represent a cost to the Canadian taxpayer, as they fail to learn English, require government assistance, reject work in low-paying positions, and are "unwilling to adapt to Canadian norms" (Pozniak 2009, 178).

In 2012, Reitz noted that skill-based immigrant selection may be the most important feature contributing to the success of the Canadian model, and that "Geography is part of the context". He argued that the geographic isolation of Canada from all countries other than the US has limited illegal immigration and thus made legal immigration more attractive. This isolation has been vital in sustaining the political perception of the Canadian border as being controlled in the national interest (Reitz 2012, 518). Globalization is creating greater opportunities for migration and a much more visible flow of undocumented immigrants into Canada, possibly threatening public support for immigration (Reitz 2012, 531). Stephanie Silverman (2014) noted that an in-

creasing number of normative theorists are engaging in a thoughtful discussion on who to admit (and exclude), and when and why these decisions may or may not be morally acceptable.

A review of the literature reveals significant criticism of the theoretical foundations of refugee determination. Catherine Dauvergne (2004) noted that migration law has been transformed into the new last bastion of sovereignty. The power of the sovereign nation to exclude remains fundamentally restricted by its position as a signatory to the Refugee Convention. Thus, the problem then becomes the capacity of the state to restrict access for those with no legal avenues of migration, specifically undocumented migrants and those seeking asylum. Determining who is and is not a refugee proves to be an enormous task from both a legal and logistical perspective. Howard Adelman (2004) noted that the foundation of the Canadian refugee determination system is the idea that the desirable CAN be readily distinguished from the undesirable, which is problematic in practice. Shifting geopolitical, legal, and sovereign geographies offer migrants the temporally and spatially contingent "right to have rights" thereby exacerbating the asymmetry of geopolitical relations and manipulation across local and international scales (Coddington et al. 2012, 39). Walsh (2014) posited that the security of the nation-state as a social body hinges on the exclusion, alienation and insecurity of others (254). James Hathaway (2008) argued that refugee protection is paramount to the antithesis of migration control; the claimant becomes impermeable to the laws of sovereignty by virtue of their inclusion in a geopolitical category; it is a "trump card" against migration control methods. The state is then left to muddle through the determination process to decide how, when, and to whom asylum is granted (Silverman 2014). David Garland (2000) argued that at its very basis—the failure to properly address the issue of undocumented or undesirable migrants is a violation the state's responsibility to provide internal security; a violation of the most basic condition of the social contract.

If there has been a single overarching trend in refugee policies over the last decade or so, it has been the official drive to rein in, to control, to constrain, to render orderly and manageable the arrival of refugees. This is by design, in order to achieve state based migration management goals (Hathaway 2007, 355). Susan Zimmerman (2011) noted that refugee determination is a site of inclusion or exclusion and occurs in non-neutral, value-attached and political ways, and the

state's processes of granting or refusing asylum claims are central to how meaning is assigned to the different forms of this mobility. Certain categories are marked as suitable for recognition and others are not, as the "right and wrong" reasons or "sanctioned or rejected" (236). Nicholas De Genova (2013) has argued that asylum regimes produce a mass of purportedly "bogus" asylum seekers (1181). Because the borders of the sovereign state and management of migration are foundationally based in law, there is little room left to approach these matters from a strictly humanitarian perspective. Instead, decisions are relegated to a question of an individual's fit into a specific legal category for admission. Migrant behaviour is seen as being influenced by policies, as Rocha, Hawes, Fryar and Winkle (2014) note. Policymakers can therefore increase the probability of detection, increase the costs of engaging in the activity, or decrease the benefits of engaging in the activity all through manipulation of policy (80).

Critical geographers have played a crucial role in identifying how these increasingly militarized and spatially expanded immigration policy enforcement practices are not just oppressive but also tremendously "productive" in that they serve two key functions of the state: ensuring capital accumulation in industry and maintaining the political legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the public (Harrison and Lloyd 2012, 371). Western nation-states have been engaged in deliberate practices to make efforts to reach their sovereign territories increasingly arduous for those seeking asylum. The literature then becomes a relevant way to grapple with the motivations for social policy.

