BUILDING REFUGE: NARRATIVES FROM THE PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES PROGRAM IN THE LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA AREA

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ABSTRACT

Since 1978, Canadians have been resettling refugees through Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. Sustained critical engagement with the PSR Program is important because of its projected growth within Canada and its use in guiding similar policy development in other countries. I conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with sponsors and refugees from the Lethbridge, Alberta area in the summer and fall of 2020. Their stories demonstrate that the sponsorship experience is influenced by refugee, sponsor, and community characteristics, the relationships between these groups, and the broader contextual setting. This project seeks to add to the growing literature on Canada's PSR Program by exploring the sponsorship experience through the lens of sponsors and refugees who have first-hand experience and build on feminist discussions and conceptualizations of geographical scale.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BVOR	Blended Visa Office-Referred
DP	Displaced Person
CCCRR	Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees
GAR	Government-Assisted Refugee
GRSI	Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative
IFHP	Interim Federal Health Program
IRB	Immigration and Refugee Board
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
PSR	Privately Sponsored Refugee/Private Sponsorship of Refugees
PSRP	Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program
RWE	Right-Wing Extremists
SAH	Sponsorship Agreement Holder
STCA	Safe Third Country Agreement
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> Building refuge to me, I think would have to include building space in the hearts and minds of people… To build refuge and it's in the sense that, you know, refuge as a place of safety, a place of belonging, a place of connection, that requires people to create space in their hearts and their minds for someone else, for someone who's different from them, for someone who may be demanding, who may even challenge your assumptions in ways that you didn't anticipate.
>
> -Ryan

Refuge is built in time and place by a multitude of actors, simultaneously finding and creating space to be. This creation of space is both geographically situated and as Ryan says, situated in the hearts and minds of people. Refuge is fraught, contested, stretched, and challenged; it is both a relief and a struggle. For this research, I theorize the building of refuge at the nexus of sponsors, communities, and refugees who over the past 43 years have participated in Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program.

In 2015, a number of groups in Lethbridge, Alberta, became involved with the private sponsorship of Syrian refugees. During this time, social media pages that focused on sponsorship received tremendous encouragement, community organizations created intricate networks of support, and the city welcomed over 130 privately sponsored refugees. This same vibrancy was felt across Canada and around the world. Leading up to and following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's 2015 election win, the resettlement of Syrian refugees was on the minds of Canadians. It was astounding to see conversations about refugees so engrained in public discourse at that time. Yet, in 2019, when I started this project, these public conversations about forced migration and resettlement had largely faded; something had changed.

Observing this change sparked a curiosity and with it, a series of questions that guided my initial engagement with this topic. What role does the framing of a "crisis"

play in shaping refugee resettlement? Participants in this study had participated in refugee resettlement between 1979 and 1980 when large numbers of Southeast Asian refugees were being resettled to Canada and more recently between 2015 and 2018 when Syrian refugees were arriving. Because these periods were framed as so-called "crises", the resettlement landscape and experiences of refugees and sponsors were different. The story of Alan Kurdi's death played a significant and memorable role in shaping refugee discourse during recent years. While this inspired Canadians to participate in projects like private sponsorship, it also points to questions about how the program can remain sustainable and whether it is a just approach to the ongoing needs of displaced persons.

A second question also sparked my engagement with this topic—in the context of neoliberal localization of responsibility, are local groups equipped to take on the large task of resettlement? In Canada, privately sponsored refugees now make up the largest group of resettled refugees, indicating a significant demand on community organizations. The private sponsorship program has been viewed as a neoliberal approach to simultaneously save money and divert responsibility onto local groups. While this localization of responsibility can be empowering, it can also embed these groups so deeply in the local that their practices are dissociated from the broader contexts of displacement. With sponsorship being such a local project, I wondered whether sponsors and refugees were conceptualizing their experiences within the broader contextual settings.

And lastly, are the religious organizations that have been so critical to the formation of the PSR Program still positioned in a way to handle this role? Christian groups have taken on a significant role in private sponsorship, in both its early roots, and contemporary structure. However, with growing decline in membership in Christian

churches, there are concerns that they may not be able to sustain such levels of involvement. Throughout this research, the role of Canada's Mennonite community in private sponsorship has served as an example of how faith-based groups have remained involved in the program. These questions and initial observations following the arrival of Syrian refugees in my community are what inspired this research on the PSR Program.

In 1978, Canada's PSR Program officially began. The program allows Canadians to resettle refugees by supporting them financially, emotionally, and socially for their first 12 months in Canada. The first notable use of the program was for the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, sponsorship in Canada has a longer history, especially among faith-based groups. Scholarship on refugee resettlement in Canada has focused largely on the benefits and drawbacks of the program (See for example, Lanphier, 2003; Lenard, 2016; Lim, 2019) and the role that different resettlement streams have on the integration of refugees (See for example, Agrawal, 2018; Hynie et al., 2019; Kaida et al., 2019). Though many of these pieces critically approach private sponsorship in an attempt to destabilize assumptions about the PSR Program, what is missing is the use of narratives in order to understand the sponsorship experience in a more holistic and subject specific way. I conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with sponsors and refugees from the Lethbridge area between June and November 2020. Through an iterative analysis I was able to draw out a number of themes from the narratives of participants. Their stories demonstrate that the sponsorship experience is influenced by refugee, sponsor, and community characteristics, the relationships between these groups, and the broader contextual setting. This project seeks to add to the growing literature on Canada's PSR Program by exploring the sponsorship experience through the lens of sponsors and refugees who have first-hand experience and

build on feminist discussions and conceptualizations of geographical scale. In 2006, Pratt and Rosner introduced a special issue of Women's Studies Quarterly called the Global and the Intimate. In it, they set forth a call to upend "hierarchies of space and scale" by "undermining straightforward boundaries and distinctions" (pp. 16, 21). They assert that "categories defined in opposition to one another actually rest in false dualisms" and call on fellow feminist scholars to "to show how the intimate and the global intertwine, to try to disrupt grand narratives of global relations by focusing on the specific, the quotidian, and the eccentric" (Pratt & Rosner, 2006, p. 16). I aim to answer this call throughout my research by highlighting how the experience of sponsorship is intertwined with various scales that have impacts on the lived experiences of both sponsors and refugees.

1.1 Feminist Political Geography

While chapter two offers a more thorough review of the literature, the following section is devoted to positioning this project within the field of geography. In a key text on feminism in geography, Monk and Hansen (1982) put out a call for the "recognition of the need for basic transformations of the [geographic] disciplines if women's experiences and actions [were] to be incorporated into enriched interpretations and analyses of human experience" (p. 36). A decade later, Doreen Massey's *Space, Place and Culture* which was originally published in 1994 offered a series of papers that formulated space and place in terms of social relations, specifically the construction of gender. Today, feminist approaches can be seen in many fields of geography. My research is situated in the field of feminist political geography, a subfield of political geography that more broadly includes feminist geopolitics, subaltern geopolitics, and other critical approaches to power (Hyndman, 2019). Feminist geopolitics has its roots in the 1990s when Kofman and Peake (1990) made the argument that "gender perspectives can make a fuller

understanding of some of the key areas of political geography" (p. 313). In particular, they were referencing a need to rethink the masculinist nature of geopolitics that focuses on boundaries, state structures, and international conflicts as key sites for analysis. Since then, feminist geopolitics has become a significant subfield of political geography. Below, Massaro and Williams (2013) describe the field:

> [Feminist geopolitics] traces nascent forms of power, oppression, and resistances at and between multiple scales (e.g. body, home, and nation-state), enabling and understanding of the operation of various forms of power through situated, embodied, and politically transformative theories and research methodologies. Feminist geopolitics redefines what counts as geopolitics and what is appropriately studied through a critical geopolitical lens (p. 567).

Two of the main goals of feminist geopolitics are to unpack the role of geopolitical power on the everyday lives of people and to draw attention to how individuals and communities challenge, rewrite, and push back against it. While researchers employing critical geopolitical analyses offer powerful deconstructions of political discourse, they offer "little sense of alternative possibilities" (Dowler & Sharp, 2001, p. 167). The role of feminist geopolitics then is to offer a "positive politics" or a constructive path forward (Dowler & Sharp, 2001, p. 167). Feminist scholars also challenge the assumption that the nation-state ought to be the sole focus of geopolitical thinking. They focus on "narratives, scales, and spaces that do not take the nation-state as their starting point" by instead looking at how politics and policies unfold in the realm of the everyday (Young, 2021, p. 3). There are a number of other geographers who have implemented feminist geopolitical approaches in their research on forced migration including Hyndman and Giles (2016), Kyriakides et al. (2018), and Mountz (2011).

Hyndman has been a key figure in the development of both research on the PSR Program and theorizing feminist political geography. She argues for a widening of the

feminist geopolitical tent to include subaltern geopolitics and other critical approaches to power. Feminist political geography gives space to research from a wider array of feminist scholarship in an attempt to "consolidate a thoroughly feminist and anti-racist political geography that does not succumb to Orientalist rescue narratives or produce regimes of care and security that subjectify refugees" (Hyndman, 2019, p. 4). This theoretical approach offers important guidance for scholarship on the PSR Program by highlighting the agency of both sponsors and refugees who are not merely characters in an orientalist rescue narrative. Rather, refugees and sponsors who are involved with private sponsorship have diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences which play out at various scales. It is within this wider range of feminist interventions that this project is situated. Both the methodological approach which focuses on narratives, and the method of analysis and conceptual framework reflect these goals.

Subaltern geopolitics pay close attention to colonial and imperial histories and geographies. In doing this, they seek to offer alternatives to the "endlessly critical nature of critical geopolitics" by offering alternative ways of doing and imagining geopolitics (Sharp, 2011, p. 271). Subaltern geopolitics refrain from analyses of dominance and resistance, "because studying only the dominant accounts and those that absolutely oppose them, can have the effect of reifying this binary geopolitical structure rather than challenging it" (Sharp, 2011, p. 271). Subaltern geopolitical approaches have been utilized in a number of migration contexts including the Haitian-Dominican borderlands (Blanco, 2020) and among Palestinians (Elsayed & Debian, 2020; Harker, 2011). By bringing together feminist and subaltern geopolitics, the subject of inquiry more broadly can include those responses to power that are actively resisted, as with feminist geopolitics, and those that place people on the margins, as with subaltern geopolitics.

Sponsors and refugees in the present research shared stories from both of these sides. While at times they actively resisted, such as sponsors efforts to challenge negative discourses about refugees, there were also instances where they were pushed to the margins, such as the limited political power that refugees and sponsors in the program have. This makes feminist political geography a useful analytical tool for understanding the PSR experience. Alawadhi and Dittmer (2020) offer a recent example of the use of feminist political geography to analyze the figure of the refugee in two Marvel films. They suggest that studies like this offer broader understandings of the role of whiteness and securitization in how refugees are portrayed in the global north. Feminist political geography offers a unique approach to understandings refugeeness. Specifically, that while being a refugee is intimately experienced, that experience exists as a result of, and in response to, a variety of contextual elements including personal characteristics and broader geopolitical factors. There are a number of areas of analysis in this project that highlight this including the way that times of perceived crisis influenced the opportunities and experiences of sponsors and refugees.

My research draws on and seeks to contribute to feminist political geography by offering both critical analysis and a "positive politics" for the PSR Program. I have done that, first, through my selection of the scale of analysis. While the PSR Program may lend itself to analysis at the scale of the nation-state, I have chosen to take a feminist approach that troubles the distinction between scales, instead focusing on how scales are simultaneously experienced. This involved, among other aspects of analysis, an unpacking of the role of national and global forces on the everyday lives of refugees and sponsors. The methodological choices for this project also reflect a feminist lens. Gill Valentine (2008) argues that when everyday narratives and tensions in communities and

workplaces are critically analyzed they can tell us about broader social discourses. Conducting semi-structured narrative focused interviews, which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three, allowed me to use the everyday as an entry point, reversing the "commonsense approach that starts with the 'big picture'" (Kuus, 2017, p. 163). I made use of individual narratives as a way of understanding the various threads and scales at work in the PSR Program in Lethbridge during specific resettlement periods. Secondly, feminist approaches "refuse, reframe, and redirect analysis to go beyond these IR [international relations] politics and practices that centre states as the objects of inquiry, but ultimately it seeks to change them" (Hyndman, 2019, p. 15). The policy suggestions and critical reflections offered throughout this thesis aim to shape a constructive path forward for the PSR Program. While feminist geopolitics is centred around oppression, power, and resistance, feminist political geography draws on subaltern geopolitics to broaden the scope of analysis to those responses that are not explicitly resistant. This is appropriate for the study of private sponsorship where power relations are often negotiated in more subtle and nuanced ways. This was prominent in my analysis of sponsor-refugee relations which show that both sponsors and refugees navigate orientalism, paternalism, and the inherent power differences of the program in their day-to-day interactions. Beyond this, sponsors and refugees must also contend with a wide range of circumstances, contexts, and individual characteristics. With these considerations in mind, feminist political geography guided my framing of the four research objectives around which I designed the project.

1.2 Research Objectives

The questions raised at the outset of this chapter offer points of entry into this research. They each connect with the research objectives that guided project design. These

objectives were derived from gaps in the literature and attend to the role that feminist political geography can play in shaping a "positive politics" for private sponsorship. The first objective for the project was to position refugees as active agents in narratives of private sponsorship. In public discourse, refugees are often constructed as either good or bad. Good refugees, such as those who arrive through the PSR Program, are those who "wait their turn," arrive in controlled flows, and integrate successfully into Canada. Those who show agency in arriving at Canada's borders, such as asylum seekers, are labelled as risky, potential criminals, or terrorists. Upon entering Canada, refugees are subject to these same labels. The good-bad binary produces refugeeness in a way that delegitimizes asylum seekers' claims, is assimilationist in tone, and decentres the free choice of resettled refugees. An important critique of private sponsorship is that it is orientalist in nature, positioning sponsors as active agents and refugees as passive victims in need of help. By resituating refugees as active agents in narratives of private sponsorship, I tried to disentangle these problematic framings of refugee resettlement. My original intention was to engage with the narratives of refugees to highlight their agency in seeking refuge. Given the challenges I faced in recruiting refugee participants for this research, that became difficult. However, I was still able to capture refugee agency in the narratives of sponsors. For example, a number of sponsors shared stories of how they tried to preserve and foster the agency of the refugees they sponsored. Refugee agency was also captured in the diversity of narratives and how multiple elements, working through various scales, influence the experiences of both refugees and sponsors. The conceptual framework outlined in the following chapter also helps contextualize sponsorship experiences as being impacted by individual, relational, and broader contextual factors.

The second objective was to document narratives from the PSR Program in the Lethbridge area. This goal involves archiving the interviews and photos of participants from this project in the University of Lethbridge's Digital Collection. There, it will serve future researchers and community members who are interested in the PSR Program. Further, it will offer a resource to participants who may see value in the collection as a way to solidify their memories from this time, or for future advocacy or artistic uses. Documenting their stories is also an important way to share experiences that are less often captured in traditional historical records. Alistair Thomson, for examples, argues that this type of work is important because it records "experiences that are rarely recorded" and gives a voice to "the 'hidden histories' of people on the margins" (Thomson, 1998, p. 584). It also documents the types of stories that are not kept in the public record such as unwritten rules, ramifications of personal relationships, and stories of daily life (Yow, 2005).

The third objective was to link sponsor and refugee narratives to the analytical themes used to understand the sponsorship experience. The literature gap that this objective aims to fill is threefold. Despite its history in Canada, and a surge in recent studies on Syrian refugee resettlement, the PSR Program remains understudied (Cameron & Labman, 2020). In addition, there is a "significant knowledge gap in the literature that builds an understanding of the experience of refugees who settle in small communities" (Agrawal & Sangapala, 2020, p. 2). Lastly, there is "sparse scholarship that 'unsettles' the goodwill behind private sponsorship in refugee resettlement" (Hyndman, 2019, p. 17). This research aims to contribute to all three of these areas. The analysis portion of this thesis is structured around my conceptual framework, beginning with the impact of individual level sponsor, refugee, and community characteristics, followed by an analysis

of the relationships between those three actors, and finally the broader contextual factors that contribute to sponsorship experiences. Some of the themes that will be discussed in greater depth in later chapters include the framing of sponsor-refugee relations in kinship terms, challenges to the sustainability of the program, and the ways that sponsors and refugees navigate power relations.

The fourth objective was to analyze the narratives shared in this project to make policy suggestions. This is especially relevant as other countries use Canada's model as an example in developing their own private sponsorship initiatives. One key policy implication that will be discussed in chapter five is the role of grass-roots faith-based communities in shaping and maintaining Canada's PSR Program. Policymakers will need to be aware that without that cultural and historical backdrop, gaining sustained support in other countries will be a challenge. Together, these objectives are meant to address gaps in the literature, consider ethical complexities in research on migration, and equitably produce knowledge and understanding of the PSR Program.

1.3 Thesis Outline

In Chapter Two: *Contextualizing Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program,* I situate this research in Canadian resettlement policy, the history of the PSR Program, and its contemporary design. I also provide a rationale for the project, noting the significance of continued research on Canadian private sponsorship. The chapter concludes by contextualizing the research site geographically, introducing my conceptual framework, and providing a review of the literature.

In Chapter Three: *Methodology,* I introduce the narrative focus of data collection for this project. I outline the research design including recruitment, interviewing, and

analysis before concluding with a discussion of ethical considerations and methodological reflections.

Chapter Four: *The Impacts of Refugee, Sponsor, and Community Characteristics and Interactions on the Sponsorship Experience,* begins with an analysis of the refugee, sponsor, and community characteristics that influence the sponsorship experience. This includes an analysis of Lethbridge's resettlement landscape and refugee and sponsor characteristics. In the latter half of this chapter I reconnect these individual elements and highlight the relationships between them. This includes sponsors' attempts to reshape community discourses, the use of family metaphors to structure sponsorship relationships, the delicate dance between sponsors and refugees as they navigate the power dynamics of the program, and the social capital that exists in private sponsorships.

In Chapter Five: *Broader Contextual Factors and Policy Considerations,* I reposition the scale of analysis first to demonstrate the impact of broader political, historical, geographic, economic, and social impacts on sponsorship, and second to show the simultaneity of scales that interact to shape the sponsorship experience. Sections within this chapter include rescaling sponsorship, the sustainability of the PSR Program, the trouble with "naming", and considerations for policy transfer. Among the themes expressed in this chapter, I offer a series of policy suggestions.

Finally, in Chapter Six: *Conclusion* I bring this research into conversation with future opportunities by outlining the key findings, sharing suggestions for a critical move forward, and describing opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALIZING CANADA'S PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP OF REFUGEES PROGRAM

> So we had sympathy and empathy for them, for their plight, and we wanted to contribute to help in any way possible. To help them to resettle in Canada… Some of us had been overseas. Others had not been overseas. Everyone understood that refugees need as much help as humanly possible and that all of us here have had some help. All of us are actually immigrants to Canada, so let's help others. And of course, my husband himself was a refugee; he and his family were refugees after World War II, coming to Canada.
>
> -Bev

In 1979, Bev and a group of friends got together to sponsor a Laotian family in Stirling, Alberta, a small town in Southern Alberta. Bev touched on some of the many motivations that continue to encourage Canadian citizens to participate in this program including empathy and sympathy for people in other countries, and personal experiences of immigration, forced migration, and living abroad. Every year, sponsors in Canada continue to participate in the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program where they support refugees for their first 12 months in Canada. The experiences of sponsors and refugees vary dramatically and depend on individual characteristics, the relationships they have, and the broader setting. To contextualize sponsorship experiences today, it is important to acknowledge the history of the program and those who have advocated for a community sponsorship model in Canada. In this chapter, I will situate this project by describing the historical background and contemporary structure of the PSR Program, outlining my conceptual framework and the research site, and providing a review of the literature. Before contextualizing this project, it is important to consider the language that I will use throughout this thesis.

The terms used in this project are important to consider as language is always a representation of the world, and with that representation come challenges in translation.

While we use language to share thoughts, ideas, reflections, and experiences, the choice of wording can be poetic, political, utilitarian, and/or purposeful. While it can encourage thoughtful discussion, it also risks isolating those who feel misrepresented or mislabeled. Before moving forward, it is important to set out a clear rationale for the terms used in this project. Discussions of terminology in forced migration studies have mainly focused on how terms like "economic migrant" and "illegal immigrant" are used to demarcate certain people as deserving of welcome, and others, undeserving (See for example Althaus, 2016; Bauder, 2014; Brown, 2013). Bauder (2014) argues for the adoption of the term "illegalized" when talking about those who enter or remain in a country unauthorized. This is because it captures the legal and discursive processes that render people illegal, rather than as an inherent quality of the person. However, the field has not yet provided critical engagement with the terms refugee and sponsor, both which are especially significant for this project. When talking about private sponsorship, the government uses the terms, "refugees and persons in refugee-like situations," which it has adopted from the UNHCR. The term "refugees" aligns with the definition outlined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol which defines a refugee as "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 1951/1967, p. 3). This is often shorthanded as the UN Convention definition. The group labelled "persons in refugee-like situations" are those who fit into the Country of Asylum class who for reasons such as civil war, conflict, and human rights violations are outside of their home country and cannot safely return. In practice, those who fall into either of these categories are called "the refugee" in the PSR

Program. Those who choose to help resettle these refugees through the PSR Program are known as sponsors or "sponsoring groups" (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019c). The noun form of sponsor suggests a sureness or guarantee and is derived from the Latin word *spondere* which means "give assurance, promise solemnly" ("Online Etymology Dictionary," 2021). In many ways, the PSR Program remains a promise and assurance to both the government and refugees that they will be assisted in their resettlement. It also implies that responsibility is placed onto the sponsor for the success of the refugees who they sponsor.

One of my objectives with this project was to position refugees as active agents in narratives of private sponsorship, contesting the ways that "refugeeness" has been portrayed as centrally about vulnerability and helplessness, which I discuss in greater detail below. Related to this objective, my use of language is meant to purposely avoid producing the people who chose to participate in the project as objects by defining them in a singular way. I feel torn by the terms used to talk about the people who have participated in this study and those who may be affected. To refer to them simply as *sponsors* or *refugees* feels overly simplistic – suggesting that their identity is singularly defined by this status or period of time in their life. It is clear that their experiences are much more nuanced than this. An alternative then, is to use terms like *person with refugee experience* or *person with sponsorship experience.* This brings forth a different set of issues, many that come from the critiques of "people first language" raised by disability scholars (See for example Peers et al., 2014; Sinclair, 2013). Notably, we tend to be inclined to use person first language when the identity marker in question is viewed negatively. Sinclair (2013) points out that we talk about "…athletic or musical people, not about 'people with athleticism' or 'people with musicality'" (p. 1). It is more familiar for

us to hear person first language when discussing people on the move or people with disabilities. Regardless of intention, the selection of person first language can suggest a value judgement. Additionally, both sets of terms mark sponsorship and refugeeness as person specific traits rather than a result of global politics and economics, and the processes that displace people in the first place. Though refugee and sponsorship experiences happen on very personal levels, it is important to remember that they are not individually based, but rather a result of the interplay between broader forces and personal experiences.

When I asked Joliana, a self defined Syrian-Canadian who arrived as a refugee, to reflect on any experiences of stereotyping that she had in the community, she offered this reflection on the term refugee:

> …the word refugee doesn't mean a bad word. So every time they ask me, I say that, like as I said, it's making you another person. It gives you a lot of things like language, it gives you strength, you become stronger, and you start believing in yourself—as you are a human here in this country.

Drawing on Joliana's reflections, and the conversations I have had with other participants, my goal is not to shy away from terms that have gained a negative undertone, but instead to reposition the word "refugee" to reflect the lived experiences of people who have arrived under this classification, and challenge that negative affiliation. My goal is not to categorize or define people's identity, but instead to explore the PSR Program. My hope is that the terms used in this thesis will encourage readers to reflect on the internalized ideas that we all have about refugees, and how that influences the language that we use to talk about research, issues, and policy.

2.1 A Primer on Canadian Refugee Resettlement Policy

Following the mass displacement of people during WWII, the UN created the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950 (Beiser, 2009). A year later, the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees committed signatory countries to write the convention definition into their legal frameworks in order to bring the convention into practice. This was followed by the 1967 protocol, which removed geographic and temporal restrictions on refugee status, notably that to be considered a refugee one needed to have become a refugee due to events in Europe occurring before 1951. Canada became a signatory on the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol on June 4, 1969 (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 1951/1967). Central to the Convention is the principal of non-refoulement which restricts countries who sign on from expelling a refugee from their territory without making a determination on their case (Labman, 2019). Therefore, they take on responsibility for refugees who arrive in their country. The United Nations has proposed three durable solutions for worldwide forced migration: repatriation to their home country, integration into the country to which they fled, or resettlement in a country that will offer them permanent settlement. Three countries have emerged as leaders in resettlement; Canada, the United States, and Australia who together receive around 90 percent of UNHCR's resettlement referrals (Labman, 2019). All three of these states are geographically removed from larger refugee flows such as those met by countries who border "refugee-producing" countries. Paradoxically, all three have also been complicit in creating the circumstances for forced migration including military, political, and economic interventions. Most recently, there have been calls for Canada to take responsibility for having contributed to development-based displacement in the resource-extraction industries in Central America (Canadian

Council for Refugees, 2019). Questions remain about whether Canada's role in seeking solutions is significant enough and whether they bear responsibility for those who have been displaced as a result of their actions.

In addition to defining who counts as a "refugee" under international law, the Convention and Protocol were also framed to improve "burden-sharing," often referred to as "responsibility sharing" today. This acknowledges that some states bear more of the costs and responsibilities of forced displacement due to the unevenness of displacement. Less developed countries continue to host the vast majority of refugees globally. As of December 2020, 86% of the world's refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad were being hosted in developing countries (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2020). Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, and Uganda are among the countries that host the most displaced persons. This unevenness is the result of both proximity and policy. On one hand, countries like Canada are geographically difficult to reach by refugees from "source countries" often in the global south. On the other, "interdictions at sea, visa requirements, and both the offshoring and the outsourcing of migration control all work to deny access" (Labman, 2019, p. 18). The legally mandated protection of the Convention is often inaccessible in countries like Canada who are "protected" from having to confront refugees directly and are given the opportunity to "choose" who gets to arrive through Canada's resettlement programs. As Labman (2019) argues, "the control and order inherent in resettlement offer states a protection measure counter to the unpredictable nature, and, by necessity, often illegal/irregular, entrance of asylum seekers" (p. 27). It is in the context of this restricted arrival that the PSR Program has flourished.

Refugee resettlement in Canada is divided into three main categories. Government-assisted refugees (GARs) are chosen by the UNHCR and upon arrival are supported financially by the government for 12 months, a time when they are expected to learn English and become economically independent (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2016b). Privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) are those who are supported financially and emotionally for 12 months by private sponsorship groups. Two key aspects of the PSR Program are that the sponsoring group can "name" the refugee they would like to sponsor and the principle of additionality which suggests that all PSRs should be above and beyond the number of refugees resettled by the government. Finally, blended-visa office referred (BVOR) refugees are a sort of hybrid category between GARs and PSRs. They are funded for six months by the government, and six months by private sponsors who also support them emotionally for the first 12 months. This program was introduced in 2013, however it has not grown substantially since then (Labman & Pearlman, 2018). My focus is on the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. In the coming sections I will outline why the PSR Program begs further study.

2.1.1 A Brief History of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program

Private or community sponsorship in Canada became official in the Immigration Act of 1976, which came into effect in 1978 ("Immigration Act," 1976-77). In practice, Canadians have resettled over 370,000 refugees through this program since it officially began (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019a). However, unofficial sponsorship of refugees has a longer history in Canada. For example, Canadian Mennonite communities helped resettle 21,000 Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union between 1923 and 1930 (Good Gingrich & Enns, 2019, p. 10). Similarly, the Jewish Immigration Aid Services of Canada and B'nai B'rith supported the resettlement

of Jewish people exiting Soviet Russia without cost to the Canadian government (Ritchie, 2018, p. 669). The roots of the program as we see it today, date back most specifically to the 1940s when religious groups began advocating for community sponsored resettlement options. Geoffrey Cameron (2020) has done archival research to make the early history of refugee sponsorship available. Molloy et al. (2017) have done similar research on Canadian refugee policy with a greater focus on the period between 1975 and 1980. The following paragraphs draw on their work to contextualize the PSR Program today.

In the post WWII period, refugee admissions were managed first by the Department of Mines and Resources and soon after by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Supply (Cameron, 2020). The goal for refugee resettlement was to meet the need for unskilled labour in post-war Canada. Then Prime Minister Mackenzie King's vision for Canadian immigration policy during this time is exemplified in an excerpt from his May 1, 1947 speech: "The people of Canada do not wish as a result of mass immigration to make a fundamental alteration in the character of our population. Large scale immigration from the Orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population" (As quoted in Molloy et al., 2017, p. 17). This preference for European immigrants and refugees stayed at the forefront of Canadian policy until the introduction of a points based system in 1967 and more specifically the 1976 Immigration Act (Molloy et al., 2017).

In the late 1940s the Close Relatives and Bulk Labour schemes were the two ways for refugees to enter Canada. However, many relatives were not accepted because they were considered "enemy aliens" (Cameron, 2020, p. 21). In response, a group of faith-based groups came together as the Canadian Christian Council for the Resettlement of Refugees (CCCRR) to advocate for resettlement options. Their work came to fruition first with the Farm and Woodworkers Trial program and soon after a church sponsorship

program for non-family members. Between 1947 and 1952 around 60,000 Displaced Persons (DPs) were resettled through this program. Groups including the Canadian Council of Churches and the Canadian Jewish Congress were involved in shaping this family sponsorship scheme into a religious sponsorship scheme. Though religious groups received more autonomy in refugee selection during this time, there was tension between the government's desire to meet labour needs and the groups' selection based on humanitarian need. During this time, the assumption of care for one year post arrival began. In 1952 Parliament passed the Immigration Act, 1952. This act entrenched Canada's preference for European immigration and "said a great deal about who could not be admitted to Canada but had little to say about who could" (Molloy et al., 2017, p. 18). This act was framed by a belief that after the postwar refugee crisis was resolved, the refugee problem would subside.

In the late 1950s sponsorship became known as the Cooperative Resettlement Program where four religious groups—the Rural Settlement Society, Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canadian Council of Churches, and CCCRR, resettled over 37,565 Hungarian refugees. During this time, the Canadian public and media were supportive of moving Hungarian refugees to Canada. Molloy et al. (2017) suggest that "the Hungarian refugee movement set a precedent for Canada's can-do approach to future refugee crises" (p. 18). After 1959 when this program was cancelled there was a significant fall in refugee resettlements (Cameron, 2020). It was not until they mobilized in response to the coup in Chile that religious groups "reignited a political discourse about the role of voluntary groups in refugee resettlement in Canada" (Cameron, 2020, p. 30). The resettlement of Chileans in 1973 rekindled the cooperative relationship between immigration officials and church and solidarity groups. At this time, there was also a

growing realization that the ad hoc mechanisms for refugee resettlement of the past were not adequate for handling the ongoing nature of forced displacement. This realization was brought on by the quick succession of "refugee crises" around this time including in the former Czechoslovakia, Uganda, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. It was this revitalization in attention coupled with extensive public consultations that set the groundwork for private sponsorship to be included in Canada's 1976 Immigration Act (Molloy et al., 2017).

The Immigration Act of 1976 took such a departure from its predecessor, the Immigration Act of 1952, that it took two years for the regulations, administrative instructions, and tools to be designed (Molloy et al., 2017). When the official Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program took effect in 1978 it lacked specificity in how it would be enacted. As a pilot project, B'nai Brith, a Jewish human rights group, sponsored 50 Soviet Jewish people, providing them food, shelter, and assistance. B'nai Brith was likely approached because of their connection to the Jewish Immigration Aid Society, who, during the late 1960s and 1970s when sponsorships fell dramatically, continued to sponsor Soviet refugees. Following this, a number of meetings took place between government officials and religious organizations. Notably, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) worked with the government in 1979 to create a "policy framework to implement private sponsorship on a larger scale" (Cameron, 2020, p. 33). This resulted in the creation of Master Agreements – forty of which were signed in 1979, all with religious organizations (Cameron, 2020). These master agreement holders eventually became Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH), organizations that have agreements with the Canadian government to do private sponsorships and hold liability for constituent groups.

The first noteworthy use of the program was the resettlement of 60,000 Southeast Asian refugees during the 1980s following the Vietnam War, followed by the Bosnian and Kosovar refugees in the 1990s (Agrawal, 2018, p. 2). Most recently the PSR Program was responsible for resettling 18,900 Syrian refugees in communities across Canada between November 2015 and July 2019 (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019b). The faith-based groups who were the original advocates for private sponsorship have remained key figures in more recent refugee sponsorships.

2.1.2 How the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program Works

From 1979 to today, the program has remained fairly consistent in both intention and practice. Over the course of one year, sponsors support refugees who arrive in their communities. These refugees are in addition to any government resettlement that takes place and there is the option for refugees in this category to be named. In this section I will outline what responsibilities sponsors and refugees have, who can sponsor, and who can be sponsored.

Those who choose to sponsor refugees are required to live in the community to which the individual or family is being resettled and usually pay for rent, utilities, and general living expenses for the first year; supply clothing, furniture, and household goods; find interpreters, a family doctor, and a dentist; assist with gaining provincial health-care coverage; assist with enrolling adults in language training and children in school; introduce them to community members; provide orientation in the community; and help with seeking employment (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019c). In 2018, the estimated cost of sponsorship ranged from $16,500 for a single person to $35,500 for a family of six (Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, 2018). The first step in becoming a sponsor is submitting an application which includes a sponsorship

undertaking form and a settlement plan outlining financial arrangements. The responsibilities of refugees, as identified by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), are to complete their application and admissibility requirements, pay the cost of transportation to Canada, and "make every effort to become self-sufficient as soon as possible after arriving in Canada"[1] (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019c). From this wording, it is clear that certain expectations are placed on refugees that associate being "good" refugees with not being a "burden".

There are four types of sponsorship groups — Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), Constituent Groups, Groups of Five, and Community Sponsors. SAHs are organizations located in Canada who have been approved by IRCC to sponsor refugees. They can work independently or alongside constituent groups, for which they assume responsibility. For example, a religious diocese may be a SAH who works alongside one of their churches who would be considered a constituent group. Of the 130 SAHs listed in March 2021, at least 73 are affiliated with religious communities (Government of Canada, 2021). Groups of Five are collections of at least five Canadian citizens over the age of 18 who form a sponsorship group. For example, Bev came together with friends and community members in Stirling to form a Group of Five. Community Sponsors are organizations who form a sponsorship group. They are different from SAHs in that they do not have a long-term agreement with the Canadian government for continued sponsorship. Both Community Sponsors and Groups of Five must complete a financial profile form and settlement plan (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019c).

[1] In practice transportation costs are paid via a loan from the federal government and must be repaid starting one year after their arrival. Some sponsors in the present research felt this was an unethical approach and paid for this loan on behalf of the refugees they sponsored.

Of the seven sponsorship groups represented in this research, one was a Group of Five and the remaining six were Constituent Groups. One reason for the popularity of Constituent Groups is the support gained from working with an SAH including training sessions for sponsors.

Those who can be sponsored under one of these arrangements belong to one of two groups: Convention refugees as defined by the UNHCR and those who belong to the country of asylum class. The country of asylum class exists because of Section 6(2) of the Immigration Act, 1976 which allows the government to designate certain groups who do not fit the UNHCR definition of a refugee to be admitted through refugee resettlement programs. One of the earliest uses of this clause was the Indochinese Designated Class which allowed those displaced in Southeast Asia for reasons other than persecution to be resettled as refugees in Canada[2] (Molloy et al., 2017). Most recently, the country of asylum class has been used for the resettlement of Syrian refugees. Those in the country of asylum class are located outside of their home country, are "seriously and personally affected by civil war, armed conflict or massive violation of human rights," and do "not have a prospect of another durable solution, within a reasonable period of time" (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019c). In addition to passing medical, security, and admissibility checks, they are also assessed on "their ability to establish successfully in Canada" including their language skills, employability, resourcefulness, and connections to family or a sponsor in Canada (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019c). This "ability to establish successfully in Canada" provision is an

[2] Often those unfamiliar with the Refugee Convention definition are surprised that flight from generalized conditions of violence, like civil war, does not necessarily meet the strict definition which focuses on individual persecution. The country of asylum class and other regional frameworks in Latin America and Africa account for conditions of violence that the UN convention does not capture.

example of the selective nature of Canadian refugee resettlement that is enabled by Canada's relatively isolated geography and policies. Refugees from both groups can be sponsor referred, often called a "named" sponsorship, or visa-office referred. Visa-office referred refugees are initially identified by the UNHCR and then placed on an inventory. Named sponsorships can be referred through friends, relatives, internet connections, community members, or others (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019c).

2.1.3 The Significance of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program

Canada's longer history of refugee sponsorship means that its policy foundations have been used to guide other countries in implementing community sponsorship, a term often used to describe this type of resettlement scheme outside of Canada. In 2018, the UNHCR guided the development of the Global Compact on Refugees which asks states "to establish private or community sponsorship programs that are additional to regular resettlement" (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2018). Canada's Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) Program, which is a joint partnership between the Canadian Government, the UNHCR, and the Open Society Foundation has been used as a resource to share the Canadian model with other countries. Canada is looked at as a model for community sponsorship because of its longstanding history of sponsorship and the relative success of the program. However, as Canada continues to be looked to as a model, it is crucial that the program continues to be explored. This is one reason for continued critical research on Canada's PSR Program.

Beyond this global interest in Canada's private sponsorship model, the Canadian government is also suggesting increasing the number of refugees who arrive through private sponsorship.

Table 2.1: Resettled Refugees to Canada by Refugee Category, 2013-2020, and 2021-2023 Targets

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 Target	2022 Target	2023 Target
GAR	5,728 (46.92 %)	7,626 (59.23 %)	9,491 (47.35 %)	23,560 (50.84 %)	8,640 (32.45 %)	8,095 (29.10 %)	9,950 (33.07 %)	3,870 (41.91 %)	12,500 (34.72 %)	12,500 (34.72 %)	12,500 (34.72 %)
PSR	6,328 (51.83 %)	5,072 (39.39 %)	9,743 (48.61 %)	18,360 (39.62 %)	16,700 (62.72 %)	18,570 (66.76 %)	19,145 (63.63 %)	5,315 (57.55 %)	22,500 (62.5 %)	22,500 (62.5 %)	22,500 (62.5 %)
BVOR	153 (1.25 %)	177 (1.37 %)	811 (4.05 %)	4,420 (9.54 %)	1,285 (4.83 %)	1,150 (4.13 %)	995 (3.31 %)	50 (0.54 %)	1,000 (2.78 %)	1,000 (2.78 %)	1,000 (2.78 %)
Total	12,209	12,875	20,045	46,340	26,625	27,815	30,090	9,235	36,000	36,000	36,000

Note: This table contains information from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2016a, 2020a, & 2020c.

As Table 2.1 demonstrates, targets for 2021-2023 are to bring in 22,500 PSRs, 12,500 GARs and 1,000 BVORs per year (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020c). Increasing the target number of PSRs over the next three years suggests a desire to grow the program. This increase is even starker when compared to pre-2015 numbers. In 2014, there were only 5,072 PSRs who made up 39.39 percent of resettled refugees. The large increase from 2014 to the years including and following 2015 was due to the resettlement of Syrian refugees following Justin Trudeau's federal election promise. This raises a number of questions about whether Canadian communities can sustainably meet this demand in the future, a topic I will consider in more detail in a later chapter. With these considerations in mind, continued research on private sponsorship in Canada will help add to the body of literature which seeks to understand whether expanding the program is possible and how we can be purposeful in moving the program forward.

I have chosen Lethbridge, Alberta, as shown in Figure 2.1, as a specific site for doing this research because of its history of sponsorship, the disproportionate number of refugees who have been resettled to the area, and its size in light of growing calls for resettlement in smaller cities.

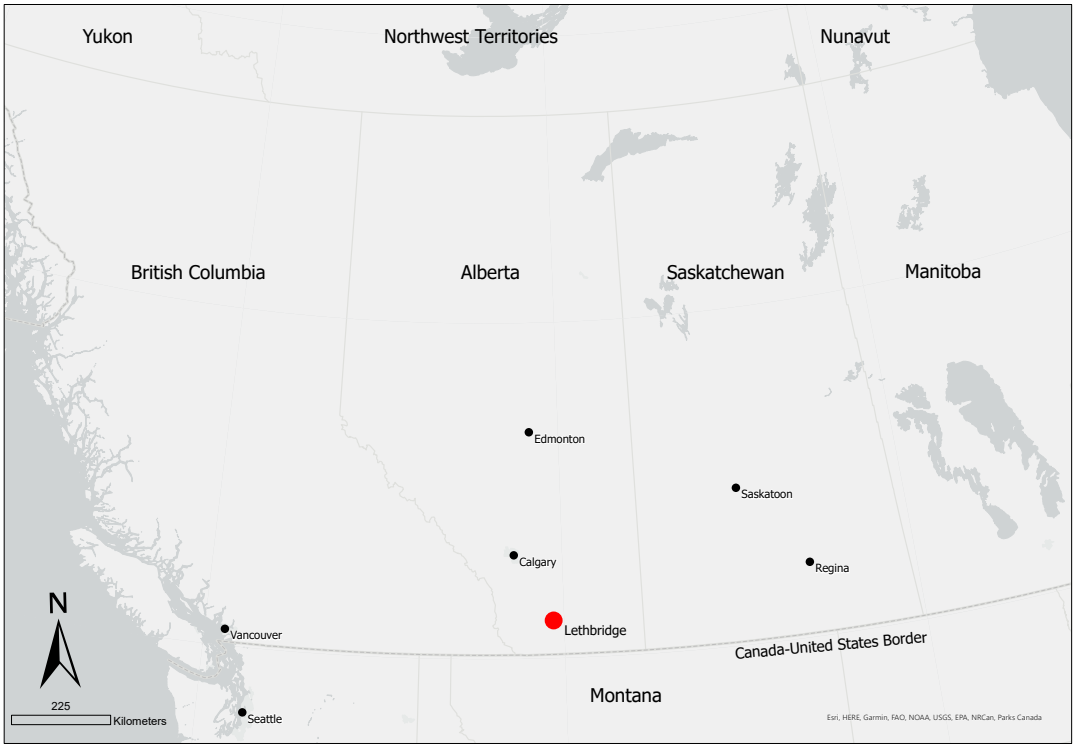

Figure 2.1: Lethbridge's Location in Western Canada

The large number of faith-based groups involved in sponsorship in the area may also contribute to understanding the challenges of sustainability.

2.2 The Research Site

The research site shown in Figure 2.2, that I interchangeably call Lethbridge and the Lethbridge area includes the city of Lethbridge and towns located within a 60-kilometre radius including, among others, Coaldale, Stirling, and Picture Butte. Lethbridge is situated on the traditional territory of the Siksikaitsitapi or Blackfoot people of the Blackfoot Confederacy.

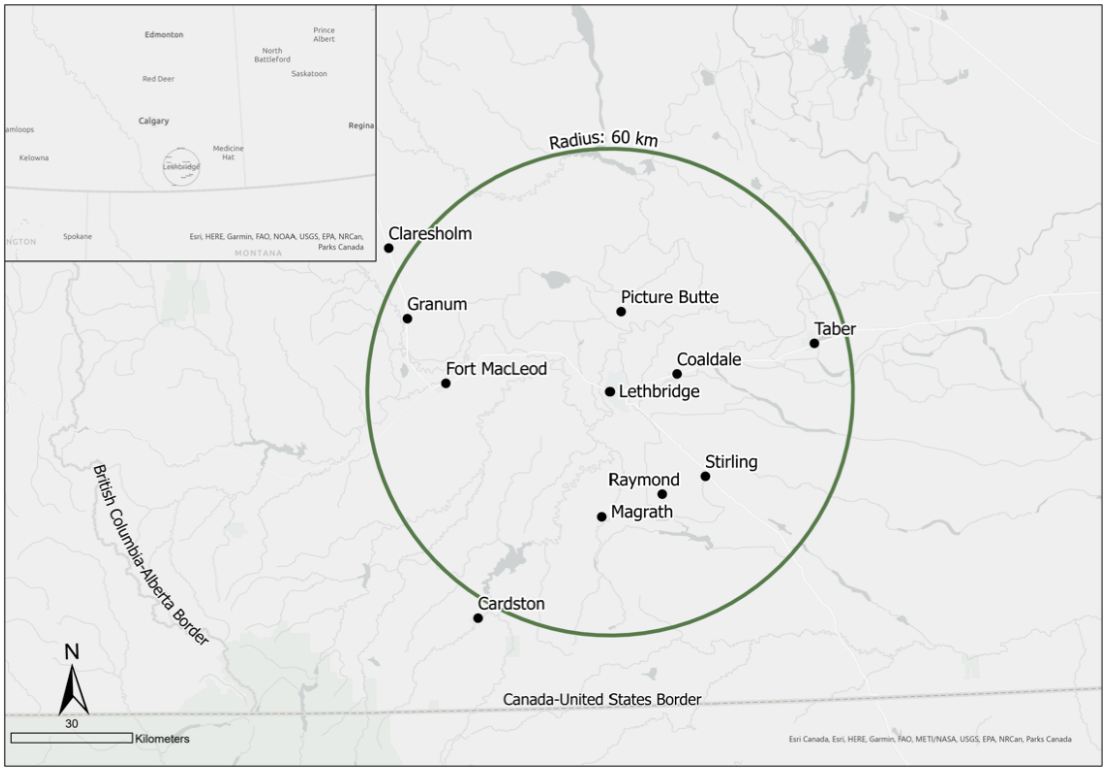

Figure 2.2: Research Site: The Lethbridge Area

The city has a population of 101,482 and is in Southern Alberta (Statistics Canada, 2016). As of the 2016 national census, 13.6 percent of people in Lethbridge identify as foreign-born. Of the 8,140 foreign-born residents who settled in Lethbridge between 1980 and 2016, 32.4 percent were refugees as compared to 14.9 percent of Albertan foreign-born residents and 15.1 percent of Canadian foreign-born residents (Statistics Canada, 2016). This suggests that Lethbridge receives a disproportionate number of refugees among its immigrant population.

Like many prairie towns, Lethbridge's economic foundations were irrigated agriculture, railways, and coal mining (Ellis, 2001). Of those three pillars, agriculture has continued to be an important element of the regional economy. Early immigration before the twentieth century was mainly from the US and Europe. In the beginning of the twentieth century, Chinese and Japanese immigrants came to the Lethbridge area to work

on the railway and in farming (Agrawal & Sangapala, 2020). These "non-white" immigrants faced social exclusion and discrimination when they arrived (Bonifacio, 2017). Lethbridge is known to be a part of the so-called Albertan Bible Belt because of the large Christian presence in the area. As shown in Figure 2.3, "Christian groups visibly own the religious landscape of Lethbridge" (Bonifacio, 2017, p. 81).

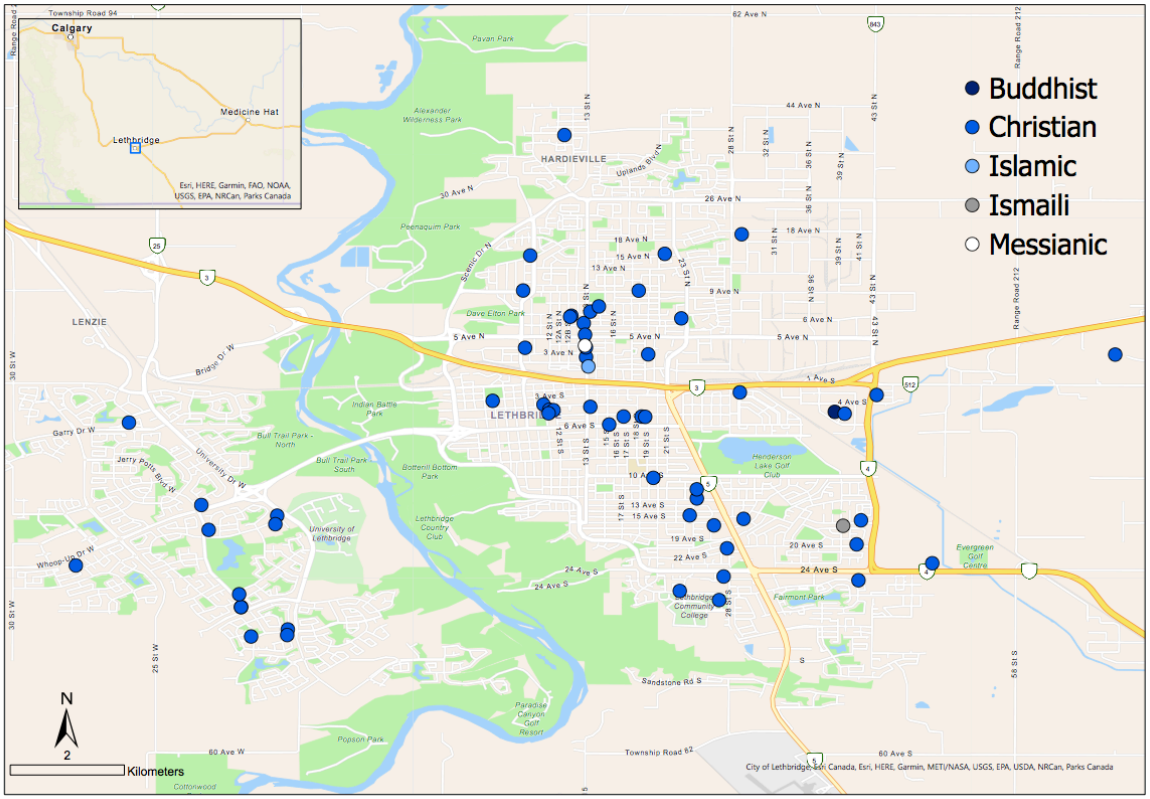

Figure 2.3: Places of Worship in Lethbridge, Alberta

Lethbridge is home to only four non-Christian places of worship; Lethbridge Islamic Centre, Ismaili Community Centre and Jamatkhana, Lethbridge Buddhist Temple, and the Joyful House of Prayer Messianic Congregation[3]. This has shaped the experiences of both sponsors and refugees in Lethbridge, but also means that Lethbridge is an important site

[3] While there is some debate about whether The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is considered Christian, it has been assigned to the Christian category because members "unequivocally affirm themselves to be Christians" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, n.d., para. 1).

for understanding the interplay between the PSR Program and Christian-identifying groups. The relative success of the PSR Program in Canada has been tied to the advocacy and beliefs of faith-based groups in Canada. Most sponsorship work is done by faith-based organizations that are facing "ongoing decline of [membership to] the major Christian denominations" (Bramadat, 2014, p. 915). Bramadat (2014) infers that "declining membership and participation in mainline religious groups are likely to threaten the long-term viability of established agencies" (p. 929). The religious landscape of Lethbridge makes it a useful place to explore this more deeply and understand the challenges to the sustainability of the PSR Program that arise from the reliance on Christian groups.