Social Construction of Refugees

Given the global rise of asylum seekers, it is timely to critically examine how forced migrants are constructed in particular ways through discourses of neoliberalism and security (Huot et al. 2015, 133). The ways in which ideas about refugees are formally constructed and communicated has been the subject of several academic inquiries. Fran Cetti (2014) noted that claimants have been progressively transformed from "refugee", the object of human rights discourse and legislation, into criminalized "economic migrants" signifying a global threat to security. Grove and Zwi (2006) identified a range of discursively constructed subjectivities including queue

jumpers, uninvited guests, threats to public security, and drains on public resources (1936). Suzanne Huot and her colleagues (2015) identified three main constructed "problems" as well as "solutions" to address them. Particular groups of forced migrants were constructed as threats to: the economy, the integrity of the refugee system, and national security. The policy changes aim to "solve" these problems through: the creation of specific categories of migrants associated with varying rights and subjected to differing types of managerial and surveillance practices, enhancing efficiency within the system (e.g., reducing processing times, ensuring timely removals), and expanding governmental powers (Huot et al. 2015, 135).

Sales (2002) suggested that the negative construction of asylum seekers through legislation creates a social category in both policy and discourse. This negative construction employs Stanley Cohen's (1972) concept of "folk devils"—scapegoats who embody society's fears and anxieties at a particular point in time. Stripped of any positive characteristics and re-imagined as "wholly unfavourable symbols", folk devils are placed at the epicenter of a moral panic (Bradimore and Bauder 2011). Li (2003) argued that the very term refugee implies an unsolicited immigrant vilified as a burden to the state (47). Dawson (2011) noted that in thinking like a "state", the desirable refugees are those who are able to prove that they are utterly helpless and innocent. While those deemed to have any agency are considered less in need the agency itself is typically understood as "unsavory" (considering them as identity frauds or queue jumpers) or "dangerous" (criminals or potential terrorists) (70). In Canada, the use of the "bogus refugee" narrative has been linked to an economic-utility perspective that represents immigrants in light of economic costs and benefits (Bradimore and Bauder 2011). Undocumented migrants are blamed for crime, unemployment, overpopulation, cultural fragmentation, and overburdening social programs and though, despite being the target of anxiety and fear, the folk devil is not the cause of the panic itself (Walsh 2014; Bradimore and Bauder 2011). Therefore, a national refugee discourse rooted in financial costs can be an important policy tool, particularly in the midst of economic recession.

The dominant discourse of asylum seekers as a threat to economy (i.e., as a burden on the refugee system and a drain on health and social welfare resources) and security (i.e., as criminals

and terrorists) actively frames asylum seekers as the site of the problem and therefore requiring of a targeted solution (Huot et al. 2015). This individualization of the asylum "problem" aligns with neoliberalism in that it enables governments to absolve themselves of responsibility for addressing issues that engender the need for asylum (Huot et al. 2015, 141). Grove and Zwi (2006) highlighted how these strategies construct the "other" in society and justify a lack of government support, financial or otherwise, for forced migrants. Cetti further noted that techniques of global migration management are serving to automatically designate the majority of forced migrants from the poor areas of the global south as "illegal" mobile bodies, inherently unworthy of legal rights, and noted that the concept of "illegal" mobility presupposes a clear boundary between legality and illegality (2014, 8).

About the Project

I embarked on this research seeking to investigate the individual social impacts of securitized migration policy in Canada as they pertain to one particular group of migrants: asylum claimants who arrived and made a claim in Canada after January 1, 2010. I believe the research is timely as governments are grappling with contemporary challenges associated with the securitization of borders. In Canada, there were 111 new immigration policies implemented between 2002–2015, compared to just 19 between 1867–2001 (CCR 2015). In this study, I sought to address two questions:

(i)   What are the effects of securitization of migration policies insofar as perceptions of success in integration, and feelings of trust and belonging; and

(ii) Are there unintended policy consequences associated with rapidly changing securitized migration policies?

The policy implications of these questions are substantial. Once a refugee claimant is granted status as a convention refugee or protected person by the Immigration and Refugee Board, their right to remain in Canada forever becomes entrenched in law, with only one exception. In the case of serious criminality, the Minister may order the removal of a convention refugee or

protected person if it is determined that allowing the individual to remain in Canada presents a "danger to the public" (IRCC 2016c). On the whole, this situation is rare and thus, when an individual is granted status as a refugee or protected person they are likely to remain in Canada indefinitely. As such, ensuring that those granted asylum in Canada are appropriately settled and integrated and feel a sense of trust and belonging in Canadian society is an important national priority.