Since the introduction of the private sponsorship program in 1978, groups in and around Lethbridge have sponsored over 610 refugees from countries including Vietnam, Bosnia, and Syria (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020b). Syrian refugees were a focus of sponsorship groups between 2015 and 2018, with all sponsor participants who were involved during this time having sponsored Syrian refugees. During this time there was significant community collaboration which included various churches, Lethbridge Family Services, and a series of groups that emerged in relation to this moment including the University of Lethbridge's Refugee Action Committee, the University of Lethbridge's World University Service of Canada Student Refugee Program, and an integrated health system for newcomers.

Aside from the history of private sponsorship in Lethbridge, its size, having just over 100,000 people, is another important element. In recent years, there have been calls to disperse migrants in Canada outside of large metropolitan centres. Known as regionalization, these policies "address population decline and promote regional

economic development in areas outside the major centres." (Wulff et al., 2008, p. 120). In Southern Alberta, regionalization is evident in projects like the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot in Claresholm. In 2016, Immigration Minister John McCallum stated that, "We would like to spread the immigrants across the country relatively evenly" noting that the last thing they want is for every newcomer to resettle in Toronto or Vancouver (Johnson, 2016). In Alberta, most refugees are resettled in the two largest cities, Edmonton and Calgary. However, if regionalization continues to be an important policy development, smaller cities can expect increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees. A potential contribution of the present research is offering a more thorough description and analysis of how resettlement is impacted by geographic features including the size and makeup of the community.

The size of Lethbridge may also improve our understanding of how discourses are contested in smaller cities. In comparing the receptions in urban and rural setting Kyriakides et al. (2020) found that while anti-refugee sentiments were salient in both contexts, sponsors in rural areas were better able to "defuse negative discourses" and replace them with more positive ones because of the visibility, rather than anonymity, in a rural setting. In this research the rural site was a "sparsely populated municipality in Ontario" and the urban site was Toronto (Kyriakides et al., 2018). Lethbridge is not urban to the extent of Toronto, nor sparsely populated enough to be considered rural. Therefore, it offers an example of how negative discourses are negotiated in a small city unlike Toronto and rural Ontario.

Lethbridge is an important site, not because it offers a generalizable understanding of "the refugee experience" but because it offers a space to understand the specific experiences of a small selection of participants in a small city. The geography of

Lethbridge is important because it is a site where sponsorships are enacted. While sponsors and refugees bring unique characteristics, backgrounds, and skills to the sponsorship table, it is also important to consider how those play out in a certain location. Considering Lethbridge's geographic location, size, history, and socio-cultural makeup is important for understanding the sponsorship experience. Lethbridge also offers several unique features that other research sites do not. For example, the prominence of faith-based groups in Lethbridge can help us better understand challenges to the sustainability that arise from the reliance on Christian groups. As well, the size of Lethbridge is important for understanding the formation of networks among resettlement partners and the use of social capital in small cities. This project seeks to contribute to an understanding of sponsorship that takes into consideration multiple scales, the importance of location, and how sponsors and refugees experiences are embedded within broader contexts.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

Private sponsorship can feel like a very local or city specific project. Yet, the experiences of sponsors and refugees are simultaneously individual, relational, national, and global. It is easy to succumb to the division of what happens *here* through private sponsorship, from what happens *there*, at other scales, including the global. In framing this project, I was drawn to position the experiences of the PSR Program as being situated within the contexts of multiple scales. Granzow and Dean argue that "the maintenance of modern Eurocentric ontological dichotomies is of central importance to contemporary state regimes" (Granzow & Dean, 2016, p. 84). In particular they are referencing the distinction between past and present, fact and fiction, and life and death. However, the local/global distinction also fits into this analysis because it serves a similar function.

"Death" and the "past" have been used to render the traumas of colonization as separate from the "everyday subjectivities, practices, socialities, and bodies" of the present (Granzow & Dean, 2016, p. 84). Similarly, dissociating the global contexts from local resettlement, render the global contexts of conflict as separate from the "everyday subjectivities, practices, socialities, and bodies" of refugees in Canadian communities (Granzow & Dean, 2016, p. 84). Furthermore, the conceptualization of the past has been weaponized by "distancing what *was* from what *is*, and thus… delivering a present devoid of a past" (Granzow & Dean, 2016). When thinking about the global/local distinction in this way, it is clear that this binary has been weaponized to distance what happens *there* from what happens *here*. The conceptual framework used for this project draws on a desire to connect here and there – linking the experiences of sponsors and refugees through multiple scales.

To do that, I have adopted elements from Hynie, Korn, and Tao's (2016) Holistic Integration Model in Figure 2.4. Derived from Ager and Strang's (2008) Social Integration Model, their model was meant to capture how the social environment and community changes along with refugees, that including subjective variables is important for understanding social integration, and the need to emphasize that social integration is a holistic process.

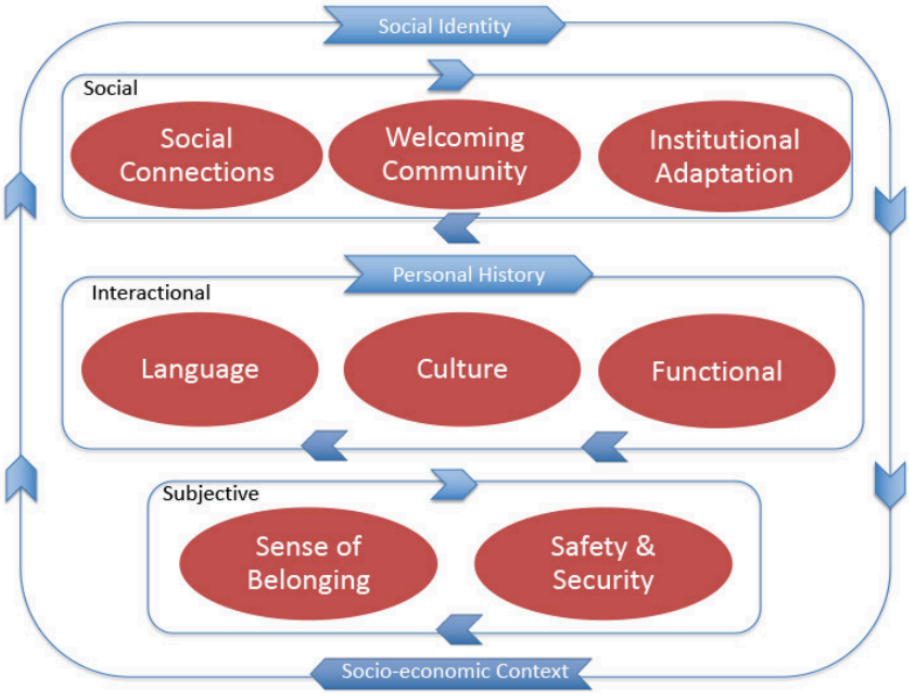

Figure 2.4: Hynie, Korn, and Tao's Holistic Integration Model (2016)

They suggest that integration is made of three elements: social integration, interactional integration, and subjective integration. Social integration includes social connections, welcoming community, and institutional adaptation. Social connections are types of social capital that include social bonds to family and co-ethnic networks, social bridges to community members outside their ethnic group, and social links to services and civic engagement. Welcoming community includes community attitudes toward refugees, and institutional adaptation is the ways that service providers and institutions are able to adapt to the needs and characteristics of refugees. Interactional integration, which measures the refugee's "fit" into their new environment looks at the interaction between the individual and the community and considers language, culture, and functional skills. These are measured at the level of the individual and include the refugee's ability to use English or French in Canada, their working knowledge of social and cultural norms, and observable

measures of their education, housing, employment, and health services. Subjective integration focuses on an individual's subjective feelings of belonging, safety, and security. This is also known as their "psychological sense of community or feeling of being 'at home'," in their community (Hynie et al., 2016, p. 189). Included in this is their perception of the safety of their community, being free from crime and harassment, and having economic security. The circular arrows "represent the holistic nature of integrations, that these factors are interrelated and mutually reinforced," and highlight how all of these elements are related to the social identity and socio-economic status of the individual (Hynie et al., 2016, p. 189).

I chose to adapt the Holistic Integration Model for a number of reasons. Many of the elements of integration highlighted in Hynie et al.'s model are relevant for understanding the experiences of the PSR Program. Notably, their categories of social integration are helpful for conceptualizing the relationships between refugees and communities. However, missing from their model of social integration are sponsors, specifically because the model was developed for understanding GAR integration. Both their subjective and interactional integration categories are focused on the scale of the individual refugee. This is a helpful way of outlining some of the specific elements of individual experience, but it does not include sponsor and community identities. The circular arrows are another influential element of their model that has been utilized in my conceptual framework to show how both scales and elements are interrelated. While the Holistic Integration Model focuses primarily on refugee integration, my conceptual framework takes a broader scale approach to understanding the sponsorship experience. My conceptual framework is a way of thinking about the interconnectedness of individual

characteristics, relational factors, and broader contextual elements and how they shape the sponsorship experience.

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.5 places the sponsorship experience at the centre and conceptualizes that experience relative to three distinct domains: individual characteristics, relational factors, and broader contextual elements. It seeks to capture both the interconnectedness and simultaneity of scale.

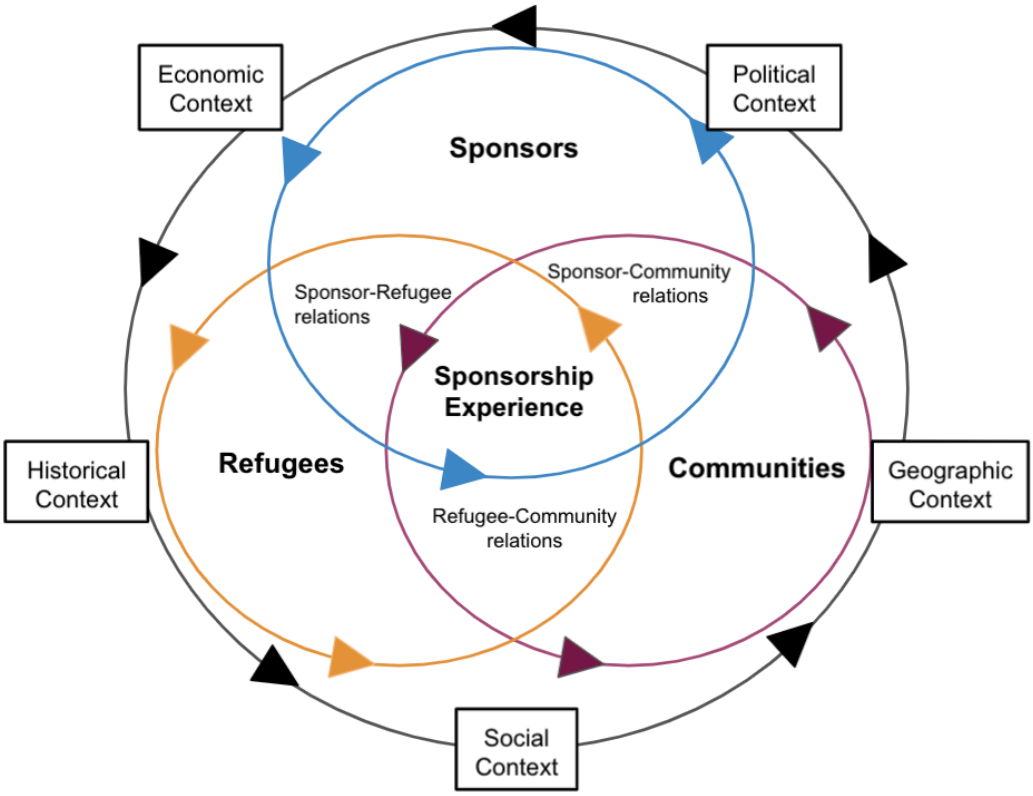

Figure 2.5: Visual Representation of Conceptual Framework

The first domain is individual characteristics which includes refugees, sponsors, and communities. Individual refugee characteristics include their socio-economic context, personal history, social identity, subjective sense of belonging, and feelings of safety and security. For sponsors, this similarly includes their socio-economic context, personal history, and social identity. Community elements include how welcoming the community

is including whether there are positive community attitudes and discourses that are supportive and inclusive of refugees. Other community factors include institutions and supports available to refugees, the socio-economic context of the community, and the community's history, for example whether they have a history of sponsoring refugees. The second domain is relational factors which includes sponsor-refugee relations, sponsor-community relations, and refugee-community relations. Examples of these will be discussed in more detail in the following sections. The third domain is the outer circle which demonstrates how the experiences that can feel very local or community level are also connected to the economic, political, geographic, social, and historical contexts of the nation and the globe. Similar to the Holistic Integration Model, I have used circular arrows to represent the "holistic nature" of sponsorship experiences and how these factors are "interrelated and mutually reinforced" (Hynie et al., 2016, p. 189). The coloured circles are to be viewed as connections within a system rather than borders. In the literature review that follows, I will share existing literature on the PSR Program and organize it to align with the domains of this conceptual framework.

2.3.1 The Role of Refugee, Sponsor, and Community Characteristics

The role of refugee characteristics in resettlement has largely focused on the connection between the economic success of refugees and their personal differences. For example, the so-called "PSR advantage," or the general agreement that people who arrive through the PSR Program fare better economically than their GAR counterparts is prominent in Canadian resettlement studies (Hynie et al., 2019; Mata & Pendakur, 2017; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). Though these studies make strong statistical claims for the difference in economic outcomes of PSRs and GARs, it is difficult to directly compare the two groups, as their demographic backgrounds are quite different. In a 2019 study of 1,837 refugees,

Hynie et al. found significant demographic differences between these groups. 29.6 percent of PSRs were university educated or professionals and only 6.6 percent of GARs had this level of education. Additionally, GARs on average spent 38 months displaced, while PSRs averaged 19.5 months. Interestingly, the researchers also found that 97.2 percent of GARs were Muslim and 2.8 percent were Christian, while 22.4 percent of PSRs were Muslim and 77.6 percent were Christian (Hynie et al., 2019). The results of studies are varied, suggesting that the "PSR advantage" is not as clear as it might seem (Hynie et al., 2019). Though PSRs had higher employment rates than GARs, even when socio-demographic variables were considered, "sponsorship did not predict… financial difficulty when these other variables were taken into account" (Hynie et al., 2019, p. 43). Further, "GARs reported a higher sense of belonging to their neighbourhood compared to PSRs" (Hynie et al., 2019, p. 43). Though it is statistically significant that PSRs fare better economically, it is important to see that many individual-level factors influence resettlement experiences.

In terms of community characteristics, researchers have documented the level of welcome in communities. For example, there have been instances of prejudice and intolerance in communities with "unwelcoming attitudes… that included negative Facebook rhetoric about immigration or refugees in general" (Haugen, 2019, p. 57). The worry about these unwelcoming ideas prompted one group in Haugen's study to choose a Christian family over a Muslim family when sponsoring. The majority of sponsored refugees in Canada are Christian, indicating that this might be a factor that has shaped the individuals and families who are chosen for resettlement (Hynie et al., 2019). Other studies have documented the services available to refugees in certain cities which influence the resettlement experience; for example the availability of language courses,

job training programs, and access to collaborative health teams on arrival (Agrawal, 2018; Agrawal & Zeitouny, 2017). However, these are typically connected back to measures of functional integration including career outcomes, housing, and health care.

Research focusing on sponsor characteristics has tended to point out the motivations for becoming a sponsor including religious aspects. For example, the personal history of many Mennonite sponsors has been documented and linked to their familial history of forced migration which has inspired many members of the community to sponsor (Good Gingrich & Enns, 2019). As well, religious teachings have encouraged many Canadians to sponsor (Macklin et al., 2018). In fact, "many of the privately sponsored refugees who settle in Canada are assisted by religiously affiliated groups, the members of which explicitly link their efforts to religious feelings, ideas, institutions, norms and objectives" (Bramadat, 2014, p. 915). The importance of faith backgrounds in shaping sponsorship experiences is likely connected to Canada's history of private sponsorship that began with religious communities sponsoring fellow community members before the program became official.

To understand this individual domain, I analyzed sponsor and refugee interviews to identify elements of personal identity, characteristics of their sponsor or refugee, and the specific qualities of Lethbridge that influenced their resettlement. Participants shared a number of stories that described the wide diversity of personal backgrounds of both refugees and sponsors and how that influenced their experiences coming to Canada. I was also able to interview a number of sponsors who were involved with faith-based groups. This contributes to better understanding the role of faith-based groups in sponsorship including their motivations, histories, and challenges with sustainability. The findings related to this domain will be analyzed in more depth in chapter four.

2.3.2 The Dynamics of Relationships Between Refugees, Sponsors, and Communities

Unique to the private sponsorship model is the relationship that is formed between sponsors and refugees. The intricacies of this relationship are rich and complex. Aside from financial support, private sponsors are responsible for providing "emotional and social support" for the first year of settlement (Elgersma, 2015). When refugees are supported by a sponsorship group, they may find it easier to create interpersonal bonds with community members (Lanphier, 2003; Lim, 2019). One important benefit of the PSR Program is that refugees are welcomed into a community and gain a social network even before they land in Canada because of the emotional and social support from their sponsors.

Private sponsorship may also be one way of reducing anti-refugee sentiment. Lenard (2016) suggests that when sponsors reach out to their community for support such as donating furniture and clothing it extends the network of those involved and might spread positivity related to refugees. She also argues that during the national mobilization around the Syrian refugee resettlement effort, "*too many* Canadians were personally involved in the admission and settlement of refugees to permit the emergence of an anti-refugee perspective to gain significant traction" (Lenard, 2016, p. 306). Similarly, Lim (2019) suggests that the relationships between sponsors and refugees "play an important role in changing public perceptions of refugees" by shaping refugees not as the dangerous other or a drain on the economy but as friends and community members (p. 306). This is one example of how all three relational elements are connected.

However, the sponsor-refugee relationship cannot only be framed by its merits. When refugees come to Canada, they are likely to have different perspectives than their sponsors. This has been problematic in situations where sponsors impose their

expectations, based on Canadian cultural norms and values, onto refugee families (Lanphier, 2003). An example of when ideologies "were at odds with the newcomers' wishes and expectations" was the disconnect between sponsors' and refugees' valuation of time and punctuality (Agrawal, 2018, p. 16). Private sponsorship creates a unique relationship between the sponsoring group and the refugee family. Sponsors hold a "position of dominance due to social, economic, political and cultural resources afforded by citizenship and national belonging" and because they are supporting the refugees financially, a role the state has authorized them to fill (Kyriakides et al., 2018, p. 59; Lim, 2019). This can be challenging when differences in power result in paternalistic dynamics. Paternalism, as theorized by Gerald Dworkin, is "the interference with a person's liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests, or values of the person being coerced" (1972, p. 65). If newcomers feel pressured to follow this advice or take goods offered to them, in an effort to be grateful, it can undermine the autonomy and independence of the refugee family, something Lenard calls "'we-know-best' paternalism" (2016, p. 307). The concept of the "grateful refugee" is a common thread in scholarship on private sponsorship. For example, when refugees were not given their allowance, "they did not want to create trouble for their sponsors who they felt indebted to" and thus they did not articulate their concerns to government agencies (Agrawal, 2018, p. 13). This is one way that the autonomy and agency of refugees can be restricted in private sponsorships.

Good Gingrich and Enns describe how sponsors begin the relationship with a natural disposition as humanitarian helper or protector which then positions newcomers as the passive victim (2019, pp. 16-17). Kyriakides argues that this creates a social distance or hierarchical order among sponsors and refugees which may add to the

paternalistic nature of the relationship (Kyriakides et al., 2018). This helper-helped dichotomy reduces the agency of newcomers and assumes that the knowledge and ideas of the sponsorship group are more valuable. Lim describes how paternalism and infantilism occur because sponsor-refugee relationships lack defined role-responsibilities and because the power that sponsors have slips into other spheres of a refugee's life. This is problematic because, "even if a sponsor merely intends to gently 'persuade,' the refugees may believe themselves to have no real choice in the matter" (Lim, 2019, p. 316). Others have argued that private sponsorship is laden with orientalist scripts (Hyndman, 2019; Kyriakides et al., 2018). These authors argue that an orientalist narrative has shaped "refugeeness" as an idenity that is passive, in need of rescue, and has no pre-conflict practical identity. Together, literature focusing on the relationship between refugees and sponsors suggests that both challenges and opportunities result from this relationship.

Sponsor-community relations have been explored less thoroughly in the literature. However, it has been noted that the PSR Program is a useful tool in times of perceived refugee "crisis" because it allows Canada to leverage the support of passionate individuals who want to help. Media and, in the case of the Syrian crisis, election campaign publicity "mobilized millions of people around the world looking to directly assist the vulnerable individuals flashing across their screens each day" (Bond & Kwadrans, 2019, p. 87) . The photo of Alan Kurdi, a three year old Syrian boy whose body washed up on Turkish shores "galvanized people around the world to offer their support to these desperate people" (Lenard, 2016, p. 305). The PSR Program was an outlet that mobilized those people who wanted to help. Ritchie (2018) noted that "private sponsorship circulates through the popular consciousness at times of perceived crisis" (p.

664). Though this can be viewed as a strength of private sponsorship, it should also be noted that because sponsorships are so tied up with community support and publicity, it may not be sustained in periods that are not viewed as "crises". Calling these events "crises" is problematic because it neglects the fact that forced migration, displacement, and the need for resettlement are ongoing concerns. It also means "there is a risk that market demand [to sponsor refugees] will drop when media attention fades" (Labman & Pearlman, 2018, p. 445).

The area where community-refugee relations has been explored most thoroughly is in assessments of functional integration (Agrawal, 2018; Agrawal & Zeitouny, 2017; Hynie et al., 2019; Kaida et al., 2019). Functional integration includes measurable features such as education, employment, housing, and health services (Hynie et al., 2016). Specific to Lethbridge, Agrawal's studies have explored the housing, language, employment, and health care outcomes one year after the arrival of Syrian refugees.

Participants discussed relational aspects in all the semi-structured interviews conducted for this project. This was prompted by probes that challenged sponsors and refugees to speak to group dynamics, networks, and community connections that arose during their sponsorship. Emergent themes including the metaphor of family utilized in refugee-sponsor relations, the role of social capital in the PSR Program, and mutualistic sponsorship approaches will be discussed in chapter four.

2.3.3 The Impacts of Broader Contextual Elements

The sponsorship experience cannot be separated from the national and global contexts in which it sits. Here I will share some of the literature that outlines this connection. Resettlement in Canada, and arguably around the world, is an inherently political act. For example, the Cold War era offers an example of how refugee acceptance was tied to

ideological leanings. Those displaced by right-wing dictatorships in South Africa rarely were able to resettle in North America while those displaced by communism in Czechoslovakia and Southeast Asia "were met with large-scale resettlement projects" (Ritchie, 2018, p.667). Similarly, the surge of Syrian refugees in 2015 and 2016 was the result of an election promise by then Liberal candidate and later Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in the 2015 federal election. Yet, the "legitimacy of humanitarian projects rests with their humanist or neutral/apolitical appearance" (Ritchie, 2018, p.667). This means that though resettlement is highly political, it has been constructed as a local project of citizenship and voluntarism that is apolitical. As Carpenter notes, "the local is not just the local; it is also the global" because it is the space where global relations are enacted (2015, p. 138). The fixation on the local domain makes history and social relations invisible, abstracting the political nature of resettlement from the material realities (Carpenter, 2015). It also allows for an ironic narrative of Canada as a "welcoming" country despite its global practices that prevent migration such as extra-territorial border control and securitization policies and practices. Examples of these practices include the domestic measures, bilateral agreements with the United States, and international agreements designed to "combat terrorism, enhance security, collect and share biometric data, facilitate trade and travel, and restrict migration" (Arbel, 2016, p. 835). One such example is the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) that Canada shares with the US which asserts that both countries are safe for asylum seekers. In practice this means that Canada can deny entry to asylum seekers who first arrive in the US. This agreement which specifically restricts and prevents asylum seekers from entering Canada has been criticized by scholars and advocates who argue that the US is not actually a safe place for asylum seekers who often are subject to migrant detention and inhumane treatment (See

for example Macklin, 2005; Moore, 2007; Yeung & Islam, 2021). In July 2020, the agreement was found to be unconstitutional by Canada's Federal Court, however it currently remains in effect as the government of Canada appeals the decision. Policies like this shed light on the thin veil of Canadian "welcome".

It is also clear that private sponsorship sits within a particular economic context. A perceived benefit of the PSR Program is that it relies on the financial support of citizens rather than the government. The sponsors are responsible for the financial costs that arise after the arrival of the refugees for 12 months, reducing the amount the government spends on resettlement (Elgersma, 2015; Hyndman et al., 2016; Lim, 2019). This "defraying of the cost of refugee resettlement" allows the government to save money that it might otherwise spend on resettlement (Lenard, 2016, p. 304). Many scholars have argued that the private sponsorship program is a neoliberal strategy that allows the government to defer responsibility for resettlement onto its citizens (Carpenter, 2015; Labman, 2016; Labman & Pearlman, 2018; Ritchie, 2018). For example, in 2010 when the government announced an increase of 2,500 resettled refugees, only 500 were allotted to the GAR program (Labman, 2016). As discussed earlier, target numbers for the PSR Program are set to rise. This is a crucial element of the context in Canada that begs further examination.

For my project, these broader contextual elements came out in more nuanced ways through the stories that refugees and sponsors told about sponsorship. My method of analysis, which will be discussed in the following chapter, was used to unpack the connections between everyday experiences as told through stories and the larger contexts. Findings related to the sustainability of the program and the dissociation of scales will be analyzed in chapter 5.

2.4 Conclusion

What remains a gap in the literature is having a specific focus on how both refugees and sponsors have experienced the PSR Program in a small city using narrative methods. Few studies on private sponsorship have consulted both sponsors and refugees. One particular recent study that interviewed sponsors and refugees in Lethbridge was small scale, interviewing only two PSRs and two Sponsors (Agrawal & Zeitouny, 2017). In order to get a more holistic understanding of the lived experiences of private refugee sponsorship, it is important to look at both of these actors. Lethbridge's disproportionate number of refugees and community support make it an important site for unpacking how the three domains: individual characteristics, relational factors, and broader contextual elements influence the ways in which refugee sponsorship plays out. Moreover, documentation of private sponsorship in Lethbridge has been very limited. What is known about it is mainly written in newspaper articles and in a few pieces of research literature (See for example Agrawal, 2018; Agrawal & Sangapala, 2020; Basu, 2016). Over 610 refugees have been privately sponsored to Lethbridge, making it an important part of Lethbridge's history. Its size is also likely to offer direction to other sponsoring communities as immigration policies increasingly encourage smaller cities to resettle newcomers. Lastly, there is a gap in using narrative methods to understand the experiences of privately sponsored refugees and sponsors. Narratives offer a view of everyday interactions that can both help us understand larger discourses and challenge negative discourses surrounding refugees. This will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

> But just sharing those experiences with people to give the other side of the story, maybe it helps? I don't know.
>
> -Jean H

In this excerpt, Jean reflects on what she hopes to be the power of a story, that it may help others to re-think their understandings of the world. The methodology for this project draws on this same hope. To meet the aims of this project—positioning refugees as active agents in narratives of private sponsorship, documenting and analyzing these narratives, and highlighting valuable insights, I conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with sponsors and refugees in the Lethbridge, Alberta area. A narrative method was employed to draw attention to the diverse experiences of sponsors and refugees, challenge common stories of refugeeness, and learn from the experiences of those who have been directly involved with the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program. I conducted interviews with 25 participants between June and November 2020. This chapter outlines the narrative focus of this project, describes the research design, provides ethical considerations, and highlights methodological reflections.

3.1 Narratives as a Framework for Interviewing

The semi-structured interviews conducted for this research were guided by a desire to listen to the stories that people tell about sponsorship. Narrative methods offer an opportunity to understand the "dynamic interplay between life, experience, and story" (Eastmond, 2007, p. 248). Rather that fostering generalizations, they elicit the telling of detailed accounts which add nuance to our understanding of refugee and sponsor experiences. Researchers working in related contexts have made use of similar methods. Lindsay French (2019), for example, used oral history and ethnographic methods in her study of Cambodian refugees after the time of the Khmer Rouge. As well, El-Bialy and

Mulay (2018) used narrative methods to understand refugee experiences of micro-aggressions and everyday resistance in a small Canadian city (For other examples see Eastmond, 2007; High, 2014; Sigona, 2014). Narratives have been a focus of this project because they reflect the personal, relational, and broader contexts of sponsorship, they are generative, and they can be used to deconstruct assumptions about sponsorship and refugeeness.

McGeachan and Philo (2014) argue that geographers ought to be more attuned to words. "Words are both crucially *reflective* of the goings-on in the human world, but also unavoidably *generative* of that world in all kinds of ways. Words can shape, wound, fracture and direct how lives, and the material landscapes housing these lives, are planned, enacted, altered and obliterated" (McGeachan & Philo, 2014, p. 3). Their argument is that listening to people's stories or reading their words can tell us not just about the world around us, in a reflective sense, but also that it creates the world in which we live, in a generative sense. A story that emerged in this research was that of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, a Syrian boy whose lifeless body washed up on Turkish shores on September 2, 2015. Of the 14 interviews I conducted with sponsors who were involved with Syrian refugees, Alan Kurdi was referenced in 7. Erin, the leader of a large collaborative sponsorship group shared this reflection:

> ...part of the initial sort of support in Lethbridge was very much tied to like Alan Kurdi and that who are we as Canadians and that's dissipated. So I think, I don't think we could just raise the money we raised as easily as we raised it… five years ago.

This excerpt articulates both the generative and reflective nature of narratives. The story of Alan Kurdi had material ramifications. In Lethbridge, that meant a rise in support for private sponsorship groups. On a larger scale Slovic et al. (2017) found a significant

increase in donations to a Swedish Red Cross campaign designed to aid Syrian refugees. They also analyzed Google Trend data and found a large rise in the use of the search terms "Syria," "refugees," and "Aylan" following the release of this story in September 2015 (Slovic et al., 2017, pp. 641-642). This serves as one specific example of the generative nature of narratives. Though this example demonstrates how stories can be generative in monetary measures, they can also be generative in creating community values, identity, and other less easily measured elements. Erin's excerpt also illustrates the reflective nature of stories which can open up "new understandings of political, social, and cultural life" by being attuned to the mundane, local, and person experiences that are expressed in stories (Cameron, 2012, p. 573). In this excerpt, Erin signals a connection between the story of Alan Kurdi, her personal experience, and what she perceives as Canadian national identity when she says, "who we are as Canadians." Here she is referencing the national identity of being welcoming, a pillar of the perceived Canadian identity, and common theme in refugee sponsorship. However, it is important to consider the ambiguous nature of Canadian national identity that does not resonate the same way with all Canadians. The connection between sponsorship and Canadian identity will be discussed in greater detail in the analysis portion of this thesis. A focus on the reflective nature of stories is helpful for drawing our attention to the relationship between personal experiences and broader contexts. Using a narrative approach to understand private sponsorship has been an opportunity to capture the reflective and generative nature of sponsor and refugee stories, but also to decompose unquestioned stories of refugee resettlement.

Narratives are productive discursive elements that both reflect and shape public consciousness. In many ways, stories have defined what being a refugee in Canada

means. Working with the stories that sponsors and refugees tell about their experiences, these pre-conceived notions of refugeeness and sponsorship can be challenged. Refugees are often characterized in the extremes. What has come to be known as the victim-villain or good-bad binary constructs migrants as "good" when they lack agency, demonstrate vulnerability, and necessitate rescue (El-Bialy & Mulay, 2018; Hyndman, 2019; Mainwaring, 2016). Conversely, a "bad" migrant demonstrates agency and is a potential security risk. Society, politics, and the media bestow refugees with either a "dangerous agency as unknowable, risky bodies, criminals, and potential terrorists… or [as having] no agency at all," (Mainwaring, 2016, pp. 289-290). These two categories are used to demarcate who is deserving of help, often labeling refugees awaiting settlement in faraway places as deserving, and those who have arrived at Canadian borders seeking asylum as undeserving. Once resettled, bad immigrants and refugees are associated with reliance on the welfare system, not learning the language, and putting undue "costs" and "burdens" on healthcare and social systems (El-Bialy & Mulay, 2018, p. 9).

Despite these prescriptions of "refugeeness", narratives can be decomposed through the critical practice of "recreating, reimaging, resisting and recovering" from the stories that others tell about groups (Peers, 2012, p. 186). It is my aim to share the stories of those who have first-hand experience with private sponsorship as a way to re-centre their accounts of the program. Following from McGeachan and Philo's (2014) argument that stories are generative of the world around us, telling different stories can generate changes in the perceptions, attitudes, and values of the community. This decomposition is possible because of "the capacity for stories to move, inspire, and evoke embodied experience" (Cameron, 2012, p. 587). Here Cameron is touching on the visceral nature of storytelling and the role that it can play in changing perceptions. Similarly, Anderson

(2018) argues that representations, including narratives and stories, "do things – they are activities that enable, sustain, interrupt, consolidate or otherwise (re)make forms or ways of life" (p. 1120). Though it is difficult to share tangible examples of the use of stories in shifting public consciousness and opinion, an awareness of this process came through in my interview with Francis and Cybele:

> I think one point that we would like to emphasize is that many people talk about refugees being a drain on the country and so on. That the refugees get an unfair, beneficial treatment when they arrived compared with pensioners and so on. Well, this family had very few sources when they came and yet they settled down really well. And every single member of the family is productive. And the taxes that they pay now are helping to pay pensions of people, you know? So there's no cause for people to try and say that refugees are a drain on the national purse or anything like that.

Here Francis is explicit in his goal to *recreate, reimage, resist,* and *recover* from the stories that are told about refugees (Peers, 2012, p. 186). He tells this story in order to contest a common narrative that refugees are an economic burden. In many interviews conducted for this project, participants shared a desire to showcase diverse experiences and challenge taken for granted assumptions about what it means to be a refugee or a sponsor. This theme will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

The semi-structured interviews conducted for this research were aimed at capturing narratives about the PSR Program. Narrative methods are useful because of their reflective and generative nature and also their ability to decompose mischaracterizations about refugees and the program. In the section that follows I will more specifically describe the research design for this project.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Recruitment

Two broad categories of participants were recruited for this study, refugees aged 15 and above who were resettled to the Lethbridge area through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program between 1979 and 2020 and those who took part in resettling refugees in the Lethbridge area through sponsorship roles during this same period. My intention at the outset was to include ten participants from each of the two groups. Recruitment utilized snowball sampling by connecting with community groups, faith communities, and individual connections that I had. Snowball sampling has the potential to attract participants with very similar experiences or demographic characteristics. To alleviate this concern, my sampling followed Tracy's (2019b) suggestion to "recruit a handful of participants who represent a maximum variation, and then generate several smaller snowballs from that diverse initial sample" (p. 84). The use of non-probability sampling was useful for achieving more diverse, information-rich cases. These small snowballs were formed in large part around different sponsorship groups with seven different sponsorship groups represented. A total of 25 people were interviewed. Three identified as refugees, 21 identified as sponsors, and one was a family member of sponsored refugees.

In order to find connections from earlier time periods I utilized the Canadian News Archives database. This archive contains 100 newspapers published between 1872 and 2016 in Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland. I chose this archive because it contains the community's largest local newspaper, *The Lethbridge Herald*. A local newspaper was helpful for finding the names of specific individuals and churches who had been involved in private sponsorships. Using the search terms 'Sponsor' and

'Refugee' I found 31 relevant newspaper articles from which I could draw a list of names and groups.

To connect with participants who had been involved more recently I relied on previous connections with two church leaders in the community and reached out to various others including faith-based organizations, individuals, and community organizations. The invitation to participate was sent via email and contained key information as well as an English recruitment poster (Appendix 1). Groups who were contacted include but are not limited to: Lethbridge Family Services, Southern Alberta Ethnic Association, Lethbridge Latin American Association, Canadian Bhutanese Society, World University Services of Canada (WUSC) University of Lethbridge Chapter, Stirling Vietnamese Refugee Aid Organization, Galata Ministries, Lethbridge Muslim Association, Lethbridge Croatian Club, and various other institutions.

The relative success of my attempts to recruit participants from a wide variety of time periods was limited. All participants had been most closely connected to either the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees between 1979 and 1980 or Syrian refugees since 2015. Figure 3.1 shows the number of privately sponsored refugees resettled in Lethbridge from 1980-2019. The total number is over 610.

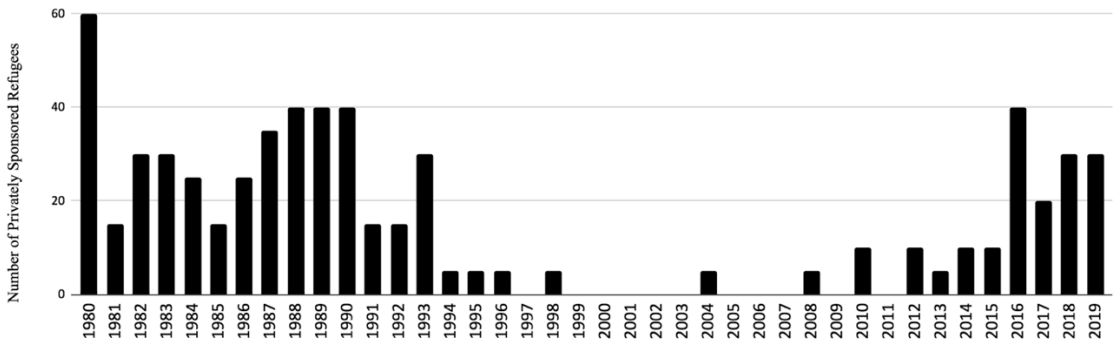

Figure 3.1: Privately Sponsored Refugees to Lethbridge, Alberta, 1980-2019. This figure was produced from data from Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2020b) Lethbridge, Alberta (census metropolitan area (CMA) of intended destination) – admissions of permanent residents by select immigration category, 1980–2019.

As figure 3.1 shows, the number of sponsorships during 1980 and 2016 stand out. It is not surprising that these two time periods were represented among my participants as they were two of the most well-known refugee "crises". Despite this, sponsors also talked about memories from other time periods including movements of people seeking refuge who identified as Mennonite, Hungarian, Chilean, Bosnian, Kurdish, and Eritrean. For example, Barb recounted that:

> In about 1993, we had a minister who convinced our congregation to consider sponsoring a refugee family. At that time, we had a group of young families in our church who spearheaded some of this work that went into settling the Bosnian-Serbian family that we sponsored.

Others, such as Erin, reflected on experiences growing up:

> And then in the 50s, they took in a Hungarian refugee family. So I grew up with these cousins who were actually, I mean their parents had fled after the Soviet invasion.

Although all participants were most specifically connected to the Syrian and Indo-Chinese refugee "crises", there were many connections to other movements which highlight the nuanced motivations for involvement and history of sponsorship in Canada.

Another challenge was recruiting refugee participants. Of the 25 participants in the project, only three identified as having a refugee experience. Though disappointing, this challenge was not unexpected as it has been faced by other researchers (Agrawal & Sangapala, 2020; Gabriel et al., 2017; Lenette & Boddy, 2013). As this challenge revealed itself, I responded by contacting cultural groups including the Canadian Guatemalan Association Calgary Chapter, Ecuadorian Social Club of Lethbridge, and Afghan Canadian Association of Calgary. Knowing there were a large number of Arabic speaking Syrian refugees in the area, I also circulated an Arabic recruitment poster (Appendix 2). There are a number of reasons why I suspect it was difficult to recruit refugees including worries about language proficiency despite interpreters being available, the busyness of everyday life including managing a pandemic, and general distrust of a researcher who is not a part of the community.

Beyond these concerns, refugees are often asked to tell their stories in ways that focus on devastation, loss, and tragedy. Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) hearings, for example, require claimants to "reflect upon some of the most traumatic and difficult moments of their lives, and retell them to an unfamiliar government official" (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2012, p. 28). A study of 70 asylum seekers who went through an IRB hearing found the process very emotional, with some reporting "complicated feelings of being sad and overwhelmed," while others experienced "debilitating emotional breakdowns during the process" (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2012, p. 27). However, it is not just in these institutionalized processes that refugees are asked to tell their stories. Tammas (2019) reflects on how "there is often an expectation that refugees *owe* the wider public their stories" (para. 4). When asked to tell his own story of arrival, he has faced an expectation to "move the audience" and "inspire sympathy" by sharing his pre-arrival

background. He warns researchers that "refugees are not objects or vehicles of inspiration and sympathy" (Tammas, 2019, para. 7). This argument has been central in framing this project's objectives and methodology.

In relation to recruitment, it is probable that refugees who saw the posters misinterpreted the intent of the project and were worried that they would be subjected to this kind of storytelling during an interview. During the project, I received this text message from a participant named Lorraine:

> I decided to go talk to [my friend who was a refugee from Vietnam] about your thesis and if she'd consent to an interview. She does not want to participate. I asked her if she had any friends who might be interested. She said that none of them want to talk about it because it was such a horrible experience but [I] totally understand as I've been to Vietnam and Cambodia. I told her not to feel bad and there was no pressure so she's ok.

Worries about talking about their "horrible experience" or difficult memories of the past are one likely reason for the challenge of recruiting refugees. While I anticipated that this would be a challenge, it was ethically important to be forthcoming and clear about the intent of the research on all recruitment documents, including the poster. To alleviate these types of concerns for participants, I often shared the interview guide ahead of time. Participants expressed that that helped alleviate their anxieties about the interview process, however, it did not increase recruitment.

3.2.2 Interviewing

Upon finding an interested participant, the next step was organizing an initial meeting. During these thirty-minute sessions I would talk about my background, share additional information about the project, learn about their background, and offer a space for them to ask questions. These meetings were invaluable in helping form a more comfortable relationship. Additionally, participants often shared significant details about their

involvement with sponsorship from which I could better plan for the interview. At the end of the initial meeting, I scheduled a time for the one to two-hour in-depth semi-structured interview.

The interview guides (Appendices 3 and 4) were developed to allow for participants to share the memories and experiences that were important to them. For example, question number two for sponsors, '*Would you be able to walk me through the sponsorship process from the beginning when you became involved?'* is a type of generative "tour question" that "asks the interviewee to overview familiar descriptive knowledge of memories about an activity or event" (Tracy, 2019a, p. 166). The intent of this question was to elicit a narrative response from participants. Keeping the questions broad and using the guide flexibly allowed me to follow up with participants on themes that they were alluding to. For example, when Wynona mentioned that, "…at least for me, there was this preconceived notion of what type of person they'd be like, based on what I've seen or what I've heard…" the conversation was able to organically shift to the theme of "refugeeness" that Wynona was picking up on.

> *Interviewer:* What would you say is the image of like a refugee that you think is presented in the media?
> *Wynona:* Well, very poor. Like they always show a person who's really, who's already really, I don't know. There's no other word for it.

I chose to conduct a pilot interview before actively recruiting participants in order to pinpoint the "flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design" and provide an opportunity for revision (Turner III, 2010, p. 757). The pilot interview was conducted with a member of the University of Lethbridge's WUSC group because their association with the University offered easy communication. As a case and point, the pilot interview process showed that the interview guide restricted the narrative responses

of the participant. There were too many specific questions which did not encourage the participant to tell a story. The interview felt formulaic rather than organic. Formulaic in the sense that there was a structured pattern of answer, follow-up question, answer, and then moving on to the next question. In contrast, the narrative approach I was aiming for relied on "open-ended, relatively unstructured interviews that encourage participants to tell stories" (Tracy, 2019a, p. 159). In response to this, I reshaped my interview guide to focus on fewer main questions that called for longer stories. I also allowed a great deal of flexibility in the interviews, allowing participants to guide the trajectory of the conversation. This also encouraged me to be committed "to attending to the storytelling act itself" (Johnson, 2016, p. 52). While this was beneficial for giving autonomy to interviewees, it also had effects on the type of data collected which needed a more thorough and time-consuming multi-step analysis.

During the pilot interview, I found it difficult to "put aside [my] analytical inclinations and really engage in listening" (Adams, 2012, p. 402). Throughout the research process, I continually reminded myself to be attentive and critically curious. This came about in my focus on being receptive, responsive, and flexible in my listening, often leaving uncomfortably long silences on the record. This was especially important in the context of conducting research in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic. All interviews for this project were conducted virtually with the participant choosing telephone, Zoom, or Facetime and were digitally recorded with consent. The interviews conducted through video chat were generally free from technological challenges. All participants had experience using Zoom or Facetime and it did not impede the quality of the interview in a substantial way. In fact, it gave me the opportunity to interview three individuals who were a significant distance away. Telephone interviews were more

challenging because of the lack of non-verbal communication cues. At times it was difficult to read the emotion of the participants. However, telephone interviews also enabled an element of heightened listening. I did not have to think about the way I was taking notes, my physical appearance, or my non-verbal cues. It felt at times like the act of only listening allowed me to be a more critically curious and responsive interviewer. The virtual nature of the interviews, though a limitation, did not impede the study.

In total I conducted 21 interviews with 25 participants. Four of the interviews were with couples who identified as sponsors. Of those four couples, two had sponsored during the 1979-1980 resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees. Remembering 40 years in the past was at times challenging but having a partner to remember with was beneficial. For example, Linda and Ian were able to ask each other for clarification and draw on each other's memories:

> *Ian:* They had the run of the house and I can't remember. Did you prepare foods for [our son] or how did that work?
> *Linda:* Well, I would have had baby food for [our son] and I must've left food for lunch.

Having two people also created space for both participants to remember the past and formulate their responses while the other was speaking. Some of the documented challenges to interviewing couples are that one partner may silence or overpower the other, it can create tensions among the couple, and interviewers may struggle to equally include both participants (Zarhin, 2018). Those concerns did not present themselves in these four interviews. Additionally, some participants who were interviewed alone consulted others before the interview to help consolidate their memories:

> Now remember I'm trying to remember back 41 years so I've been contacting people and asking my husband.
>
> -Bev

Participants were also invited to share any images or artifacts that they felt would help them share their story. Images are useful because they "act as a trigger to memory, provide meaning or clarity to a situation, and can evoke an emotional, multi-layered response in participants" (Copes et al., 2018, p. 477). Others who have used photo-elicitation in similar research include Lenette and Boddy (2013), Weber (2018), and Rumpf (2017). April, a visual artist and sponsor, took this opportunity to send me various pieces of artwork that she had created for her sponsorship group to use on social media and in print brochures. Figure 3.2 shows one of the graphics that she created for the group.

Figure 3.2: From Syria to Lethbridge. This image was created by April (2015).

During the interview we were able to use these pieces of art as a starting point for conversations around her role in the group, the group's vision of sponsorship, and the way they communicated with the community.

> I remember being up and not being able to sleep at night because I was thinking about the imagery. I think first the "From Syria to Lethbridge" came about. That phrase came about because it's just, it didn't have the word refugee or crisis or immigration in it. It was just based on moving people from one place to another place. And it was always a sort of a movement based on sort of like, hope and love.
>
> -April

In my interview with April, this methodological layer helped to elicit nuanced responses when thinking about the broader implications of sponsorship in the community. Weber (2018) also argues that photo-elicitation democratizes research by reducing the power imbalance between researchers and participants, and reduces the risk of retraumatization. This is because it gives control to the participant to decide the trajectory of the interview, focusing on what is important to them, and thus the information gathered. For some time, Geographers like Dakin (2003) have been implementing methods "grounded in participant perspectives" as a way to focus on experiential rather than expert approaches to research (p. 185). I also drew on this concept of democratizing research in my interviews that did not involve photo-elicitation by encouraging participants to share the stories and experiences that they felt were meaningful.