Methodology and Sample

Qualitative interviews were conducted between February and April 2016 in two sites: Toronto and Vancouver. The overall goal of the interviews was to obtain rich qualitative data. Semi-structured and conversational interviews facilitated this goal, allowing the participants to easily discuss their perceptions and experiences in an open-ended format while also allowing the interviewer to ask additional questions to gain detail and depth.

I contacted the Executive Directors of seven refugee-serving organizations by e-mail about the study and asked them to participate or to recommend a frontline staff member who would have knowledge regarding the research topic. Of those contacted, four organizations agreed to participate in the project.

In an effort to recruit refugee participants, research recruitment posters were distributed with permission at two settlement services providers in Vancouver and two settlement service providers in Toronto. The assistance provided by NGO settlement service providers was instrumental in advertising this study as they presented the research poster to potential participants they believed might be interested.

In each of the interviews, I used an in-depth, semi-structured, and conversational strategy with a series of guiding questions. Two different scripts of guiding questions were prepared for this study: one for NGO employees who provided settlement services and assistance to refugee claimants in Canada, and the other for participants who had been granted refugee status by the IRB as in-Canada claimants.

TABLE 1: PARTICIPANTS' CHARACTERISTICS*

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	GENDER	LANGUAGE OF INTERVIEW	LOCATION OF INTERVIEW
El Salvador	M	English	Toronto
El Salvador	F	English	Toronto
El Salvador	F	English	Toronto
Colombia	F	English	Toronto
Cuba	F	Spanish	Toronto
Cuba	M	Spanish	Toronto
El Salvador	F	Spanish	Toronto
El Salvador	M	Spanish	Toronto
Peru	F	Spanish	Toronto
Eritrea	M	Tigrigna	Toronto
Nigeria	M	English	Toronto
Nigeria	F	English	Toronto
Saudi Arabia	F	English	Toronto
Nigeria	M	English	Toronto
Colombia	F	Spanish	Vancouver
Nigeria	F	English	Vancouver
Afghanistan	M	English	Vancouver
Afghanistan	F	English	Vancouver
Colombia	M	Spanish	Vancouver

*Information from interviews conducted February to April 2016

*The country of birth is included for participants in the sample, but it should be noted that one participant was born stateless in that country, therefore the country listed is not the one in which they faced persecution. So as to ensure anonymity of the participant, a deliberate decision was made to record only one country rather than include specifics.

I conducted a total of twenty-three interviews. Of those, eighteen were conducted with individuals who had arrived and been declared convention refugees or protected persons by the Immigration and Refugee Board under the new legislation and timelines. Of those eighteen, four are also currently employed as NGO employees. In these particular interviews both scripts were used. The remaining five interviews were conducted with NGO employees that serve in-Canada refugee claimant populations. The resulting sample was diverse, capturing a range of perspectives from participants migrating from: El Salvador, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, Nigeria, Cuba, and Columbia (See Table 1).

Unlike those interviewed in Vancouver, in Toronto all five of the research participants employed by NGOs were convention refugees themselves. Three of the four had arrived in Canada as asylum claimants and are therefore uniquely positioned to speak from the dually informed

perspective of both experienced professional service providers and also their lived experience as refugees.

Seven interviews were conducted in Spanish, and one in Tigrigna, each with the assistance of interpreters. All twenty-three interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. To ensure anonymity, only the gender, country of origin, and interview site was recorded for refugee participants. Because of the small number of NGOs that participated in the project, the participants were coded only as NGO employees, and by location of interview—no further descriptors were utilized. The intent of the initial research was to capture the perspectives of claimants who had been processed under the "'legacy" system and claimants who had been processed under the "new" system. However, efforts to find individuals who had arrived after January 1, 2010 as "legacy" cases and had received a hearing by the time of the interviews (February and March 2016) were futile. The enormous backlog of legacy cases in which a significant population of individuals arrived prior to 2012 but have not yet had a claims determination hearing requires further research and is beyond the scope of this paper. As such, all eighteen participants were processed under the "new" system with expedited timelines. It is important to highlight that, as necessary requirement for ethics approval, all participants were successful in their claim for refugee protection. This does have implications for the generalizability of the findings, particularly as they relate to feelings of trust and belonging, an issue that will be wholly explored.