3.2.3 Analysis

The method of analysis for this research has been influenced by the focus on narratives. Drawing on the suggestion that "current narrative scholarship adopts a flexible and grounded approach to the text," the analysis for this project has been both flexible and iterative (Abrams, 2010, p. 113). I considered using an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) because of its strengths in understanding lived experience. IPA focuses on an "individual's personal perception or account of an object or event" (Smith et al., 1999, p. 218). However, the limitation of this approach was in connecting individual perceptions to broader contexts and scales beyond the personal. Instead I used the listening guide as a framework for structuring my analysis. The listening guide was originally developed by the Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development, but it has been used and adapted by other researchers since then (Brown et al., 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992). In particular I am drawing from Doucet and

Mauthner's (2008) rendition of the method. They use the terms listening and reading interchangeably noting the importance of including affective and performative elements throughout analysis. Doucet and Mauthner (2008) call on researchers to listen to interviews four times, each time listening for a particular element. This process of analysis aligns closely with the conceptual framework discussed in the previous chapter. In the first reading I focused on listening for "what's happening here?" (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, p. 405). This included first impressions, interpretations, reactions, general plot points, recurring words, themes, events, the chronology of events, protagonists, plot, subplots, and key characters. During this phase of analysis, I found that many participants used euphemistic terms to talk about community members who were opposed to refugee sponsorship. For example, "there was a lot of naysayers", "some of our negative Nellies", and "people who have obviously not tried to be helpful" demonstrate this recurring theme.

In the second reading I listened for the subject or the narrator. Here the goal was to "trace the I" in the story, looking for how they spoke about, saw, and presented themselves, and understanding their perceptions and performance of self (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, p. 405). In this reading I focused on the domain of individual characteristics of refugees, sponsors, and communities. Grace, for example, shared that, "…it was a very strange experience again of internalized racism that I didn't know I had and didn't see before…" Here she reflected on how she saw her personal growth during the time that she was involved. This type of personal growth was highlighted during this reading. In the third reading I focused on the social networks and relationships expressed in the narrative. This included the narrated self in relation to others, group dynamics, and social connections. This aligned with the relational aspects of my conceptual framework

including refugee-community, community-sponsor, and sponsor-refugee relations. For example, Nicole said, "I just feel honoured to have been able to be part of the group and contribute even in my small way." Here she connects her personal position with the broader sponsorship group.

In the last reading, the focus was on structured subjects. This meant linking micro-level narratives with macro-level processes and structures. This included public and societal narratives as well as the way the narratives existed within a web of larger discourses and contexts. Here I focused on the third domain of my conceptual framework which highlights the connection between personal experiences and narratives, and the broader economic, political, geographic, social, and historical contexts. Sharon spoke about how people in the community who are opposed to sponsorship, "see the people coming across the border illegally. They see things happening in the East," and surmises that because of this, "…naturally they're going to lump all refugees together." Here she alludes to the different portrayal of refugees who arrive at borders seeking asylum, and those, often perceived as more deserving, who wait their turn outside of Canada and are selected to arrive as resettled refugees. This method of analysis allowed me to highlight various themes including challenges to sustaining the program, the familial characterization of sponsorship, the way sponsors and refugees contend with ethical concerns, and opportunities for improving the program that I examine in the analysis sections to come.

3.2.4 Ethical Considerations

From the start of this project, I considered the implications that the work would have on the lives of community members. While designing this project I planned with the end in mind. This meant trying to anticipate ethical concerns that would arise and planning for

how to mitigate them. These ethical considerations played a large part in shaping the project.

The focus of the project was on post-arrival experiences of sponsorship, not on the "horrible experiences" or conducting what Tuck (2013) would call damage-centred research. However, it is important to remember that pre-arrival identities help us to contextualize post-arrival experiences. Striking a balance between learning about their past and not asking them to relive painful experiences involved a level of finesse. During interviews I tried to stay attentive to both the stories people told and the emotions that they had when telling them in order to mitigate this concern. Semi-structured interviewing allowed for an added level of flexibility that gave me the ability to manoeuvre more ethically in these circumstances. Participants were also given a list of mental health resources that could be used if they felt the need for additional assistance after the interview.

From the outset, a concern was whether the interviews could be used as a way to discredit the PSR Program or refugee resettlement more broadly. With anti-refugee sentiment being present in this community, I worried that the stories shared by sponsors and refugees could be used to support negative attitudes. This came about during the project when participants shared stories of refugees who struggled to adjust to certain rules.

> In spite of this, it is a learning experience for new immigrants and hard for them to adjust to obeying laws as they don't see them as really necessary. Wearing seatbelts, bicycle helmets, and driving without a valid driver's license were hard for some of the people to adjust to.
>
> -Barb

In conversation with these participants, we came to the consensus that these topics were useful in a research context but should be taken out of the interviews before they are

made publicly available through archiving. This compromise was important for participants because they felt that they articulated a legitimate concern with the transportation system in Lethbridge, but they also shared concerns about how this could be used against newcomers.

Another important ethical element of this project was balancing the desire to capture stories and not reproduce the power dynamics of the refugee experience. During recruitment sponsors who were involved may have encouraged the refugees they sponsored to participate. My concern was that these refugees would feel obliged, out of a sense of gratefulness, to share their stories. There was also potential for them to learn about the project through institutions such as settlement organizations and churches. To alleviate these concerns, I tried to encourage participants to share contact information with me rather than doing any direct recruitment. As well, I ensured that participants knew that their participation was voluntary before, during, and after the interview. With the small number of refugee participants in the study, it does not appear that this was a significant issue.

Ethics are not one aspect of the project, they are both a starting point and an intrinsic aspect of the design, collection, interpretation, and dissemination. To help reach a strong level of ethical conduct, I gained ongoing informed consent, protected confidentiality and anonymity where appropriate, returned interview transcripts to participants for review, and had participants use a release form for their stories to be archived. Though ethical tensions are present in all research, planning ahead and considering the impacts on the community helped me to navigate some of these concerns.

3.3 Methodological Reflections

Conducting semi-structured interviews that focus on the stories that people share offers unique opportunities for analysis. Throughout the course of this research, there were opportunities to look for themes in what was omitted from people's narratives. Though the question of truthfulness and the fallibility of memory are critiques of narrative approaches, they can also point to themes that can be difficult to talk about. Stories that are slow to reveal or have never been told may indicate larger historical, social, or political narratives. Oral historian Lindsay French reminds us that "there are, in fact, many stories in the silences" (2019, p. 275). French explores how elements that many believe make oral history and other narrative methods biased are actually their strengths. Similarly, Alessandro Portelli (1981) explains that oral histories tell us less about what happened and more about the meaning of events. He famously wrote that oral histories "tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did" (p. 99-100). To Portelli, oral history is not just about finding conclusive facts because "untrue statements" can "sometimes reveal more than factually accurate accounts" (1981, p. 100). Stories are partial and co-constructed so when we give attention to the silences, we can uncover nuances about subjectivity, society, and experience. The following excerpt hints at a reluctance to share the challenges that existed in the relationship between Joliana and her sponsors:

> *Interviewer:* …was there anything that you wish [the sponsors] maybe would've done differently, or that if they had to do it again, you would maybe suggest for them to do?
> *Joliana:* No, I don't think so. No, they're amazing. Like they did what they have to do. I don't think there's anything. I love them. They're so amazing. Yeah.

Erin, a sponsor, spoke of this theme as well:

> ...maybe families just don't want to tell you. I became very aware too, that if they had concerns or if they were upset about stuff, they didn't want us to know because they felt like we'd done so much, you know. And or that it would feel, it would seem ungrateful to tell us, you know, that things were difficult or that people had been rude or whatever.

Reading these comments together allows for a clearer picture of what those omissions or silences mean. They indicate that an expectation of gratefulness is present in these relationships, a topic I will explore in greater depth later. Perhaps the space for refugees to express grievances in Canadian society is not in conversations with outsiders. Rather than simply seeing omissions as falsehoods, it is important to read Joliana's silence as telling us about expectation, gratitude, and what it means to be a refugee in Canada. Despite this opportunity for analysis, understanding the challenges of the PSR Program from the perspective of refugees was a limitation of this study. Future research utilizing an ethnographic approach may better allow a researcher to be present and observe these challenges in context. Future research with this type of participant-observation may help add nuance to our collective understanding of refugee experiences of sponsorship.

A further limitation of this project was my limited connection to the sponsorship community prior to beginning this research. An insider is considered to be "an individual who possesses a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members" (Greene, 2014, p. 2). My positionality was brought into conversation when participants would frequently ask me how I came to be interested in this project. This question challenged me, not because it was difficult to answer, but because I anticipated that it would put my "outsider-ness" on display. Despite this, I did not want to fall into the "skeptic's cop out" where a researcher "retreats to quietism, paralysis, and cynicism, based on 'difference'" (Johnson, 2016, p. 61). The pitfall here is not conducting research because of differences

between the researcher and the participants. I contended with these issues because prima facie, I am an outsider, not a refugee or a sponsor. However, these types of constructed binaries that position researchers as outsiders in communities can be challenged. Greene (2014) chooses to see "the insider-outsider dichotomy as a false one," that is more accurately conceptualized as a continuum (p. 2). My membership in the communities of my participants is incredibly fluid. Though I am not a refugee or a sponsor, I do share a community with them and had other unique connections. One participant recounted that he taught junior high classes to both my father and uncle and another shared a story of caring for my grandmother when she worked as a nurse. Despite superficially being an outsider, with each individual I shared elements of common membership in communities that allowed me to occupy the "space between" (Spates & Gichiru, 2015, p. 1928). As the project unfolded and I built relationships with members of these communities, my membership became even more complicated and fluid. For example, when a member of the Syrian community in Lethbridge passed away from COVID-19 in the fall of 2020, three participants reached out to me to talk both about the tragic nature of the loss and the way the community had come together to support the family. Though I initially worried that participants would see my interest in this project as inauthentic because I have not experienced sponsorship first hand, this did not materialize during the project.

3.4 Conclusion

The methodology for this project was chosen because it seeks insight and understanding from those who have first-hand experiences of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. The generative and reflective nature of narratives make them a powerful starting point for understanding the experiences of private sponsorship. Despite limitations in recruitment, positionality, and online interviewing, the 21 semi-structured

interviews conducted for this project helped build understanding of the diversity of refugee and sponsor experiences and indicated areas where care and attention are needed. The methodology was also chosen as a way to turn the lens around and view how larger scales are interwoven into the personal experiences of sponsors and refugees. A narrative focus allowed me to take a feminist approach to the scale of analysis and piece together how national and global factors play out in lived experiences.

CHAPTER 4: THE IMPACTS OF REFUGEE, SPONSOR, AND COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS AND INTERACTIONS ON THE SPONSORSHIP EXPERIENCE

The way private sponsorship is experienced is subject to the unique characteristics of sponsors, refugees, and communities, the relationships between them, and the broader contextual factors that simultaneously affect sponsorship. The goal of this chapter is to present the themes that have emerged from this research in relation to the unique characteristics of sponsors, refugees, and the Lethbridge community as well as their relationships. I will begin by outlining Lethbridge's unique characteristics in relation to refugee sponsorship including examples of community (un)welcome, benefits and drawbacks of the Lethbridge area for resettlement, and the way Lethbridge's size has enabled significant networking and collaboration. Next, I will share examples of how the personal, professional, and faith backgrounds of sponsors and refugees influence resettlement. Though the structure of these sections may suggest that these analytical areas are discrete elements, they are in fact intensely interconnected. One cannot, for example, extract individual refugee characteristics from the relationships and broader contextual factors because they are simultaneously experienced. In the second half of this chapter I will bring sponsor, refugee, and community factors back into conversation by outlining the ways in which they interact with one another. This will include an analysis of sponsors' attempts to change negative discourses about refugees, the use of family metaphors in framing sponsorship, the ways that sponsors and refugees contend with power imbalances, and the ways that refugees and sponsors utilize social capital to draw on community networks for resettlement support. While this chapter focuses specifically on individual characteristics and relationships, woven into these examples are political,

historic, social, economic, and geographic elements that cannot be separated from the lived experiences of refugees and sponsors.

4.1 Lethbridge's Resettlement Landscape

> [Lethbridge] is quite diverse in terms of who lives here, where people are from, religious groups. So, there's already a fair bit of diversity here. There's the other side of it too, where people are quite conservative and have pretty firm ideas about the world.
>
> -Jean H.

Positioned around 70 kilometres north of the Alberta-Montana Border, is the city of Lethbridge, a place divided in two by the Oldman River. However, it is not just this geographic divide that has impacts on resettlement in Lethbridge. Jean H. hints at the ideological makeup of Lethbridge, noting that on one hand there is religious and cultural diversity, but on the other the presence of what she calls "firm ideas about the world." Lethbridge is home to these views in part because of its history, in particular European immigration and the presence of racism and discrimination, as was discussed in chapter two. A theme that emerged in this research was the interplay between those who celebrate immigration, diversity, and change in the makeup of the community, and those who do not. Hynie et al. (2016) call these elements *community welcome* which they define as "positive community attitudes, and positive public discourse that is inclusive and supportive of refugees" including media discourse and general beliefs and attitudes in the community (p. 5).

In Lethbridge, the degree of community welcome varied, suggesting that sponsors and refugees faced both positive and negative attitudes toward resettlement. The following two excerpts demonstrate two examples of positive community welcome in Lethbridge:

> I remember [someone] telling me, one of her brothers had stopped at a garage sale and had picked some stuff out. And the house owner said, "Are you Syrian?" and he said, "Yeah." He goes, "No cost. Take it." And they were quite overwhelmed by this and [she] laughed and she said, "Yeah, you crazy Canadians, you love Syrians, you know, go figure." But I think they ran into a lot of that, like quite positive and affirming experiences.
>
> -Erin

> And we had a quite a nice experience when we arrived in the Superstore parking lot. We were just going to get the cart. And I was thinking, 'How am I going to explain to them about putting the dollar in the cart?' But you know, we got through all that, but we didn't actually, we didn't have to do it because there was a man who was just about to bring his cart back. And he said to them, "Would you like this cart?" But of course they didn't know what he said. And so I sort of stepped in and I said, "You know, these two lovely ladies have just arrived yesterday from Syria," and this man was so nice to them. He was just super welcoming and shaking their hands. And so it was kind of a nice experience for them and me…
>
> -Lee

In both of these examples, the sponsors shared how members of the community outside of the sponsorship group were receptive of refugees in Lethbridge. However, there were also a number of instances where community members expressed unwelcoming attitudes. A recent study in Ontario, found that in both urban and rural contexts, oppositional discourses toward Syrian refugees were based on the three themes: terrorism, Islam, and relative deservingness (Kyriakides et al., 2020). While they did not outline how each of these themes were used in public discourse, I will offer my own understanding of each. Relative deservingness is framed as concerns for the well-being of Canadians over others. This is prominent in arguments that suggest that refugees earn more money than retirees, or that we ought to be helping the homeless in Canada before we resettle refugees. Both terrorism and Islam are tied to concerns around safety and Canada's changing demographics, especially with recent framing of Muslims as security threats post 9/11. While the theme of terrorism did not explicitly come through in the present research, both

Islam and relative deservingness did[4]. An analysis of the role of Islamic faith in resettlement experiences will be discussed later in this chapter. The following excerpts from sponsors describe two instances where unwelcoming attitudes were expressed:

> But if you just talk to people about bringing refugees over here, there was a lot of naysayers and I find there still is… And I had one who was my best friend's husband and son-in-law were right against it because they figured that we should be helping the poor in Canada and never mind the rest of the world.
>
> -Lorraine

> The people that were in the house next door to them, they weren't in favour of it. They didn't want them. And that's that. They just didn't want them there. And they didn't like them.
>
> -Lee

In Lorraine's example, the "naysayers" that she speaks about use the theme of relative deservingness to express their disapproval of refugee resettlement, while the theme of Lee's is more ambiguous. Most sponsors shared an experience that showed some level of negative welcome. The mix of experiences indicates that resettlement in Lethbridge is disputed, offering examples of both welcoming and unwelcoming ideas. Like Jean H. mentioned, the cultural makeup of Lethbridge is diverse meaning the experiences of sponsors and refugees in this city are also diverse.

Like any location for resettlement, Lethbridge offers both opportunities and challenges. One of the most consistent drawbacks described by participants was the public transit system. Lethbridge's size, and geographic position straddling the Oldman river created challenges for transportation. Bus transit in Lethbridge is structured around four main hubs; The University of Lethbridge in the west, Lethbridge College in the

[4] But see for example, Levitz (2016) and MacLellan (2015) for discussions of concerns expressed by some Canadians about the safety and security risks of the Syrian resettlement project.

south, a bus terminal in the north, and another terminal downtown. The transportation system was described by participants in this study as confusing:

> I was struggling with taking the bus. Like every time I tried to get to my job, I got lost like five times or six times on my commute. I would take the bus, like going North instead of going South. Yeah. Like because it didn't make any sense you know?
>
> -Abed

For Abed, the bussing system made it difficult for him to navigate the city. This is especially challenging as refugees learn a new language. Others pointed out that it was rather inefficient:

> Like, if you don't drive, I don't recommend Lethbridge just because the city transportation are not the best. In Calgary it's way easier than here. I don't usually use buses, actually, because I drive. But when I go, like, with the newcomers I find it so difficult for them and for myself, because I... like, you go too late to any appointment or you need to go early, like, in my car I go like 15 or 10 minutes earlier. But when I use the bus, I have to leave an hour earlier in order to go to my appointment. It's so difficult, especially when you work.
>
> -Muna

Here, Muna reflected on the amount of extra time and planning needed to use Lethbridge's transit system. This is especially relevant when transferring between Lethbridge's south, west, and north side, as one must go through a bus terminal. Others noted that the bussing system limited their ability to travel outside the city:

> The buses in Lethbridge aren't great. And it was hard for them to get to work and to do what they wanted to do. And they also wanted to go to Calgary occasionally to get food that they could only get there and bring it back.
>
> -Ryan

> And, to be fair, in Lethbridge it's kind of nice to be able to drive, and they love to go to Waterton, I'll tell you that much. So it's pretty hard to go by bus there, so you need to drive.
>
> -Barb

These challenges encouraged refugees to purchase vehicles and get their drivers' licenses quickly upon arriving in Lethbridge. Sponsors were also aware that having personal

transportation was important for refugees and were generally encouraging of this endeavor. In fact, one group who had sponsored two families learned from their first experience about the difficulties with the public transit system and had a car donated to the second family before their arrival in Canada. Sponsors also surmised that this played a role in encouraging some refugees to drive before they had received a Canadian driver's license.

Another critique of the Lethbridge area was the lack of jobs in which refugees could make use of Arabic and the limited availability of Arabic speaking professionals such as specialist doctors and lawyers. Others noted the lack of entertainment for young people in Lethbridge:

> I started to feel like, Lethbridge is so boring and that it's just for old people, because there's not many things to do or places to go. And, as I see my friends in Calgary and Montreal and Toronto are like going out and having so much fun.
>
> -Joliana

> My first summer was like, was ridiculously boring… Lethbridge just looked like a huge, like a senior residence, basically. Like I felt like, yeah. But then I remember, like I was Googling what Canadians do in the summer. To like, just see, like, I was like, "What do these people do for fun?" Like, I can't, you know, you go downtown and everything is dead. There are no bars. Like, there is no live music, you know, it's not like a vibrant art scene.
>
> -Abed

However, both of these participants also noted that they discovered new interests including skiing, hiking, and travelling to Calgary for Arabic concerts with friends. Those that were involved with sponsorships between 1979 and 1980 discussed the limited cultural and religious supports at the time. Interestingly, this was not flagged as a concern by any of the refugees or sponsors who were involved in the time period since 2015. This is likely a result of the changing demographics, including rising immigration from non-European countries, and improved supports over the last forty years including the opening

of non-Christian places of worship and the growth of Lethbridge Family Services (LFS). LFS opened in 1910, but at the time was called the Lethbridge Nursing Mission (Lethbridge Family Services, n.d.). Their goal was to offer medical services to those who could not afford it, including a baby clinic. In 1956 their mission changed to focus on child and family welfare services. It was not until 2000 that the Immigrant Services branch was established. In 2007 there was significant growth to Immigrant Services including a school-based settlement support program, a life skills program, and a new satellite volunteer program in Taber. This history of LFS shows that there was significantly less support available in 1979 and 1980 compared to more recent years because of Immigrant Services.

The benefits of Lethbridge as a place for resettlement largely centred on the size of the community and the formation of resettlement networks. The ways that sponsors and refugees utilize social capital, or their ability to draw on their community for support, may be enhanced by the size of the settlement community. This will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. In a study of the resettlement of Syrian refugees in four rural Canadian communities ranging in population from 800 to 8,000 people, Haugen (2019) found that "despite the challenges, rural communities lean on their social connections and use community networks to find solutions" (p. 60). Though not a rural site, Lethbridge's social landscape enables these community networks to form in similar ways. As Agrawal and Sangapala (2020) suggest, due to its smaller size, "Lethbridge had better connections among the organizations and individuals involved or interested in the settlement sector" than larger cities like Edmonton (p. 16). There were two main types of networks that formed in Lethbridge during the resettlement of Syrian refugees. The first was a multidisciplinary healthcare clinic that was formed by Lethbridge Family Services

and the South Zone Chief Medical Officer. This collaborative health model allowed refugees to see multiple health specialists at a single appointment. This was a first step in assessment that allowed refugees to be referred for services and procedures at a later date. The following excerpts capture sponsors' impressions of this model which facilitated access to health care professionals within 48 hours of refugees arriving in Lethbridge:

> And they would arrive and they would do all of the assessments: dental assessments, mental health assessments, they'd get all their shots, all their blood work was done, you know. So, in an hour and a half, everything got done instead of having to go from appointment to appointment to appointment.
>
> -Erin

> And so, [they] when they were coming in 2017 had early access to a multi-disciplinary team, clinical group assessment.
>
> -Marie

> The City of Lethbridge is set up well to welcome refugees. Lethbridge Family Services – Immigration Services [LFS-IS] knew that there would be many refugees from Syria. They coordinated initial LFS-IS contact with medical, dental, mental health and school information in one event. Our group visited the first day this was held. My major takeaway was finding out how much our local immigration services does for all these people.
>
> -Barb

The benefit of this multidisciplinary approach to initial refugee screening and assessments was also documented by Agrawal and Sangapala (2020). They noted that "Lethbridge was exceptional in its medical service model which created a one-stop medical clinic" for Syrian refugees (Agrawal & Sangapala, 2020). Though this framework was useful, it is difficult for programs like this to be maintained during times when refugee arrivals are not at "crisis" levels as they were during this time.

The second type of network that was formed during the arrival of Syrian refugees was large, multi-organizational sponsorship groups such as the Lethbridge Resettlement Collaboration. Erin, the leader of this group shared the following description:

> And I said, like, this is too big for any one of our groups to do, but if we all work together, we could do this… So, we formed a group with the three Anglican churches, the committee from the university, and the surgeons, the "docs", we called them. And we became the Lethbridge Resettlement Collaboration.

Together, this group sponsored a large extended family. They also made connections with Lethbridge Family Services to provide settlement help to Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs). Specifically, when the donations of material goods that they received were beyond what the family they were sponsoring required, they set up a depot where GARs could come and choose household and clothing items at no cost. Erin spoke about the intricate network that enabled this to happen, noting the important role that Mike, another participant in this study, played in forming this depot:

> And Mike took his truck and he just started collecting furniture and clothing, dishes, towels and sheets, and you know, lamps. All the things that you need. And then the university gave us a quonset [a large cylindrical steel storage container]. And then eventually the surgeons talked to the building where they had their office and the building let us use storage in the basement. So we had storage downtown, not for furniture, but for all the household stuff and the furniture we left in the quonsets. So we were just collecting and collecting and collecting. It was kind of insane. So we realized, like we had way more than we needed. Even with four families, we had more than we needed. So we went to immigrant services and said, "Look, you're going to have all these GARs coming. Let us support them with stuff too," because the government gives them the basic stuff, but not a lot of this other stuff.

These types of networks allowed refugees and sponsors to quickly and easily receive the services and goods they needed. It also allowed the passion that went into sponsoring refugees to transfer to refugees who were not privately sponsored. Many sponsors attributed the ability of these networks to form to the size of Lethbridge.

> I mean, one of the advantages of Lethbridge, the size of Lethbridge is that you really can do this kind of community thing. And the city's both big enough and small enough that that happens and works. Which I think, there was so much that just happened that was great, I felt, in terms of really mobilizing community resources and creating connections and the rest.
>
> -Erin

Linda, a sponsor who was involved in a rural town outside of Lethbridge noted some of the differences between resettlement in small towns compared to cities.

> I think the rural community, because they all know each other, can be more supportive than the bigger cities in providing support. That being said, communities like Edmonton and Lethbridge have multicultural centres that can also give some professional help in well translation for one thing, but also just different cultural supports that may not happen in small communities like Westlock for instance, or Stirling.

From the experiences shared by sponsors who were involved in more recent sponsorships, it seems as though Lethbridge's size allowed for a positive balance between having those networks of support that are typical of smaller communities, yet still offering professional supports and services like language courses and health care.

Lethbridge's size and makeup have shaped the way refugee sponsorship has been enacted. The level of community welcome in Lethbridge is in flux, with examples available from both ends of the spectrum. This means that refugees and sponsors have had both welcoming and unwelcoming experiences in Lethbridge. This is not surprising considering Lethbridge's historical and contemporary context as a place of both diversity and conservativism. The most significant drawback of resettlement in Lethbridge was the transit system, which was described as confusing, inefficient, and limiting. Other drawbacks included the limited number of Arabic-language resources including jobs and services, and the lack of entertainment opportunities in the community. Benefits of resettlement in Lethbridge focused largely on the size and ability for networks to form including a multidisciplinary healthcare clinic and large multi-organizational sponsorship groups. These findings suggest that Lethbridge is a site where a balance can be met between facilitating networks and offering professional services and supports. A policy implication of this theme is that smaller cities, especially those equipped with settlement

supports and services, should continue to be utilized for both the resettlement of refugees and immigrants. However, there is also a need for capacity building in these communities to ensure that the needs of newly arrived refugees are met, such as the availability of language courses, access to appropriate healthcare, and supports for finding housing and employment. While community supports are important elements of the resettlement landscape, the needs of resettled refugees vary depending on their pre-arrival contexts and experiences, as I discuss in the next section.

4.2 Refugee and Sponsor Characteristics

4.2.1 Refugee Characteristics

> There's a tendency to paint all refugees in one way or the other, you know? Not realize that circumstances vary, and different people require different kinds of help and support.
>
> -Francis

As Francis suggests, there is tremendous diversity in the personal backgrounds and experiences of refugees. This was also true for the refugees and sponsors who were represented in this study. Pre-arrival identities and skills were drawn on for aspects of integration including language learning and job finding. For example, a woman who was an English Teacher in Syria had more success in language courses and finding a job in her field than others. Barb outlined how some of these personal differences in skills impacted the jobs that were available to refugees in the community:

> For example, you're not probably going to be a mason or work with marble in Lethbridge. There's not high demand for it. We met one guy that, he showed us pictures on his phone of beautiful masonry. You know, not happening here. Two houses in Paradise Canyon[5], if you're lucky. So yeah, they've all had to kind of reinvent themselves. [One of the brothers] was an engineer on a train or something, but English would be a barrier to that, like to transfer, to say CP or CN Rail as a conductor or whatever. So, another fellow had some welding. And he

[5] Paradise Canyon is a wealthier neighbourhood at the southern end of West Lethbridge.

> was able to get a job out at Nobleford kind of doing welding, and it's worked fairly well.

Another refugee was able to use previously learned skills as a forklift driver in Vietnam at an industrial job in Lethbridge. This demonstrated how personal backgrounds including job skills impact resettlement outcomes and experiences. However, there were also frustrations when the types of positions refugees had access to in Canada felt limited:

> Where I think it was hard, I think it's just hard to go from owning your own businesses, having nice big houses, to being in a situation where you're in small rental properties, you're told you're not allowed to put in a big garden in the yard 'cause it's not your yard. And you know, all of those kinds of things, I think that was just a challenge. You know, working minimum wage jobs when you're used to running your own business.
>
> -Erin

This is one example of how personal background influenced experiences of sponsorship for refugees in the Lethbridge area. Sponsors were also very aware of this diversity and acknowledged that different people need different kinds of support:

> [Building refuge] is ongoing; it's flexible and adjusts to the needs of people as time goes by because people come with a set of needs, and those needs can change over time as they settle, or don't settle.
>
> -Jean H.

> When he came, he already had a cell phone, it turns out. And he already had a computer. So the money that we had allocated for the technological things, we didn't need anymore…. you know how when you have a guideline, you follow every single guideline and then it turns out, okay, it doesn't fit everybody.
>
> -Wynona

Both Wynona and Jean H. shared how the needs of the refugees they sponsored were both different as time went on, and different because of the personal backgrounds they possessed. Sponsors often alluded to this by underscoring that not all refugees are the same. Sharon, for example, shared that the experiences were much different for the two families they had sponsored:

> All families are not created equal, whether you're Canadian or Syrian. I mean, they had older children, they had a different lifestyle… And they were older, so the young people went to Calgary a lot because that's where all the Syrians and Arabic people are, and they had more of a social life away. So the two families are very different, and we respect that.

This sits in contrast to notions of "the refugee experience" that homogenize refugee experiences of resettlement. The refugee experience was specifically theorized by Stein in the early 1980s as following a set of stages; "perceptions of a threat; decision to flee, the period of extreme danger and flight; reaching safety; camp behavior; repatriation, settlement or resettlement; the early and late stages of resettlement; adjustment and acculturation; and residual states and changes in behaviour caused by the refugee experience" (1981, p. 320). However, this understanding of refugees' lived experiences has been criticized by scholars like Malkki (1995) and Eastmond (2007). The issue with a universal refugee experience is that it positions refugees as "an undifferentiated, essentialized and universal category quite irrespective of the different historical and political conditions of displacement and of the individual differences between people who become refugees" (Eastmond, 2007, p. 253). These notions of a singular experience are entangled with assimilationist narratives and projections of linear progress toward self-sustainability and economic contribution. However, sponsors in this study were attuned to the issues with homogenizing refugee experiences and expressed an awareness that all refugees have different backgrounds and characteristics. They also were able to see how those characteristics changed the settlement and integration experiences, including job finding, of the refugees they sponsored.

Aside from their personal backgrounds and skills, another characteristic that emerged as impacting settlement experiences in Lethbridge was faith. This was most specifically addressed by Syrian refugees and sponsors who were involved with Syrian

refugees. Syria has large Christian and Muslim populations, and people identifying with both of these faiths were sponsored to Lethbridge. As I described in chapter two, the religious makeup of Lethbridge is largely Christian. This same makeup was true for the participants in this study. All of the faith-based groups associated with sponsorship who were involved in this study were of Christian denomination. Canada's 2011 National Household Survey found that 610 of the 81,390 people living in Lethbridge, Alberta, at that time identified as Muslim (Statistics Canada, 2011a). More recently, the Lethbridge Muslim Association has estimated that Lethbridge now has over 1000 Muslims (Lethbridge Muslim Association, 2020). The first mosque in Lethbridge was established in 1992. Before this time, the community was small and would pray in rented halls or the basement of one of the founding members of the Lethbridge Muslim Association. Because Muslim community members are such a minority, a large focus of community discourse around the arrival of Syrian refugees focused on the Muslim and Christian backgrounds of refugees. Joliana, a Syrian-Canadian participant, reflected on the way that faith came about in her experience in Lethbridge:

> I think they kind of stereotype, this kind of thing happens for the people who wear something on their head, you know what I mean? I don't like it, the way they treat them because it's like, it's their tradition, you know? But, when they asked me like, "Where are you from?" Because of my language, I say, "I'm from Syria." So they start to ask about my religion, about what it is like back there. So, it's still hard, because they have this bad idea about what Syria is about. Like, they think all the people there are Muslims or like, we all wear something on our heads or like, we have to. Or that we used to live in like, not houses. Every time they ask me like, "Oh, you are from Syria? So you're like this religion! Why are you not wearing something on your head?" No, it's not like this. Syria has so many religions there, you know, and it has so many good people. So when I hear like, "Oh, look at her, she's wearing something on her head!" Like, why are you talking about this? You know?

Here Joliana captured how community members in Lethbridge were often preoccupied by notions of faith when talking with or about Syrian refugees. Similarly, many sponsors

who were involved between 2015 and 2020 commented on the different experiences of Christian and Muslim refugees. Mike and Barb shared a story of overt discrimination that took place in the community because of perceptions of faith:

> *Mike:* I know one thing that the women had a problem with when they were looking for work in particular was the fact that they wear a hijab and their long coats and stuff. And, well, one woman we know, an employer just told her right straight out that if she was going to dress like that, he wouldn't employ her. And, I mean...
> *Barb:* She had the job offer.

Mike and Barb went on to share that when they suggested this could be taken to a higher level, a human rights tribunal for example, the women did not want to cause any trouble and simply did not take the job. Another sponsor participant shared a story from a different town in Southern Alberta where a Muslim woman she was having dinner with was forced to leave the main dining hall of the Legion because of their ban on head coverings. The rule which was originally developed to restrict hat wearing is also utilized to discriminate against those who wear religious head coverings. These instances of overt Islamophobia are significant and have serious implications for resettled refugees.

In contrast, sponsors who had worked with Christian refugees often pointed out that their positive experiences may have been the result of *not* being Muslim. A number of sponsors suggested that the experiences of Muslim and Christian Syrian refugees in Lethbridge were different. For example, Lee, Ryan, and Lorraine shared these thoughts on how they anticipate faith played a role in the resettlement of the refugees they sponsored:

> To my knowledge nobody was horrid to them. Of course, they, as they were Christians, they did not wear any kind of different garb, you know? So they didn't look immediately different.
>
> -Lee

> [I] never heard of any of them saying anything about any racist treatment, anything like that in Lethbridge. Now again, these are Orthodox Christian families. I think maybe Muslim families' experiences might be different.
>
> -Ryan

> [Without a hijab] she's just another girl who plays volleyball and that at school. Whereas if she has to wear a hijab, the attitude changes.
>
> -Lorraine

These three excerpts from Lethbridge area locals suggest that they had an awareness that negative attitudes toward Muslims existed in the community. When thinking about the lack of discrimination toward certain refugees, they all implied that it may have been because they did not have the outward appearance of being Muslim. This sentiment by sponsors is not unfounded. A 2013 Angus Reid public opinion poll found that 54 percent of Canadians outside of Quebec held unfavourable views of Islam (Geddes, 2013). These statements about the differential treatment of Muslim and Christian refugees draw on understandings of Muslim identity that position Muslims as dangerous others, agents of terrorisms, and threats to White Canada. Since 9/11, contemporary security measures have heightened the visibility of Muslims by calling attention to their presence and marking them as an "inherent threat" (Perry, 2015, p. 8). Anti-Muslim sentiments are also grounded in space and place. Perry and Scrivens (2018) argue that Canada offers "fertile ground" for extremism and degradation of the other because of Canada's legacies of persecutions of minorities including First Nations peoples and immigrants (p. 173). Right wing extremist groups are clustered in Quebec, Western Ontario, Alberta, and BC's lower mainland (Perry & Scrivens, 2018). Interestingly, a study that took place around the time of Syrian refugee arrivals in Lethbridge came to the conclusion that despite a "deeply embedded history of racism" that suggests that Lethbridge would be "ripe for the picking at the hands of RWE [right-wing extremists]" this was not the case (Scrivens & Perry,

2017, p. 539). Attempts by RWE groups to recruit participants were met with a wall of resistance from a network of actors including law enforcement, government, and community activists. They suggest that Lethbridge was "a strong example of the impact that multi-agency coalitions can have on resisting the encroachment of RWE" (Scrivens & Perry, 2017, p. 553). While the ability for coalitions and networks to form in Lethbridge once again presents itself as a benefit of the community, worries about anti-Muslim sentiment are still very real concerns and have impacts on refugees' feelings of safety and community, opportunities for jobs, and experiences in the community more broadly. For instance, Erin recounted having conversations with a refugee family that was concerned about xenophobic violence:

> And then, you know, there's a shooting at a mosque in Quebec, and there's a shooting at a mosque in Christchurch. And there's, you know, the yellow vests demonstrate at city hall and the neo-Nazis come out and goose step in the streets, literally goose step in the streets giving the Nazi salute yelling, "Fuck refugees." And you realize, I mean, and they were alarmed. Like I, you know, I'm over with my family and they're asking me like, "Is it true? Are people saying this? Are people doing this?"

Though these shootings did not happen in Lethbridge, the feelings toward Muslims reverberated across Canada. Refugees' alarm at these events have impacts on both their subjective feelings and lived experience of safety, security, and belonging. While this finding has been flagged as centrally about refugee characteristics, it also shows the interconnectedness and simultaneity of scale. A refugee's faith is very much an individual factor, however it plays out in a much larger field which includes community factors, such as Lethbridge's religious makeup and social history, broader discourses, such as the misrepresentation of Muslim identity, and global geopolitical events, like 9/11. Though none of the refugee participants in this research shared examples or fears of racism, discrimination, or Islamophobia, it is important to reiterate that sponsors made up the

largest section of participants and they may not have been privy to these feelings and lived experiences. However, sponsors bring their own unique contexts and backgrounds to the sponsorship, an area that will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.2 Sponsor Characteristics

> And that is very strongly a memory of my childhood, especially my mom was very passionate about making space for people who didn't have space anywhere else.
>
> - Grace

Grace's memory from her childhood highlights just one example of how sponsors drew on their backgrounds to guide them in their sponsorship. Like their refugee counterparts, sponsors also brought to the sponsorship experience a wide variety of previous experiences and skills. Some of the most common professional backgrounds of participants in this study included healthcare, pastoral work, and education. Others had experience in policing, banking, and oil and gas. The PSR Program is structured so that groups of people are sponsoring single refugees or families. In practice, this meant that groups divided up their responsibilities among participants. For example, some groups made sub-committees for housing, healthcare, education, and transportation and assigned certain group members to work in these areas. It was common for sponsors with work experience in certain fields to volunteer to help in those areas. For example, Brian, a retired nurse remarked that, "I took on the health component because of my background" and Jean who had worked in banking shared that, "Often I would go to the local branch and basically offer a course in how to use online banking, because I use it all the time. So I figured it's a good opportunity to use my knowledge and my skills anyways to that effect. So that's how I took that approach in terms of getting involved."

Others such as dentists were viewed as valuable members of sponsorship groups who were able to offer reduced rates or pro bono procedures. Acknowledging the broader economic and political circumstances at this time sheds light on the significance of sponsors having a background in dentistry. The need for dental care was the result of one of the gaps in the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) which only covers "urgent dental care" (Government of Canada, 2017). The IFHP provides basic coverage until refugees qualify for provincial or territorial health insurance and supplemental and prescription drug coverage until the end of the private sponsorship, usually one year. Basic coverage includes hospital services, services from medical professionals such as doctors and nurses, and laboratory, diagnostic, and ambulance services. Prescription drug coverage follows provincial/territorial drug plan formularies. Supplemental care, under which dental coverage falls, covers limited vision and urgent dental care, home and long-term care, allied health services, assistive devices, and medical supplies and equipment. Therefore, those who had access to sponsors with a dental background received enhanced dental services that would not have been available to others. Ryan, for example, explained how this worked for the refugee families they sponsored.

> Well this is another area where we were kind of really fortunate and atypical. We have one of the members of our committee from Coaldale United Church was a dentist and she just basically did pro bono work for our families. So it was free. I mean it's not fair. It isn't.

It was not only members of sponsorship groups with dental backgrounds who were able to get this type of support for refugees, sponsors were also able to draw on support from their church communities for similar resources. Marie explained how this played out with one of the refugees they sponsored:

> We knew coming in that the dental issues were going to be a big challenge and the government was providing almost no support. Like you could have teeth removed,

> but that you couldn't get fillings done. You couldn't treat anything more serious and we didn't feel that was ethically fair. It was just an unjust approach because if you're going to, anyone who has multiple teeth pulled sticks out in our society really badly… When the dad developed pain, tooth pain, we decided we were going to take him to a dentist and get that assessed… and the estimates were that he needed $2,000 worth of work on his teeth, several root canals. And he being [an educated person in his home country] was adamant that he was not going to have his teeth pulled so he simply refused the dental plan. The dental plan that was given to him from the government, which isn't, you know, only emergency dental, pull your teeth to reduce the pain and that's it. So when that was explained to him he just said, "No." So, he patiently went through this process of then going to a third dentist and the third dentist was a member of [our church] and their dental group agreed to cover his costs and take him on.

Later in this chapter, I share a quote from Marie where she talks about "breaking the rules" in private sponsorship. Here she is referencing the policy her SAH had which did not allow constituent groups to pay for dental care beyond what the IFHP covered. Marie's group fought against this policy because they believed it was unjust. Other groups had similar experiences where dentists who were part of their church communities or sponsorship groups were able to offer services to the refugees who often needed extensive dental care. Having sponsors with this kind of expertise had an influence on the sponsorship experiences of the refugees they sponsored by enabling them to receive more advanced services and to address oral health concerns that had gone untreated while they were displaced.

Aside from their professional backgrounds, sponsors also shared examples from their past that had influenced both their desire to be involved in sponsorship and the ways in which they enacted sponsorship. Some drew on experiences as children and young adults that shaped their views of newcomers. Grace for example, recalled growing up in an environment where she was very aware of forced migration:

> We had a relationship to numerous political refugees from Zimbabwe. So like just the presence of asylum seekers and specifically I remember being very, like, being

> very aware of like political unrest and the need to like immigrate because of that, was present and like talked about very much so in the Mennonite community.

Similarly, Barb drew on family influences to talk about her background:

> One of my influences was my mother who would never allow any derogatory remarks about any other race. She'd had a Hungarian stepmother whom she cared deeply about and had heard disparaging language about this woman. All these experiences together influenced me to see people as people, regardless of background.

It is possible that having earlier experiences with refugee movements encouraged them to sponsor and played a role in the interactions that they had with the refugees that they sponsored. For example, Grace made a conscious effort to think about and share how the work she was doing with sponsorship in Canada was connected to global displacement more broadly. Barb described how her background encouraged her to work with immigrants and refugees in a wide variety of ways including language tutoring, toastmasters, and making friends with newly arrived Canadians.

The background of sponsors also came through in the ways that they described their motivation for getting involved with the PSR Program. Though the reasons people become sponsors are multi-faceted, there were a number of similarities among sponsors who participated in this study. The first was that sponsors had a desire to make connections and friendships in the community:

> I had time but the other motivator was the friendships both with the immigrants and the volunteers.
>
> -Barb

Barb, along with others, noted that participating in sponsorship was a way to make personal connections. In some groups, working in collaboration as a sponsorship team facilitated and strengthened relationships between sponsors. Sponsors talked about developing lifelong friendships both with the refugees, and with their fellow sponsors.

This friendship was likely encouraged because they were a like-minded group of individuals who shared a common goal. Another common motivator for sponsors in this study was a personal experience of living, volunteering, or working abroad:

> I had been with CUSO [Canadian University Services Overseas] and worked in Zambia and then travelled through Southeast Asia, and I'd been to Laos. So that was kind of a connection, I guess to say, "Yes, I would like to do this."
>
> -Linda

Linda had been to Laos, the country from which the refugees her group sponsored came. This personal connection to Southeast Asia helped encourage her to become involved. Linda's experience was not uncommon among other participants. Bev, for example, had lived and volunteered in India, Kenya, and Ethiopia prior to becoming a sponsor. She also described how a number of the other sponsors in her group had these types of experiences in other countries. April shared that her experiences living in Puerto Rico had encouraged her to become involved. Additionally, Francis and Cybele, a couple who helped a Vietnamese refugee family resettle had immigrated to Canada from Kenya. These examples suggest that experiences of living, volunteering, or working in other countries were common among sponsor participants and may have been a motivating factor. A third common motivation for sponsors was a desire to help, or give back to the community:

> I knew I just needed to be at least a little bit part of the solution.
>
> -Nicole

Nicole recognized that forced displacement was a big issue but shared that participating in sponsorship felt like a tangible way for her to help. All of the sponsors who participated in this study shared similar sentiments, which suggests that their intention in participating was to offer support and make a positive contribution to society. One of the largest reasons that sponsors were aware of this need for help was the media and news about refugees:

> When the picture [of Alan Kurdi] went viral, all kinds of people wanted to support our project.
>
> -Barb

The story of Alan Kurdi and media coverage of the Vietnam war were two of the main media elements that sponsors talked about. A more thorough examination of the role of media, specifically how it creates challenges for sustainability, will be discussed in the following chapter. Lastly, sponsors shared that they were motivated by faith:

> Let's do this. I think God is calling us to do this.
>
> -Erin

This excerpt is part of a story that Erin shared where a congregant at her church implored the rest of the church community to become involved in sponsorship. For Erin, an Anglican priest, there was certainly an element of faith that motivated her, as well as members of her church, to become involved. Others like Ryan, the pastor of Lethbridge Mennonite Church, also shared this motivation. When talking about how faith motivated sponsors, both Erin and Ryan drew on Christian teachings like welcoming the stranger and loving one's neighbour as themselves. In most cases, several of the above reasons for becoming involved were noted. In a study of over 500 sponsors of Syrian refugees, Macklin et al. (2018) found similar motivations including the death of Alan Kurdi and media attention, personal and family histories of migration, and ethical motivations including faith and community draws. Both faith-based motivations and those related to media raise concerns about the sustainability of the PSR Program. Declining membership to Christian churches who have played a significant role in Canadian sponsorship may lead to a decline in interest in the program. The use of media in gaining public support for refugees is also a concern because though displacement is ongoing, if support for

sponsorships is tied to times of perceived crisis, then it may not be sustained. These themes will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

The characteristics of sponsors and refugees have impacts on the ways that they experience private sponsorship. Refugees' skills and professional backgrounds play a significant role in their ability to find meaningful work in Canada, an important part of their integration and resettlement. Sponsors were well aware that the refugees they sponsored were diverse and would have different goals and needs. This was expressed in stories told by sponsors about how no two refugees are the same. Aside from these differences in background, Syrian refugees' faith backgrounds, as either Christian or Muslim, played a significant role in their resettlement experiences, including experiences of overt discrimination in employment opportunities and public spaces. For sponsors, professional backgrounds such as dentistry were drawn on to provide special services to refugees. Sponsors also drew on their personal backgrounds and were motivated by a number of factors including their desire for friendship, experiences abroad, community motivations, faith, and media. To this point, this chapter has aimed to tease apart community, sponsor, and refugee characteristics to identify their role in shaping sponsorship experiences. However, all three of these aspects exist within a broader contextual landscape. In the section that follows, I focus on the relationships and networks formed between sponsors, refugees, and communities and how these come together to shape the sponsorship experience.

4.3 Sponsor Attempts to Reshape Community Discourses

As described earlier, Lethbridge was the site of both welcoming and unwelcoming discourses about refugee resettlement. However, one of the benefits of private sponsorship is the potential for it to reshape public perceptions of refugees. Lenard

(2016), Lim (2019), and Kyriakides et al. (2020) have suggested that an opportunity exists within the relationship between sponsors and their larger community to challenge negative discourses. One way that this occurs is when sponsors reach out to the community for monetary and material support, increasing the number of people invested in resettlement. In fact, two million Canadians have reported that they were personally involved with the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019a). Lenard (2016) has suggested that the number of Canadians involved in what became a national project of Syrian refugee resettlement played a role in limiting the growth of anti-refugee sentiment during that period. Kyriakides et al. (2020) argue that rural settings offer an increased opportunity to transform negative perceptions of refugees because those who oppose refugees are "more visible," unlike an urban context which they characterize as having "anonymity" (p. 204). In Lethbridge, there was a significant network of community members and groups who were involved which may have played a role in the general welcoming atmosphere of Lethbridge during that time. While Lethbridge is not urban in the same capacity as Toronto, one of the sites of their study, it is also not rural. There is a common saying in Southern Alberta that Lethbridge is more like a large Magrath than a small Calgary. Magrath is a town south of Lethbridge with a population of just over two thousand, while Calgary is the nearest big city with a population of over 1.2 million (Statistics Canada, 2016). This phrase attempts to capture Lethbridge's small-town ethos and the feeling that everyone knows everyone else in the community. This means that Lethbridge offers both a sense of anonymity and some of the visibility that emboldens sponsors to "defuse voices of opposition" (Kyriakides et al., 2020, p. 205).

Interestingly, several of the sponsors I interviewed took it upon themselves to help shift community perceptions of refugees. They employed three main strategies to do this including sharing positive stories that challenged negative perceptions of refugees, dissociating "their" refugees from broader discourses about migration, and appealing to shared beliefs including notions of "Canadian" or "Christian" values. However, there were a number of unintended consequences that arose from these types of discourse challenges including shaping some refugees into model refugees and discrediting others. This first excerpt offers an example of how one sponsor chose to share positive stories with community members to challenge negative discourses about refugees:

> *Jean H:* Well, it's certainly something you do hear in the media and the community. Yeah, I guess I try to help people understand when I can, that you can't lump everybody together in the same group. So every family has individual characteristics and individual needs and they, you know, the ideas that refugees are just coming to live off the land, and we're all supporting them and that, those kinds of ideas are just so wrong. And I've seen first hand how hard our families work and how they are part of the community. And they do contribute in many, many ways. So I think people just need some concrete evidence of that so that they can change their thinking a little bit. At least, one would hope that they would, but just sharing those experiences with people to give the other side of the story maybe it helps? I don't know.
> *Interviewer:* Yeah. Do you find yourself sharing those kinds of stories and experiences with people, with people in the community or students?
> *Jean H:* A lot, yes, as much as I can actually.