Findings

Two important themes emerged from the qualitative data analysis of interviews conducted in both Toronto and Vancouver. First, participants overwhelmingly reported positive feelings of inclusion. There was a strong indication that participants believed the system and the process was fair and that Canadian society can be trusted. As convention refugees in Canada, participants continue to feel a keen sense of belonging. The second theme explored the unique challenges experienced by refugee claimants in Canada, and the structural barriers to successful integration and settlement that participants have and continue to experience.

Theme One: Fairness, Trust, and Belonging

On the whole, the academic literature is critical of securitization measures as they pertain to the refugee status determination process. In the period of intense securitization of immigration legislation and policy from 2009–2013 in Canada, NGOs, migrant advocacy networks, and academics expressed deep concern about the fairness of the new process and its constitutional legitimacy. Many of these concerns remain although there have been several constitutional challenges that continue to make their way through the necessary legal avenues. Akbari and MacDonald (2014) noted that immigration policy is highly politicized, garnering intense short-term media attention, while academic research operates on a longer time frame. In recognizing this, the research questions were designed to broadly address questions related to the individual experiences of participating in the newly implemented bureaucratic processes and asked participants how they *feel* about their experiences in Canada (see appendix 1). This is important because it acknowledges that while much of the literature thus far has theoretically highlighted the negative aspects of securitization, the timeline for academic publications is such that the rapidly changing legislation has left gaps in the availability of both qualitative and quantitative data. This is an important contextual element because, somewhat surprisingly, participants reported feeling satisfied with the process of claims determination, and though the sample size is small, overwhelmingly the data collected in these interviews indicated that after a positive determination of the claim, refugee claimants in Canada have positive feelings towards Canada.

> I am very happy with this country. I'm starting to love this country. And the people that I have met they are also part of the reasons why I feel this way.
>
> *Female, El Salvador, interviewed in Toronto.*

When asked about experiences of belonging, many participants offered positive narratives that reify the hubris of Canadians as generous:

> Canadians have been good, nice. I—everything I want—goes smoothly. I don't have any problem. I thank God, I thank my parents for choosing this country for me.
>
> *Male, Nigeria, Interviewed in Toronto.*

What I like about this country, is the people helps you a lot, they offer to—they sometimes I lost my way, in subways and different places, and even one day I express to one woman I have no money, and she paid for my trip, and I was able to navigate. That's what I like about this country.

Male, Eritrea, Interviewed in Toronto.

I might seem very negative, but if I say anything—I'm always very grateful for what the government, for what Canada, has been able to offer me. Because I'm in a place where I'm able to speak my mind, in a place where I'm able to have my practices and not fear.

Female, Saudi Arabia, interviewed in Toronto

When asked about the fairness of the refugee determination system,

I was lucky that I came after 2012. My hearing was set up—also had a hearing set on the that form that they gave me, it was 2 months after that date that I arrived. And then from the 2 months—within the 2 months—within the court day, I was told that my decision was positive, then from there, in a month, they gave me the decision letter.

Female, Saudi Arabia, Interviewed in Toronto

It is important to critically engage with these insightful narratives for two important reasons: (1) there are indications from these narratives that contrary to the expectations of those critical of the new securitized bureaucratic process with shorter timelines, participants of this study overwhelmingly reported positive experiences in the new refugee determination system, at least in the case of those who received a positive decision, and (2) positive perceptions of Canada and Canadians offer favorable conditions for settlement and integration of newcomers. Even in cases where participants reported negative experiences with Canadians, they seemed to mitigate them as unusual or infrequent. This participant noted:

Canadians are very kind and have treated us very well. Maybe one or two have been kind of cold. I went to get social assistance and they told me I could get a token for transit. When I was done, I didn't understand English obviously, so I stand there, I didn't understand what to do, and suddenly this man comes out and he's like what are you doing here? And how I was able to tell him token, and he just rudely told me, don't move, just stay here. The secretary on the other side, called me over, and said no no, come closer, come closer, to get the token. The man came back out and treated me like I was a child and he was my dad. Really pissed off. I cried. It was a difficult experience. But it's good, it's good that those things happen. It helps you. It's good. Among sort of the sweetness, a little bit of bitterness is okay. But when I feel for us immigrants, but what kills

us, is to just see our families. I'm okay, but everyday that I eat something, I feel my family and I'm scared for them. My parents, my siblings. But I feel like Canada is a dream.