Here Jean draws on notions that concrete evidence, such as the examples of her refugee family, may be able to disentangle the oppositional discourses in the community. She hopes that giving "the other side of the story" may help to build a deeper understanding of the experiences faced by refugees. Francis utilized a similar tone when describing how the refugee family he worked with was an example of how stereotypes about refugees in Canada are wrong:

> So, you know, I think one point that we would like to emphasize is that many people talk about refugees being a drain on the country and so on. That the

> refugees get an unfair, beneficial treatment when they arrived compared with pensioners and so on. Well, this family had very few sources when they came and yet they settled down really well. And every single member of the family is productive. And the taxes that they pay now are helping to pay pensions of people, you know? So there's no cause for people to try and say that refugees are a drain on the national purse or anything like that. I think if you take this family, for example, the last thing that they wanted to do was to depend upon the government. As soon as they were able to, they were completely independent of the government…

Francis begins by saying that this is a point he would like to emphasize. This implies that he had made a conscious choice to share his experiences of supporting this refugee family with others in the community in order to reshape perceptions of refugees. In doing this, both Jean H. and Francis utilize the positive stories to oppose negative discourses. An unintended consequence of this strategy is that the judgements on what a successful refugee looks like are made by the receiving community. This can disempower refugee notions of success and limit refugee agency. For example, if a refugee is pressured to find work as soon as they arrive in Canada, because being financially self-sustainable is perceived as a good quality of a refugee, this may impact their personal decisions including whether or not to participate in language or skills training.

In the second strategy, sponsors attempted to improve perceptions of refugees by dissociating "their" refugees from larger discourses about migration. Here, for example, a sponsor explains what makes their refugee different from the other forced migrants:

> And I think media hasn't helped that because they see the whole picture in Canada. They see the people coming across the border illegally. They see things happening in the East, so naturally they're going to lump all refugees together. And they don't see. And people generally don't know. They think everybody coming from Syria is Muslim, number one. So we explained that well our families aren't, but, you know...
>
> -Sharon

The situation in Eastern Canada that the sponsor is referencing is the arrival of asylum seekers who cross into Canada at places like Roxham Road, an unofficial border crossing

near Hemmingford, Quebec, that received a great deal of attention between 2017 and 2019. Between February 2017 and December 2020, over 58,000 people crossed the border "irregularly" (IRB, 2020). Many of the asylum seekers at this time were of Haitian descent and feared deportation when Donald Trump threatened to withdraw the temporary protected status that was granted to Haitians following the 2010 earthquake (See for example Smith, 2017). At this time, these border crossings became a source of heightened political and public attention, focusing largely on the manner of people's arrival that was read as "illegal". The sponsor in this example dissociates the refugees they were sponsoring from larger discourses that associated "refugees" with "illegality" and "irregular arrival" in the country by pointing out the differences. These first two strategies focus on situating refugees, and in the case of the second, "their" refugees, as worthy of help. The problem with these strategies is they create a tiered system of deservingness. At the top are refugees who arrive through resettlement programs (as opposed to at the border), are seen as productive members of the state (monetarily), and who are fitting (assimilating) into Canadian culture. By positioning these characteristics and outcomes as making refugees deserving of welcome and help, those who do not fit become undeserving of protection or support. It is important to consider how lifting up one group may inadvertently lower the status and opportunities of another. This also reinforces already existing discourses like the good-bad refugee binary that attributes deservingness to resettled refugees over asylum seekers. There is a common trope in Canada that asylum seekers who cross irregularly into Canada ought to wait their turn, as if to suggest that there is some sort of line, and that all those who "deserve" resettlement will one day have their turn to arrive in Canada. Yet, the 80 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide suggest that it is less about waiting in line, and more about having a

stroke of luck to be one of the 63,726 refugees in 2019 to be resettled to a third country (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2020). Drawing on these types of discourses is problematic because it both encourages refugees in Canada to pursue certain characteristics and outcomes, and because of the way that it reifies negative discourses.

In the third strategy, sponsors appealed to shared belief systems. One of these was perceived Canadian national identity and specifically the notion that "if I belong here, he belongs here." This saying acknowledges Canadian multiculturalism as a pillar of Canadian identity, and also offers an understanding that perhaps none of us really deserve to be here "on stolen land". In appealing to this notion of nationalism, Nicole recounted attempts to assuage negative discourses about refugees while working at a library in a community near Lethbridge:

> And it makes me sometimes also a little angry, especially when I have to mind my Ps and Qs, I guess, when there are people who tell me that they don't deserve to come here and that they're going to be bad for here. That living here is going to be a bad. That refugees coming here is going to be bad for Canada. And it's like, how many of these refugees do you know? Like the ones that I know are these outstanding people. And what did you do to earn it? You were born here. Born here on stolen land. What did you do? And it's just like, do you know what he did to get here? Like he's worked his butt off to get here. And there's so many who are trying to get here or to another country like here, and they don't get that opportunity. And for people just, yeah, I don't know. I get angry when they're treated like they're unworthy or that it's, that they don't belong here. Because if I belong here, he belongs here.

Another way that sponsors appeal to shared belief systems is through shared notions of Christian faith and identity. In the two excerpts that follow, two sponsors who were also church leaders shared the way that they were thinking about refugee discourses during this time in relation to their faith:

> I went to a demonstration and I had a poster that I was holding that somebody had created but it was just, "Jesus was a refugee" and it shows Mary and Joseph fleeing with the infant Jesus to Egypt to save his life. And you know, when I hear

> Christians criticize refugee stuff I'm like you're kind of missing the whole point, like you're missing fundamental parts of your own story.
>
> -Erin

> Essentially I was just writing about how Christians were talking about this issue online. It was a critique of things that I thought as a Christian you weren't allowed to say online about people, about people's views about refugees. And it was essentially a call to say, look if we claim to be Christians and we claim to believe that Jesus told us to love our neighbours and even our enemies and if we claim that part of what that means is to try and walk in someone else's shoes and to, I made a whole list of you know, arguments that probably wouldn't matter to anybody outside the church, but I think that the title was what got people. I called the blog post "I'm Sorry Christian, You Don't Get to Make That Move". And the move I was talking about was a rhetorical move. You're not allowed to be a fearmonger. You're not allowed to be a person that just spreads around indiscriminate hysteria and fear and sometimes even hatred because of self protection or whatever you think you're doing. I said, "That's not a move a Christian can make."
>
> -Ryan

Erin and Ryan both express a desire to encourage shifts in discourse in their faith communities by drawing on biblical teachings. In 2015 Ryan wrote a blog post called *I'm Sorry Christian, You Don't Get to Make That Move*. This was a response to the interactions he was having with fellow Christians who were suggesting that Syrian refugees were a security risk and should not be allowed into Canada. This is an example of the framing of Syrian refugees as terrorists that Kyriakides et al. (2020) proposed and was discussed earlier. Though it was not expressed in the interviews I conducted, this rhetoric was clearly circulating at this time. In response, Ryan made a number of arguments, based on Christian teachings, about why we should be welcoming to Syrian refugees. For example, he argued that "as Christians, we are convinced that ultimately evil is not overcome by greater force or mightier weapons or higher walls or more entrenched divisions between 'good people' and 'bad people,' but by costly, self-sacrificial love. The kind of love that God displayed for his friends and his enemies on a Roman cross" (Ryan, 2015, para. 19). After writing this post, Ryan received significant

attention, having over half a million hits. This shows that conversations about refugees among Christians were lively in late 2015, just as the Syrian refugee crisis was emerging in the media. The challenge with this strategy is not in positioning some refugees as deserving, and others as not deserving; instead, it may isolate responses to problematic discussions about refugees to certain groups. This is especially concerning in the case of Christian groups who already play a significant role in Canadian refugee resettlement. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the reliance on Christian groups for sustaining private sponsorship is a significant challenge. Further, relying on Christian beliefs to sustain positive discourses about refugees may also be limited by Canada's changing religious demographics and declining membership to Christian churches. The risk of relying on shared notions of Canadian identity is that the fragility and ambiguity of Canadian national identity may not be powerful enough. Canada's national identity is difficult to pinpoint. While Nicole views Canadian multiculturalism as a pillar of Canada that is strengthened by welcoming immigrants and refugees, others would suggest that protecting Canada's identity means limiting newcomers to sustain European settler culture. This ambiguity of Canadian national identity is also exposed by the stark contrast between strict border policies and messages of welcome; for example, on January 28, 2017 when Justin Trudeau tweeted, "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #welcometocanada" (Ljunggren & Paperny, 2017). While at times Canada presents a national identity of openness, this is coupled with strict migration policies that limit the arrival of refugees, including the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA). For this reason, relying on a shared notion of a "welcoming" Canadian identity is unreliable and unlikely

to resonate broadly among Canadians in a way that would make a significant change to negative discourses about refugees.

One of the ways that sponsors and communities are connected is in the ways that sponsors interact with community members with a goal of reshaping refugee discourse. Because of Lethbridge's size, those who share negative opinions about refugees sit within the realm of being both anonymous and visible. It is this visibility that Kyriakides et al. (2020) argue emboldens sponsors to combat these negative discourses. "Naysayers" who are friends and neighbours may make ideal subjects for shifting or re-negotiating notions of refugeeness. To do this, sponsors in this study utilized three strategies; sharing positive stories about refugee resettlement, dissociating the refugees they sponsored from larger narratives about migration, and appealing to elements of shared identity. Though there is an opportunity for this type of discourse disruption to take place, each of these strategies takes on certain risks. Future research in this area would help to shed light on how these and other strategies can re-shape contentious understandings of refugee resettlement. However, it is not just in their relationships with community members that sponsors have to contend with these challenges. Sponsors and refugees must also contend with paternalism, power dynamics, and orientalism in their relationships with each other.

4.4 Family as a Metaphor and Structure for Sponsorship

> But there's something about the connections of entering the social lives of other people that are different in private sponsorship, breaking the rules…
>
> -Marie

As Marie suggests, what makes private sponsorships different from government resettlements are the connections and relationships that are inherent in the program. The PSR Program is both enabled and constrained by bordering at different scales. Canada's geographic location, surrounded by cold oceans and a political border with the United

States, coupled with strict migration policies, has enabled Canada to selectively choose who gets to arrive. The nature of this stringent migration policy contrasts the permeability that exists in the relationships between sponsors and sponsored newcomers. Some sponsors speak of the refugees they sponsor through familial terms, considering themselves grandparents, or even as a surrogate family. Yet, this relationship is negotiated in everyday interactions between sponsors and refugees as they contend with paternalism, power dynamics, and orientalism. By providing guidance and support for newly arrived refugees, sponsors are positioned as knowledge keepers, charged with the duty to integrate "their" refugees and make them economically self-sufficient. When sponsors align their role with that of a parent, a savior, or the leader of the resettlement, it is problematic because it limits the agency of refugees to make decisions about their lives. At larger scales, notions of family are operationalized when deciding who is deserving of limited resettlement spaces. Families are often ascribed with a level of deservingness that others, especially single men, are not. This is enacted by both governments and sponsors who choose who gets sponsored.

Macklin, Barber, et al. (2020) describe how "sponsorship does not rely solely on contractual obligations; it also depends on the formation of personal, affective bonds of partiality, commitment, and intimacy that are the ligature securing the formal relationship," (Macklin, Barber, et al., 2020, p. 182). In their national survey of over 530 sponsors, they found that several sponsors invoked kinship metaphors. When asked whether they considered the refugees friends post-sponsorship, several respondents suggested that it was more like family than friendship. Macklin, Barber, et al. (2020) argue that sponsors compare their role to that of a family member because private sponsorships are "avowedly partial"; sponsors feel a commitment to advance the interests

of "their" family which "echoes the particularism of kinship relationships" (p. 184). Similarly, I found that many participants in the present study drew analogies between sponsorship and kinship to both describe and structure their sponsorship relationship. Brian and Sharon, for example, were members of a church sponsorship group. Upon joining the group, they volunteered to be what they called a "surrogate family" for the refugees which meant they "became grandma and grandpa for this family". For this group, that meant including them in all family celebrations and gatherings, including holiday dinners and gift giving. As Sharon noted, "for someone to be a surrogate, you have the incorporate them into your family." When asked if they could offer any advice to future sponsors, both Brian and Sharon noted the importance of this family framework:

> I would say, make sure that you have a surrogate family. That was so important. And that does not happen with government sponsored refugees. The surrogate family can guide that family through everything and be there for them.

Interestingly, one of their sponsored refugees echoed what Brian and Sharon had shared:

> Having sponsors in Canada, it's like having another family in our lives. Like our sponsors are now in the place of my family left back home. I have two sponsors here, I call them Grandpa and Grandma.
>
> -Joliana

In this group, both the refugees and sponsors acknowledged that their refugee-sponsor relationship was similar to the types of relationships one would expect among extended family. Brian and Sharon did this with the intentions of creating a space of welcome for the refugees they sponsored. Another participant, Erin, also drew on this family metaphor when speaking about her experiences:

> …that's sort of the bare-bones of how I gained this wonderful family.
>
> …so like I have grandkids now. I just skipped the having kids part. I went straight to have grandkids or my grand Syrians I call it sometimes.

Here Erin describes the relationship in family terms. For Brian and Sharon, there was a purposeful decision before the refugees arrived to use the family framework as a way of structuring the integration of the refugee family. Both spoke of how structuring the relationship in this way was helpful for integration and fostered a close relationship. In this sense, the family frame was a strategic way to position the new family within the community before they arrived. In Erin's situation, the family metaphor came about in a slightly more organic way after the refugees had arrived and they had developed a relationship:

> …we became close and then that winter we were all together and the oldest said something in Arabic and they all laughed. And I'm like, "So what's so funny?" And they said, "He just called you mom," and he's looking embarrassed. And the oldest girl said, "No, you're not mom, you're grandma." And I actually, I'm the same age as their mom's mom, the exact same year. So, that just started it after that, you know, they would call me grandma and I mean not all the time, but often enough.

With this group, framing of the relationship in family terms was not used pre-arrival but developed as their relationships grew throughout the experience[6]. This suggests that there is a closeness or certain intimacy that develops when refugees and Canadians are connected in these ways. As Macklin, Barber, et al. (2020) note, "designating a relationship as familial denotes it as profound and enduring" with mutual obligations for support enmeshed in "economies of love, trust, gratitude, and intimacy" (p. 183). It is possible that Sharon and Brian's pre-arrival framing of their relationship in family terms was meant to create a nexus of support, love, trust, gratitude, and intimacy on arrival, their goal being to successfully integrate a Syrian family into their community.

[6] Erin became involved with refugees first through private sponsorship. However, this sparked her passion for helping both PSRs and GARs. In these excerpts, she is talking about the relationship she formed with one particular GAR family that she worked with. However, it still serves as an example of the formation of affective bonds that are possible when refugees and Canadians become connected in these intimate ways.

Conversely, Erin's framing of the relationship in familial terms may suggest that that same nexus was formed as a result of helping in the resettlement process. Yet, Erin also reflected on the unusual nature of using these kinship terms:

> So on the one hand you've got this intimacy, almost overnight intimacy of family but you don't want to do what families can do, which is be highly dysfunctional and, you know, sort of enmeshed. And so just being sensitive to that I think is really difficult, challenging, but important. Yeah 'cause it is a weird relationship. Like it's an unusual relationship. I mean, even the fact that we use family terms, right? Uncle and auntie, grandma, sister, you know, that we talk about it in these terms, says something about, it's not a typical relationship.

Here Erin hints at two important aspects of the family metaphor. First, that families can be "highly dysfunctional". In other words, they can be powerful sites of inequality, exploitation, and dependence, and have dynamics of hierarchy (Macklin, Barber, et al., 2020). Erin suggests that sponsors must be sensitive to this, or have a reflexive awareness of their role, which is a reflection that many participants shared. Secondly, Erin reflected on the uniqueness of sponsor-refugee relationships. There is nothing quite like the relationship between sponsors and refugees, where this sudden intimacy happens virtually overnight. Perhaps, then, the closest frame of reference that many sponsors have is that of their family. At times, sponsors draw on their previous experiences with family life to provide settlement support to refugees. For example, in offering allowances and budgeting lessons to refugees, sponsors may draw on their experiences of parenting or being parented to guide their actions.

Despite the well-intentioned use of family metaphors, sponsors should be cautious of aligning the role of the sponsor with that of parents; that is, using the techniques of discipline, support, and authority to guide refugees to self-sufficiency, much like a parent would guide a child to adulthood. This paternalistic framing of their role can be both patronizing and align with orientalist notions of refugeeness. Orientalism can become part

of the sponsor-refugee relationship when sponsors position themselves as the humanitarian helper or saviour and simultaneously ascribe refugees with insurmountable vulnerability and helplessness. A humanitarian perspective, much like an orientalist and paternalistic perspective, can create the "illusion of vulnerability" or mark refugees as a "passive 'them'" while simultaneously reifying the narrative of "the masterful 'helper' and the compassionate 'protector,'" which dissolves agency (Good Gingrich & Enns, 2019, p. 17). There is permeability between paternalism and orientalism because they both place sponsors in a position of power over refugees. However, these potentially problematic aspects of sponsorship are not confined to those who use the family metaphor and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. As well, the examples of Brian, Sharon, and Erin show that utilizing a family metaphor does not always suggest a paternalist or orientalist orientation.

The relationship between sponsorship and family structures is not limited to the use of family metaphors in sponsor-refugee relationships. The social unit of a family is also an important element of who gets sponsored. This means that the majority of people resettled to Canada as refugees tend to be families. A sponsor in Lethbridge remarked that it was children who were the reason that they wanted to sponsor a family:

> We were going to choose a family with children with our understanding that there were more children in refugee camps than adults. At one point, our group was approached to sponsor a single person but we said, "No, this is not what we had decided to do."
>
> -Barb

This shows that decisions about who should be sponsored are connected to vulnerability and family structure. It is likely that families with children who are perceived as more vulnerable are chosen because of their apparent deservingness. Not only are these

decisions made at the level of sponsors, they are also enacted by governments and global actors. Abed, a young adult who was sponsored, reflected on this:

> …most organizations and governments, when they decide to help refugees, they basically help families, women and children – young families, women and children. They don't, so there's basically like that demographic of young adults, young single adults is just kind of overlooked.

Beyond the choices that sponsors make, Welfens and Bonjour (2020) theorize that when deciding who will be resettled, family norms are operationalized by governments, NGOs, and the UNHCR to assess vulnerability and assimilability. Vulnerability is viewed as a non-controversial and obvious distribution mechanism for resettlement spots. However, the way that vulnerability is ascribed to families is highly gendered. While women without a family may be perceived as vulnerable or at risk, "refugee men without family tend to be seen as per se not vulnerable" (Welfens & Bonjour, 2020, p. 10). Rather than at risk, refugee men without a nuclear family are viewed as risky. Perceptions of single men as dangerous "reflects the assumption that family disciplines men into behaving 'properly,' whereas men without family—especially those racialized as 'non-Western'—are assumed to be (sexually) violent and immoral" (Welfens & Bonjour, 2020, p. 10). This fear of single migrant men has been traced back to the first half of the twentieth century, when for example, Italian migrant workers with families were preferred by the French government (Welfens & Bonjour, 2020). It has also been suggested that fears of sexual aggression among refugee men can be traced back to racist colonial ideologies that portrayed black and brown men as sexually aggressive. The other frame of assessment that utilizes family norms is assimilability, or the degree to which a refugee is unlikely to "disrupt the national order" (Welfens & Bonjour, 2020, p. 12). Families are seen as facilitating integration and there is an assumption that migrating with a family is "helpful

or even necessary for migrants to build a life in a new home country" (Welfens & Bonjour, 2020, p. 12).

The deservingness ascribed to families has been enacted in Canadian contexts and was especially visible in the resettlement of Syrian refugees. In practice, 68 percent of refugee resettlement cases to Canada between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016 were family groups (Government of Canada, 2016). This suggests that the percentage of arrivals who were not members of a family was around 9 percent. While some of these decisions are made by sponsors, there are also political choices that can shape these resettlement trends. The family was an organizing principle of the Syrian resettlement initiative where the government "indicated that it would not admit single, unaccompanied, heterosexual men and that it would prioritize fragmented or intact families" (Macklin, Barber, et al., 2020, p. 190). Macklin, Barber, et al. (2020) argue that this was a pre-emptive response to the anticipated backlash which would depict Muslim men as security risks. In a similarly strategic example, Grace Yukich in a case study of the New Sanctuary Movement in the United states found that model immigrants were framed by 'family values' discourses that stress the sanctity of the nuclear family (2014). The New Sanctuary Movement works with people living with precarious legal status in the US. Model immigrants were produced through what she calls the model movement strategy which is "the process of lifting up 'model' members of a group to transform negative stereotypes associated with the group as a whole" (p. 303). Because of the movement's religious identity and audience, they chose to focus on characteristics that would resonate with religious communities, notably the sanctity of the heterosexual nuclear family. Positioning refugees as being relatable through the family form may be a strategy for gaining community recognition and support, however, it is highly

problematic. Like sponsors attempts to change public discourse, positioning families as model immigrants has unintended consequences. It can limit opportunities for those who do not fit with the frame and creates a distinction between those who are seen to be deserving and those seen to be undeserving of resettlement, status, or assistance. It is important to consider the implications of focusing on family as a priority for resettlement because it excludes certain groups, especially single men.

The discourse of Syrian refugee *families* being central to the Canadian resettlement project was articulated in very specific ways for members of one constituent group who were interviewed. When the sponsored family of four arrived in Canada, they quickly informed the sponsorship group that they were splitting up. This meant that the mother and children would be moving to a different city, leaving only the father in the community where the sponsorship group was based. As one participant explained, it shocked the community and disrupted their expectations of their role as sponsors:

> Anyways so that whole thing came out, little bit of a shocker to the whole community. So they stayed overnight a couple more nights at the house. And then her acquaintance in [another city] drove down to Lethbridge. We brought the wife and the two kids to a hotel in Lethbridge and then they went from there back to [the other city]. So that sort of destroyed our whole idea of trying to organize the family and take care of the family and do all the driving, getting them registered in school and so on, so forth.
>
> -Jean

The suggestion that a disruption in the family structure "destroyed" their idea of sponsorship indicates that the family structure was perceived as a crucial element of a successful sponsorship. Other challenges with this arrangement were also expressed:

> …we'll try to help to the extent that we can in terms funding, but we do have limited resources in terms of funds and the fact that it was meant to service the whole family, not just the, it was difficult since *it's odd* [emphasis added].

> So in some ways, yeah, we sponsored a family. Yes. There was funds and we took care of them, given the circumstances, *but it's certainly not a helpful community building* [emphasis added].
>
> In terms of the split, the whole split issue, basically, it's really out of, out of control of anybody who's trying to sponsor. *Unfortunately, it's the government let that slip through and I'm sure that they didn't want that to be known anyway* [emphasis added].
>
> -Jean

These three excerpts show a profoundly negative memory of this aspect of the sponsorship. Jean shares that the breakup of the family was "odd" and "not helpful community building". In the third excerpt, he insinuates that the government did not vet the family thoroughly enough. Jean suggests that had the government known the family was going to split up in Canada, they would not have been selected for resettlement. He also implies that the family may have chosen not to share this information for strategic reasons. This draws on Canada's unofficial emphasis on resettling family units over individuals. However, for Jean it felt like the goal of resettling families was the official goal of Canadian resettlement, and of their group.

Not only does this imply that the framing of Syrian resettlements was family centric, it also ascribes a level of deservingness to families. This suggests that private sponsorship is mediated by political and social understandings of family. The challenge with ascribing vulnerability and deservingness of resettlement spaces based on family structure is that it limits opportunities for resettlement for those who do not align with this embodiment of family. This can include family structures that differ from nuclear understandings including extended families. It also tends to exclude single people, and in particular single men. Turner (2017), for example, points out that "resettlement programmes for Syrian refugees severely restrict access to resettlement for single men" which disaffirms their experiences of danger and insecurity (p. 29).

The structure of families is operationalized in private sponsorships simultaneously at different scales. As Welfens and Bonjour (2020) remind us, "the realm of the intimate is central to international politics" (p. 16). While family norms are operationalized by governments, NGOs, and the UNHCR, their assessment of vulnerability and assimilability come into practice in the realm of the intimate including family status, relationship status, gender, and the presence of children. Further, decisions viewed as being in the realm of international politics, such as Canada's emphasis on resettling families, are experienced in intimate realms. In the interactions between sponsors and refugees, family metaphors can be used to structure an arrival environment that is welcoming and based on mutual love and responsibility. They have also been used as a way to describe the intimacy that is developed over the course of the resettlement. It is important for sponsors to use these metaphors cautiously so as to avoid positioning themselves as parents, an approach that reduces the agency and autonomy of refugees. On the national and global scale, the framing of families as vulnerable and deserving of resettlement has positioned them as the ideal units of resettlement. This political and discursive move is highly gendered and restricts opportunities for single refugees, especially single men, from accessing resettlement spots. Though vulnerability is a valuable distribution mechanism, it is important to consider the social and cultural assumptions about vulnerability that engender these processes.

4.5 A Delicate Dance

The relationship formed between sponsoring groups and refugees who arrive in Canada is unique. Sponsors hold a position of power because of their citizenship and belonging in Canada, cultural and social knowledge, and economic dominance in the sponsorship arrangement. When these power differences are mishandled, the relationships can be

charged with paternalistic orientations, expectations of gratefulness, and orientalist scripts. Yet, as Macklin, Barber, et al. (2020) argue, sponsorship is a "structurally unequal relationship that can – not must – give rise to a dynamic of parentalism with overtones of orientalism" (p. 182). In giving a piece of advice to future sponsors, one participant in the present study explained that, "finding ways to be supportive and yet not being intrusive is a really delicate dance." In this section I share examples of the tensions that refugees and sponsors faced in regard to these challenges.