Male, El Salvador, Interviewed in Toronto

When asked about feelings towards the Government of Canada, particularly related to trust, the qualitative data collected in this research offers interesting insights. In order to holistically interpret the findings, it is important to acknowledge and recognize that the participants interviewed for this research have been determined to meet the definition of convention refugee or protected person. The 1951 Refugee Convention spells out that a refugee is someone who:

owing to a well—founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

This definition is highlighted to draw attention to the potential distrust towards government that is sometimes perceived to exist among refugee populations. When asked, "Do you trust the Government of Canada?" participants said:

There's always a little bit of space for doubt about that. Always. The assistance, the support, the government has given us has been very important. But I see it as very technical and material. But the psychological and spiritual part—the doctor once told me I had post traumatic stress and I didn't know what that was. The psychological part… that's the poor part.

Male, Colombia, Interviewed in Vancouver.

In Canada, there's a system. When there's a system, you have to trust in the system. People often don't trust in people. It's part of a system. When you have a system, you have to trust, there's no doubt.

Male, Afghanistan, Interviewed in Vancouver.

I do. I do. It's kind of probably still scary, I have my PR and if I did something, I'm a very good person—but if I did something, I don't know, you never know what the stories you hear, you never know what's going to happen out of here. I always fear that I fall on something at the wrong place, at the wrong time kind of thing. Something happens that can take away my PR. That I always have in my mind, but to be back to my rational mind, no, I trust the Canadian government.

Female, Saudi Arabia, Interview in Toronto.

From a position of reflexivity, I engaged with the complexity of such a loaded question by both acknowledging the past lived experience of engagement with differing governments, and the recognition that "government" is not a singular—that the ideological rubric of the sitting government at any specific temporal period will have significant effects on an individuals' interpretation of the question. An open-ended dialogical interview question posed in this way offers rich qualitative data, because it allows the participant to individually interpret the question.

> I'm not really interested in the government of Canada. But I was told that the new government, the Liberals, are being nice to the refugees. Because the other day we went for the refugee meeting, what are the 10 issues they want to deal with—the government of Canada is telling (asking) the refugees what are the 10 issues they want them to deal with. So I think it's very nice compared to the last—because the last prime minister—conservatives—are opposite. They didn't have a chance for all this. But I think the new person is doing well and making things easier for people.
>
> *Female, Nigeria, Interviewed in Toronto*

There are two important analytical elements in these findings that must be acknowledged. First, in my role as a researcher and academic, as well as my own perceptions and reflexivity, led me to presuppose that the very nature of a securitized process would be unpleasant for participants. The findings of this study absolutely refute those assumptions, but with an important caveat: all of the participants interviewed arrived in Canada, and within months of arrival received a positive determination of their claim under the PCISA legislation. As such, it is very important to note that there are significant limitations to these findings insofar as their generalizability. Individuals who received a positive decision within the sixty to ninety day timelines report positive experiences and feelings of fairness; but the experiences of individuals who have been waiting extensive periods for a hearing, or those who received a negative decision, were not included in this study. Thus, ultimate caution must be exercised in concluding that the process as it currently exists is fair or positive. In fact, the success of several constitutional challenges as they pertain to the validity of the DCO and "mass arrivals" designations are ongoing and preliminary administrative and judicial decisions have rendered them unconstitutional. The arguments about the overall fairness of the Refugee Determination (RDS) system are well beyond the scope of this paper, but this research offers a valuable contribution to the existing body of knowledge. This

research recognizes and acknowledges that overwhelmingly, those claimants that have arrived in Canada under the new RDS system and received a positive decision of their claim (and are thus likely to remain in Canada indefinitely) do not bear significant ill-will or begrudge the Canadian system, government, and people. These findings offer significant positive outcomes for long-term pathways to integration and settlement in Canada.

Theme Two: Barriers to Integration—Employment Authorizations

Participation in the labour market is a definitive indicator of successful settlement in all western democratic nations. For migrants, irrespective of their category of admission, participation in the economy fosters a sense of independence and belonging, feelings of inclusion, and encourages settlement and integration. Bronwyn Bragg and Lloyd Wong (2016) noted that the current neoliberal context largely informs Canadian immigration policy reaffirming the notion that the more integrated someone is in the formal labor market, the more likely they are to be well-integrated members of Canadian society; that neoliberalism purports a version of citizenship in which paid work is an identifiable marker of integration. When participants of this study were asked about the challenges they have faced since arriving in Canada, overwhelmingly they reported difficulties in obtaining employment authorizations. One participant succinctly noted:

> I also think one of the things that needs to be changed is the access to permits. Work permits and study permits. Why do they (refugees) need to apply for it? Why? I mean why wait three, four months. When a person like me comes, who knows the language, and they want to work. They don't want to be on the welfare. Why make them wait? Why they don't give a work permit for at least 6 months. One of the issues is, if you don't want people on welfare, encourage them to work. Why are you not encouraging them to work? It's not like they are going to steal all the work from offices. They will be the labour people. My father doesn't know English. My father has been working in cleaning.
>
> *Female, El Salvador, Interviewed in Toronto*

Stuesse and Coleman (2014) noted that in many countries, irregular migrants are not allowed to work until their asylum cases are heard. In the Canadian context, it is assumed that once an individual is determined to be a convention refugee or protected person, that individual

would immediately be allowed to work. However, this research has ascertained that this is not always the case. Many participants were unable to access the appropriate work permits immediately following a positive decision. Stuesse and Coleman (2014) noted that being unable to work highlights the migrant's status as a humanitarian case (and welfare case), emphasizing the state's charity rather than the migrant's agency or work contribution. Many participants expressed their frustration:

> We are refugees because where we are coming from we have a problem there. And when we come here to settle down, why do they make us go through this? Why do they have to—because if they want to work, why do we have to get a work permit for? To get a work permit application is 140 days? Like, really? I don't think we should be on social assistance. In as much as we could, there are job opportunities very good. The refugees would not have to go on the social assistance.
>
> *Female, Nigeria, Interviewed in Toronto*

> When I applied for a work permit, it was not going well with the guy who was working with me, who was taking care of my case, the case worker (NGO), and it took me like, 2 months (after positive decision). But some of the people, they get before they get a decision. If you have English, go work. It would help many people to have access to a work permit sooner.
>
> *Male, Eritrea, Interview in Toronto*

> Finding work is a gap. I've been almost 1 year in Canada. But now most people when I'm going for interviews asked me what I've done in the past 1 year. And for most people it's very hard to explain the situation because most people they don't know about—when you say that I'm a refugee, they don't know what's a refugee exactly. And if you knew that I was waiting for like, 4 months to get my status. They're not very familiar with that, they don't know. When you want to try to explain to them, they will not understand it. And if you say that I was waiting to get my work permit for 3 or 4 months, it can be tough for them. [...] And they don't understand.
>
> *Male, Afghanistan, Interviewed in Vancouver*

> The process is long. Waiting is long. We have been here for almost three years. We arrived and were accepted as refugees right away. Then we applied for work permits and waited six months for those. Now we are waiting for permanent residence.
>
> *Male, El Salvador, Interviewed in Toronto*

So (not) having a study permit was an issue. And they said it's supposed to be processed in three months, then it took longer, around 6 months. Same thing with work permit, it took that long. Good thing though, I was—I went onto social welfare assistance for almost a year until I got my work permit.

Female, Saudi Arabia, Interviewed in Toronto

When I got my acceptance letter, I started going to school. Then, if I could start working, then I would work, but it takes so long to get a permit.

Male, Nigeria, Interviewed in Toronto

These narratives of frustration often come with descriptions of waiting in limbo and feeling lost. While participants feel secure in knowing that their status is no longer precarious, and that they will be allowed to remain in Canada indefinitely, they report feelings of isolation. Stuesse and Coleman (2012) noted that although their human rights are recognized, the inability to work affects their immediate identification with the national population thereby increasing social distance (117). Participating in the economy is an important factor of settlement and integration. One participant reported:

I cannot work because of my back, so I am on disability. I can't do anything that requires physical strength, so I volunteer. Every week I volunteer.

Female, Peru, Interviewed in Toronto

Within this theme, a second barrier to economic participation emerged. Participants reported that after long waits for employment authorizations, they would begin applying for positions and the readily identifiable temporary social insurance number (SIN) combined with expiry dates on the issued work permits presented structural barriers to obtaining employment. Participants were issued social insurance numbers beginning with the number nine, ultimately labelling them as "temporary" and leading to further scrutiny while seeking employment. One participant noted:

Finding work is a gap. I've been almost 1 year in Canada. But now most people when I'm going for interviews …they ask why I got a temporary social insurance number which is starting by 9 and for most of the people it's a question that they're asking. So why is your social insurance number starting by 9, why is it temporary? They ask so you're not allowed to work for permanent in Canada, you're not allowed to stay in Canada permanently? I've been asked this question a lot.

And for most people, they're asking it if I have PR. I say I don't have PR but I'm allowed in stay in Canada and work forever, because now it's my country and I have status here. [...] So this is a problem. [...]

Male, Afghanistan, Interviewed in Vancouver

Prior research examining this structural barrier by Coates and Hayward (2005) acknowledged that the label of "refugee claimant" and markers such as 900-series SIN numbers lead to discrimination. Participants noted that they had experienced this type of discrimination:

But I'm just thinking about the SIN number things. That at times, in some places, when you apply and they see if it starts with 9 or not, I'm not sure—if you are not a PR it starts with 9. To not describe a person based on their backgrounds, their statuses, to be welcoming, more open. Those SIN numbers and work permits expire, and I think people don't get hired for jobs because of their SIN numbers (that start with 9).

Saudi Arabia, Female, Interviewed in Toronto

They think I got a temporary social insurance number which is starting by 9 and for most of the people it's a question that they're asking. So why is your social insurance number starting by 9, why is it temporary? So you're not allowed to work for permanent in Canada, you're not allowed to stay in Canada permanently? I've been asked this question a lot. And for most people, they're asking it if I have PR. I say I don't have PR but I'm allowed in stay in Canada and work forever, because now it's my country and I have status here. [...] So this is a problem. [...]

Male, Afghanistan, Interviewed in Vancouver

The social insurance number, when you're a refugee it's 5, no it's 9. When you become a permanent resident it's 5. Why are they doing it in that way? They're making people feel—oh, permanent residence is more better than refugee. If you guys want to do that system, do it in a way that is convenient for everybody or like, not discriminating people. Because I believe the social insurance number, you're letting us know that if you are a permanent resident you have options and —sometimes when I go for job interviews when I was a refugee, they see my paper I'm a refugee, they don't want to give me job. They see my social insurance number starts with 9, they are like, 9, refugee—So it's so hard out there.

Female, Nigeria, Interviewed in Toronto

Overwhelmingly, participants in this study reported that they wanted to work. The ability to work would offer them the opportunity for increased socialization by making new friends, improve their English skills, and allow them to feel that Canada is home. Frustration over the long waits for employment authorizations rendering participants reliant on social assistance were noted in almost every interview, and NGO employees acknowledged the difficulties and barriers this presented for their clients. It is interesting to note that in Vancouver, almost all refugee claimants that arrive are funnelled through a specific set of agencies that work collaboratively to provide services to a population that isn't entitled to any IRCC funding. As such, one of the practices that was implemented was a filing of application for employment authorization early on in the process, just after the medical results were received. As a result, in Vancouver, NGO employees report that many of their clients receive employment authorizations in much shorter periods after receiving a positive determination of their claim. From a neoliberal perspective, the system has achieved fluency in that the NGOs serving this population who are not funded or supported by the government to do so, have become the frontline in assisting refugee claimants in Canada to successfully navigate the bureaucracy. Because the population of refugee claimants in Vancouver is much smaller, and the number of organizations that serve them is much fewer than their Toronto counterparts, this example of neoliberal success is interesting, but likely unachievable nation-wide without government intervention to standardize the application for employment authorization at the first instance application for asylum.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been created for the consideration of Public Safety Canada and the agencies responsible for its mandate. These recommendations are not meant to be prescriptive, but instead are meant to address some of the seemingly unintended policy consequences that sometimes result from rapid policy change.

The first recommendation that stems from this research is to encourage the development of policies and procedures that promote positive economic outcomes for in-Canada asylum claimants who have been determined refugees or protected persons by the IRB. The need for imme-

diate issuance of employment authorizations was a key challenge identified by participants, with many reporting waits of 6 months or more. A potential solution may involve requiring an application for employment authorization be submitted at the time of making a claim for asylum. Alternatively, the automatic issuance of employment authorizations upon positive decision of claim might be considered. Ultimately, the findings of this research indicate that leaving convention refugees living in Canada rendered reliant on social assistance for extended periods while waiting for a work permit is neither beneficial to the Canadian economy, nor the individuals' progression of integration and settlement.

The second policy recommendation encourages the development of policies that address the issues related to the "temporariness" of convention refugees being issued employment authorizations with expiry dates, and SIN numbers beginning with nine. The findings of this research study serve to reinforce prior research findings by Coates and Hayward (2005) that highlighted the discrimination experienced by those labelled "refugee" by markers such as 900-series SIN numbers. Participants in this research study reported employers asking questions during interviews with respect to the expiry date of the employment authorizations and indicated that they believed this is a significant barrier to employment as employers are reluctant to make the training investment for short-term employees. Therefore, addressing the perceived issue of temporariness will increase the likelihood of garnering meaningful employment and assist in addressing issues of discrimination for a population that is by no means temporary, and likely to remain in Canada indefinitely.

Addressing these structural barriers to economic participation will offer long term improvements in the integration and settlement of a population that is not temporary, they are likely to remain in Canada indefinitely. Recognition that their economic success is ultimately beneficial to the economy of Canada will elicit policies meant to foster and encourage employability among convention refugees and protected persons in Canada.

These recommendations offer an overall philosophy that encouraging individuals who have been declared worthy of protection to participate in the economy rather than rendering them re-

liant on social assistance is essential to their feelings of belonging and ultimate success in integration, and is enormously beneficial to Canada's social welfare system.

> I wish the government of Canada can just check in to the refugee system and the aboriginal people's system and see what those people are going through and try to fix something—I know they can't fix everything. If the refugees are having 50 issues, then I ask the government of Canada to fix like, 10. Do that for them and make them a little bit happy.
>
> *Female, Nigeria, Interviewed in Toronto*

APPENDIX 1: REFUGEE PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS –Social Survey of Refugee Experiences
Refugees

-*any questions about me or about the research before we begin?*

1. Where do you come from? When did you arrive in Canada?
2. Describe your arrival experience
3. When were you granted refugee status?
4. What challenges did you face between the time of arrival in Canada and the final determination of your refugee claim (positive decision?)
5. How did you address those challenges? Could you give any examples?
6. What services were you able to access during that time?
7. Who helped you the most?
8. Do you believe that the refugee process was fair?
9. Do you feel welcome in Canada?
10. Do you feel as though you 'belong'?
11. How do you feel about your situation in Canada now? What are the positive things that come to mind? What are the challenges?
12. What gaps do you see in the provision of services to refugee claimants in Canada?
13. What changes in government policy would you recommend to help other claimants in Canada?
14. Do you feel you had enough information throughout the claims process?
15. Do you trust the Canadian government?
16. What is your sense of your level of settlement and integration in Canada?
17. Do you trust Canadians?
18. How would you like to see this research used? For example, government report, media, funding proposals (for what: Community Center, Credit Fund, etc)?
19. Is there something you'd like to talk about that I haven't asked you?

APPENDIX 2: NGO PARTICIPANTS – GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS –Social Survey of Refugee Experiences
NGO Workers

-*any questions about me or about the research before we begin?*

1. Where do you work?
2. What is your role?
3. How long have you been in this role?
4. What services does your organization provide to in-Canada claimants?
5. What challenges did you feel that in-Canada claimants experience between the time of arrival in Canada and the final determination of their refugee claims?
6. How do the clients you serve address those challenges? Could you give any examples?
7. Is your organization able to assist claimants in addressing any of these challenges?
8. Do you feel that Canada's refugee determination process is fair?
9. What gaps do you see in the provision of services to refugee claimants in Canada?
10. What changes in government policy would you recommend to help refugee claimants in Canada?
11. What is your sense of the level of settlement and integration in Canada after refugees receive a positive determination?
12. How would you like to see this research used? For example, government report, media, funding proposals?
13. Is there something you'd like to talk about that I haven't asked you?

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