There is an expectation of gratefulness that plays out in sponsor-refugee relationships. Though often tacit, it is experienced by both refugees and sponsors. Because refugees often feel indebted to sponsorship groups for giving them the opportunity to resettle in Canada, they can feel like they ought to be grateful for everything that their sponsorship group does for them. Speaking about expectations of gratefulness placed on refugees, two participants shared these observations:

> It feels like as long as you're here, you're lucky enough.
>
> -Abed

> …appreciate and be thankful for any help. Even if they did nothing to you when you arrive to Canada, like, just appreciate that you are here, you are safe, you don't hear the air strikes, you are not worried when you go outside.
>
> -Muna

In contrast, sponsors were aware of this expectation of gratefulness and contested its presence in their relationship with the refugees they sponsored. Lee for example, made this note:

> Yeah so it was really great and they were just such generous people and they were, well just amazingly thankful. It's sort of embarrassingly so, you know, because I always think, you know, I made this decision to do this. I'm not doing it 'cause I want you to thank me.

Even if sponsors do not specifically expect gratefulness, the expectation is still felt and enacted by refugees in various ways. For example, when a sponsor hired the refugee she sponsored to paint her fence, he would not accept payment when he had completed the job. Though the sponsor did not want or suggest this, it shows how the expectation of gratefulness reveals itself in specific and material ways. This is an important consideration for understanding how paternalism and orientalism can manifest themselves in these relationships.

Orientalist scripts are activated when refugees are characterized as victims who deserve rescue and sponsors and sponsoring countries are characterized as the saviours who provide this rescue. These scripts position refugee identities as passive, feminine, vulnerable, and in need of rescue. Refugees who push against this framing of themselves as passive victims risk seeming ungrateful. However, Kyriakides et al. (2018) found that the orientalist idea that refugees are a passive object of war who require intervention is both contested and affirmed in sponsor-refugee interactions. In the present research, orientalism was contested by sponsors who focused on the mutual benefits of sponsorship. The way that sponsors reflect on the mutuality of their experiences will be discussed in more detail below.

Another significant critique of the PSR Program is that it can facilitate paternalism (See for example Kyriakides et al., 2018; Lenard, 2016; Lim, 2019; Macklin, Barber, et al., 2020). Inherent in the private sponsorship program is the goal that sponsors are meant to lead refugees to independence, however when giving advice and suggestions, sponsors might mistakenly feel like newcomers are ungrateful and irrational if they do not follow these suggestions. Patti Lenard uses the term "'we-know-best' paternalism" to describe

the situation where autonomy and independence is undermined by refugees feeling obligated to follow the advice of their sponsors (Lenard, 2016, p. 307).

Haugen et al. (2020) theorize that approaches to sponsorship fit into three categories: paternalistic, passive paternalistic, and mutualistic. Paternalistic approaches are parent-child oriented, focus on teaching refugees how to succeed in Canada, and dismiss the knowledge that refugees have from past experiences. This approach tends to reveal itself in discussions of financial priorities, overconfidence in knowing what was best, and feeling frustration when refugees did not listen to them. Two examples from my research align with this understanding of paternalism. In the first, a sponsor responded to a question about the goals and motivations of their sponsored individuals:

> He was anxious to get three things. One was he wanted to get a car and he wanted to be able to get a driver's license. I said, "Well, first thing I think you have to do is learn how to speak English."
>
> -Jean

In the second, a sponsor participant shared their experience with a refugee family who chose to smoke Hookah:

> We're always asking them to quit, because they say, "Oh no, it's not bad for you. It's not like cigarettes" Oh, but there's tobacco… and we're preaching to them to stop. They say, "Oh, it's apple chips and stuff." And it is, it's nicotine also, not just apple or cherry.
>
> -Sharon

In the first example, the speaker expressed confidence in knowing what was best and dismissed the knowledge and priorities of the refugee. In the second example, the sponsor shared feelings of frustration and succumbed to a child-parent dynamic when "preaching" for the refugee to quit smoking. These were the only two instances of paternalism as defined by Haugen that were expressed by sponsors in this project. Unlike Haugen et al.'s (2020) findings, instances of paternalism among the participants in this research were

much more subtle, nuanced, and covert. For example, Barb and Bev expressed an awareness of how sponsorship can be paternalistic yet followed up with stories with subtle paternalistic tendencies. Reflecting on a pre-arrival training session, Barb shared these remarks:

> The MCC hosted a few sessions to inform us on what to expect and our responsibilities. One important thing was that sponsorship does not include telling immigrants how or where to live. Though you have a role in guiding them, they don't always do what we think they should and we need to respect their decisions.

When asked if this ended up coming up during the sponsorship, she gave this example:

> It took a while for that to manifest itself. One thing that we didn't expect was that they smoked. It was mind boggling to need to communicate they should not smoke in their house and to encourage them not to smoke in the house in the midst of winter was hard.

Similarly, another sponsor shared this reflection on what had happened when she was involved with sponsorship over 40 years ago:

> The real problem with lack of translation and "doing" for others is that we the sponsors took agency away from our refugee family. They didn't have a choice. They would have had more choice if we had known more about their culture. Then we could have been more sensitive. In its effort to protect the refugees, the government put is in a parental role of adults thus restricting their agency. Something to ponder.
>
> -Bev

Though she was cautious and reflective about the potential for paternalistic inclinations in sponsorship, she later shared this comment.

> So I don't know if the government plan of providing shelter for the family alone was very good as the family would have been left all alone. It probably should have been more nuanced. That they could have lived in someone's home with them; Cooking side-by-side, learning to do the laundry. That was another big learning adventure, learning to do the laundry, learning to use a washing machine, learning to use the dryer, learning to use a bathtub, a toilet.
>
> -Bev

In both instances, the sponsors expressed an awareness that the structure of the PSR Program can lend itself to paternalism. They also shared stories that elucidate the tension

between awareness and practice. On one hand, sponsors are reflective of their role and positionality, but they also have to contend with the tasks assigned to them as sponsors and the expectations put onto sponsors to guide refugees.

Haugen et al. (2020)'s second type of sponsorship approach is passive paternalistic. Sponsors with this orientation have expectations that refugees should be grateful, will withdraw support as a form of punishment when refugees do not listen to them, and are condescending, rather than dismissive, of refugee knowledge from past experiences. This can come through as demeaning attitudes and negative reactions to refugee choices that do not align with their sponsor's advice. They suggest that this is often the result of pressure that is felt by sponsors from donors who expect their money be spent wisely. In the 21 interviews conducted for my research, this orientation was not expressed. Most sponsors chose to focus instead on the positive aspects of their relationship and refugee resiliency and dedication to succeed. This is not surprising as all the participants expressed having a positive relationship with their corresponding sponsors or refugees. It is also possible that the public archiving of the interviews discouraged these types of responses.

Lastly, mutualistic approaches to sponsorship are characterized as treating refugees as equals rather than as children, learning "with and from newcomers", and having "a willingness to be self-critical about the values, norms, and assumptions that sponsors hold" including having a more flexible definition of what success means in sponsorship (Haugen et al., 2020, p. 10). The term mutualistic comes from the recognition by sponsors "that both sponsors and refugees had something to offer each other that was of value" (Haugen et al., 2020, p. 13). Many participants shared these sentiments, including Erin:

> Oh, we're not just the good guys here. Right? We're not just the saviours here. We're getting so much from this. We're learning so much. We're receiving so much. There's such joyfulness in this. We're getting to know each other better. Besides just the lovely relationships we have with these families, we have better relationships with each other too. And that's an incredible experience actually.

Here, Erin captures the mutualistic nature of sponsorship that was expressed by a number of participants. She also contests orientalist framings of sponsorship by highlighting the mutual benefit of the arrangement. It was common for sponsors to share a belief that they benefitted from the experience just as much as the refugees, often noting the community relationships they developed and the cultural knowledge they gained.

There are two main features of mutualistic approaches that Haugen et al. (2020) identify. The first is that refugees and sponsors are equal partners in the sponsorship. This means respecting what refugees feel is best for them and reminding themselves that the decisions are up to them. Participants in this research shared several instances where they reminded themselves that the refugees they were sponsoring were in charge of making the decisions. Erin, for example, remembered her initial response and later reflections when the family they sponsored wanted to move accommodations:

> And I think, you know, at first it was like, "No, no, no, no, you know, this was good for this." And then it was like, and that's where you go, "Oh, right. They're adults. They can make their own decisions." And so, you know, try to be respectful of that and still offer support where we could. Like, okay, so they need help with the moving, so we can show up and lift stuff and clean the [place], you know, so they get their damage deposit back and stuff.

Though at first she worried about the decision they were making, her response respected their autonomy and was supportive, offering to help them move. Linda and Cybele also echoed this desire to respect autonomy when offering advice to future sponsors.

> And instead of rushing in and saying you need this, you need that; get to know them and find out what they're comfortable with. And then, you know, offer assistance… Yeah, you cannot be directive, you know, and say, "You've got to do

> this, you've got to do this." No. You know, they've come from a different country. They've done things their own way.
>
> -Cybele

> Because I think you need to try your very very hardest, whether you need interpreters or not, to find out what the family's wishes are rather than predetermining what's best.
>
> -Linda

Erin, Cybele, Linda, and many others shared the importance of letting the refugees they sponsored make decisions and guide the settlement process based on their choices. This mentality can help to avoid the "'we-know-best' paternalism" that reduces agency and places power in the hands of sponsors (Lenard, 2016, p. 307). The second feature of mutualistic approaches is having self-awareness and being self-critical of the ways in which sponsors approach sponsorship. Grace was part of a group of university students that started the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) Student Refugee Program at the University of Lethbridge. When talking about the arrival of a student refugee, she demonstrated this self-awareness of the sponsorship process:

> I remember we had signed documents that said we were financially, academically, socially responsible for this student. Also kind of jumping ahead [this] brought up so many factors, again, of ethics within me and of like that power that's inherently there of this committee and this real student that we are like, "Okay, you have to be friends with us." You know, it was a very strange experience again of internalized racism that I didn't know I had and didn't see before, and cultural differences and all of that stuff.

Here she explicitly acknowledged the power relations between the sponsorship group and the student, noting a feeling of being uncomfortable with this. She also alluded to her personal realization of holding internalized racism and certain beliefs about cultural difference. Later in the interview, Grace expressed that having this opportunity with WUSC forced her to confront these pre-conceived beliefs.

The sponsors interviewed for this research overwhelmingly fell into the category of utilizing mutualistic approaches. They looked at sponsorship as a mutually beneficial partnership, they respected the autonomy and decision making of refugees, and they were critically reflective of their role as sponsors. Haugen et al. (2020) suggest that at the very least there is a normative argument for encouraging mutualistic approaches to sponsorship. The following statement from a relative of a resettled refugee family gives support to this claim. When asked if there were instances when the sponsorship group pressured them into anything, she said this:

> No, actually the sponsor group that we had, like, everyone is very smart and I feel that they know how to ask for something or... like, they know the best way to offer help without hurting anyone's feelings or anyone's, like.... we didn't experience. I don't feel it. Like, I don't know if some of them feel that way, but we didn't feel it, like, at all. And we never had any conflict or any bad experience together, I don't think so.
>
> -Muna

This suggests that the mutualistic approach taken by the sponsoring group for this family was appreciated by the refugees. As Macklin, Barber, et al. (2020) said, sponsorship is a "structurally unequal relationship that can – not must – give rise to a dynamic of parentalism" (p. 182). Mutualistic approaches are one specific way to resist the dynamics of paternalism that can be present in the PSR Program. However, continued research on the benefits of mutualistic approaches would help to clarify this connection. While this section has focused on the relationships between sponsors and refugees, in the section that follows I will outline how refugees were able to utilize community connections by mobilizing social capital.

4.6 Social Capital in Private Sponsorships

One of the strengths of the PSR Program is the community connections and social ties that are inherent in it. Aside from financial support, private sponsors are responsible for

providing “emotional and social support” for the first year of settlement (Elgersma, 2015). When refugees are supported by a sponsorship group, they may find it easier to create interpersonal bonds with community members (Lanphier, 2003; Lim, 2019). The social capital available to privately sponsored refugees allows them to gain a social network because of their relationship with their sponsor. Theoretical understandings of social capital draw largely on Putnam’s analysis of declining American civic engagement. Putnam defines social capital as “connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). There is an array of scholarship on social capital that has been applied to the refugee resettlement context. Lehr and Dyck (2020) argue that already established refugee family members in host communities play a role in integration and the creation of a welcoming environment because of their social capital. Similarly, Smith (2020) focuses on how when sponsorships are used for family reunification, refugees may find it easier to integrate because of the pre-existing social networks and social capital. Labman (2019) argues that “social capital tends to guide sponsor selections” of refugees through relational migration, or the links that refugees in Canada have with family and friends left behind (p. 94). Of continued usefulness for understanding resettlement is Putnam’s distinction between bridging and bonding types of social capital. Bonding forms of social capital include in-group loyalties among families and people who share similar traits. Social bridges are those that connect community members to different geographic, gender, age, and religious groups, among others. Because identities are intersectional, bonding and bridging are not two separate entities but “dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital” (Putnam, 2000, p. 23).

The relationships between refugees and sponsors are most closely aligned with social bridges. One way that social bridges were utilized by sponsors and refugees in this study was the ways that sponsors were able to draw on their community networks in order to help their sponsored refugees. It was common for sponsors to secure employment for the refugees that they sponsored by reaching out to their community connections, an opportunity that government-assisted refugees would not have. For example, Lorraine helped two of the refugees she sponsored get jobs working in lawn care:

> [I] helped getting a couple of them jobs. Actually, the fellow that has cut my lawn for over 25 years usually just picks up a couple of fellows to help with lawn cutting and yard cleaning in the summer… So anyways, [the son] decided yes, he wanted to take this on. So two of them, the two fellows that came first worked with him.

Another sponsor was able to get the refugee they sponsored a job working in the grocery industry:

> And then she wanted a job and I started working with her, and I had a friend in the grocery industry. So I approached him and he was looking for some help, and he agreed to take her on.
>
> -Brian

Others were able to solicit informal employment opportunities such as mowing lawns and painting fences that offered a mechanism for making some extra money. Aside from utilizing outside connections, one sponsorship group which included two cattle ranchers was able to hire the father in a refugee family to work on both of the farms. Lee shared this similar experience from her group:

> And one of the people who was on our committee he is a businessman here in town and he was able to get the two men a job at his plant.

The community networks available in private sponsorship are unmatched in government resettlements. Drawing on relationships and networks inherent in the program gives

privately sponsored refugees access to different types of opportunities including the job opportunities expressed above.

Social bonds were most prominent in the networks formed between refugees and pre-arrived family members or members of their cultural community. Lehr and Dyck (2020) use the term "brokers" to describe the role that refugee family members who are already established in the host community play in the "settlement and integration of the more recently arrived and in the development of social capital" (p. 50). In the case of Syrian refugees, several large families were resettled to Lethbridge over the course of several years. This led to an opportunity where those who were already settled could help their more recently arrived family. Barb explained how this came about in their sponsorship of an extended family:

> And basically the family was starting to take care of everything. The first brothers and their families were teaching the new families. We didn't have to drive them around Lethbridge to give them a tour of Lethbridge. The families could do that. They all had vehicles, they all had their own homes by then.

Erin shared similar sentiments about the benefits of having a "broker" who could help with their resettlement:

> Our families have a real advantage having had, you know, because they had a sibling here and her husband who both spoke English, and both understood like the whole system, right? Banking and all of the rest. It both made it easier for us, significantly easier for us, but I think it also made it easier for our families that they had somebody.

One challenge that arose from this was a reluctance from refugees and their already established family members to ask sponsors for items that they needed. Lorraine for example, shared this experience:

> [The already established family was] feeling guilty that someone had to be helping them out. And we were feeling, "No, we're here to help you out." So those kinds of things took a long time for her. Like when they would say, "Well, we need a computer for this family and we need one for that family because that's how they

> communicate." And [she or her husband] would say, "No, no, no, we'll get that. We'll do that." So it took a long time for them to warm up to us and to understand that "We're here for a reason. We're here to help you and you need to know that when we say yes, we will get this and yes, we will get that, that's what we want to do."

When this previously established family member was interviewed, she shared similar observations of the challenge her family faced in expressing their material needs to the sponsors. The following excerpt expresses this tension:

> Like, my mom sometimes asks, but my dad always tells her to stop. Like my mom tells me to tell them something, like, "We need something," or, "We ask for this thing." But my dad tells me to not say that. My mom asked once for a bike for my nephew and my dad said, "Don't ask for that." But then they understood because bike is bicycle, like bicyclette in Arabic, and, they knew what my mom wanted, so they brought the bike.
>
> -Muna

Though this reluctance to ask for too much from sponsors comes through in instances where there is not a family broker, in instances where there is it adds an additional layer that needs care and attention. These examples suggest that social capital plays a role in sponsorship experiences. Inherent in the PSR Program is the use of social capital by sponsors for the benefit of the refugees they sponsor. Refugees may also arrive with varying degrees of social capital. An important example of this is the benefit of having a pre-arrived family member that can act as a broker for their resettlement.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter began with an analysis of the community, sponsor, and refugee level characteristics that have impacted the ways that sponsorship has been enacted in Lethbridge. Relevant community characteristics included the welcoming nature of Lethbridge, challenges with public transit and same language services, and the ability of networks to form in the community. The various backgrounds of refugees impacted their ability to find work and Muslim faith was viewed as having an impact on their

resettlement. Sponsor backgrounds including their personal and professional experiences influenced their motivations for being involved and the types of specialist services they were able to secure for the refugees they sponsored. However, these individual factors should be viewed as *in motion*. They are in constant interaction with each other and the larger contextual setting. Examples of this include sponsors' attempts to reshape negative refugee discourses, the way that power and intimacy is affirmed and contested in sponsor-refugee interactions, and the social capital that is inherent in the program. The interplay of these elements is not isolated to the scale of the city, they also exist within their economic, political, geographic, social, and historical contexts. In the chapter that follows, the ways that these broader contextual elements influence sponsorship will be explored.

CHAPTER 5: BROADER CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

> But yeah, sitting on the ferry back to the UK was really quite upsetting. And that really made me recognize my own privilege and like, I travelled to 14 or something countries while I was in the UK without any consideration for my visa, any consideration for like how I looked, who I was, what my religion was, and just to pop over to this [refugee] camp for the weekend and then go back to London was like, kind of fucking awful in some ways and really made me think about movement and migration and privilege in that way.
>
> -Grace

A couple of years after being involved with the student refugee program, Grace moved to the UK. While there, she was able to travel to Calais, a French Port City on the English Channel known for its large refugee camp commonly referred to as the "jungle". While there she was able to volunteer with a humanitarian aid group and interact with people living in the camp. In sharing this experience, Grace talked about the contrast between her ease of movement and the intense restrictions on forced migrants living in Calais:

> I've never been somewhere that felt more like a prison than Calais. And like the border now is so policed and there are chain link fences with barbed wire at the top that are, I don't know, 20 feet high, right? And then I think we'd literally, we'd driven off the ferry, and again so this in total was a five-hour journey from central London, and you know, crossed with no issues whatsoever.

The experience of physically travelling to this border region helped Grace to see migration and privilege in a different light. What was different from this experience, and her time as a World University Service of Canada (WUSC) sponsor in Lethbridge, was proximity. In the following excerpt Grace described what she was thinking about when she was involved with WUSC:

> When working in WUSC and with being in rural, relatively rural Alberta, there was always such a distance between this actually happening, right? Like just physically we're so far away, right? And so to understand the reality of how people are living in these camps and kind of makeshift camps, wasn't really present in what I was thinking about.

Here Grace captures one of the challenges of sponsorship, the dissociation of what happens *here* from what happens *there*. The conceptual framework I have used to guide this research attempts to destabilize this division of scales and spaces of experience and analysis. Instead, I have positioned the sponsorship experiences at the intersection of individual characteristics, relational factors, and broader contextual elements. To access understandings of how political, geographic, historical, economic, and social elements have shaped sponsorship, I draw on elements of feminist political geography. Feminist scholars played a significant role in contending "that we must begin an analysis of power from the people's everyday experience" (Mainwaring, 2016, p. 291). Feminist geographers like Jennifer Hyndman, Alison Mountz, and Merje Kuus have been influential to this field of geography by seeking to "study politics within the spaces and scales that used to be considered private or apolitical" and outside the realm of geographic inquiry, while simultaneously destabilizing the binaries between public and private and political and apolitical (Kuus, 2017, p. 164). Feminist geography involves turning the lens around—using the everyday as an entry point to view institutional structures and policies such as the private sponsorship program. The narrative focused semi-structured interviews conducted for this research serve as this entry-point, and through analysis I connect these to broader understandings of sponsorship. The four sections that follow are meant to capture the intersections of scale in the PSR Program. This includes a critical analysis of the potential for a rescaling of sponsorship to empower sponsors, the challenges to sustaining the PSR Program, the principle of "naming", and considerations for policy transfer. Integrated within this analysis are policy suggestions that have arisen from these themes.

5.1 Rescaling Sponsorship

The localisation of consciousness that Grace's excerpts highlight, places the local and the global as separated and oppositional, the local being inescapable and the global, inaccessible. In chapter 2 I drew on Granzow and Dean (2016) whose analysis of the disarticulation of the past from the present helped me to consider and describe how detaching global contexts from local resettlement practices renders the conditions for global forced migration as separate from the experiences of refugees in Canadian communities. Similarly, Massey (2013) argues that place includes relations that stretch beyond its physical location; "the global as part of what constitutes the local, the outside as part of the inside" (p. 5). Drawing on the dualism of space and time, local and global, and western notions of gender, Massey argues that it is "the very form of such dichotomies which must be challenged" in part because "the local/place/feminine side of the dichotomy" has been deprioritized and denigrated (Massey, 2013, pp. 7,10). In practice, resettlement has been constructed as an apolitical local project of citizenship and voluntarism. The trouble is that "localising consciousness also entails spatial and temporal divisions that separate the global history and politics of being a refugee" from local communities (Ritchie, 2018, p.671). For example, the Syrian refugee "crisis" can be traced back to legacies of colonialism from 26 years of French rule, a major drought from 2006-2011, the Assad government, long-standing religious tensions among various Muslim and Christian groups, and foreign meddling including the Bush administration's 2002 anti-Syrian policy (Polk, 2013). Yet, for sponsors in this project, the humanitarian act of resettling was separate from the factors that created displacement in the first place. While sponsors effortlessly spoke about their personal motivations for getting involved, their stories were largely apolitical and only vaguely addressed the geo-political

conditions that created displacement. Linda and Ian, for example, only briefly alluded to the "horrors" that resulted in the forced migration of Southeast Asians in the late 1970s and early 1980s:

> *Linda:* In the 80's it was shocking that people were risking their lives to escape from a country.
> *Ian:* And all of the horrors of agent orange and...
> *Linda:* Well, and it was the end of the Vietnam War. And so there was all those horrors. People wanted to help. It is similar to the Syrian situation, with Canadians assisting with private sponsorship.

In chapter three I referenced how one of the benefits of a narrative approach is seeing what oral historian Lindsay French would call "stories in the silences" (French, 2019, p. 275). By paying attention to silences and partial descriptions, it is possible to uncover different understandings of subjectivity, society, and experience. In the interviews I conducted with sponsors, what was missing from most of them was a connection between their local work as sponsors and the broader context of forced migration. This is unsurprising considering the way that the PSR Program "coheres with the disarticulation of the local and global" by privileging "local community action over other sites and scales of civic engagement" (Ritchie, 2018, p. 671).

The increasing reliance on local communities for resettlement exacerbates the disarticulation of the PSR Program from its global and national dimensions. The term localism has been used to describe the political strategy of "devolving power and resources away from central control and toward front-line managers, local democratic structures and local consumers and communities, within an agreed framework of national minimum standards and policy priorities" (Stoker, 2004, p. 117). A key feature of localism is that local communities gain varying degrees of responsibility and decision-making authority. Over the past two decades, the trend "toward decentralizing policy and

administrative competences in Canada's immigration and integration regime" has been persistent (Schmidtke, 2019, p. 33). The PSR Program is an example of localism because sponsors take on immense responsibility, both monetarily and in terms of integration. The Government of Canada maintains control of minimum standards and policy priorities by regulating Canadian immigration policy. One way that this is done is by managing the screening process that all refugees, including PSRs must go through. The element of the PSR Program known as "naming," whereby sponsors can suggest the name of an individual to be processed for resettlement is one way that decision-making is devolved to citizens. The PSR Program is a form of localism because local communities gain a degree of responsibility and decision-making, yet the Canadian government still has control of who, how many, and when refugees are resettled through the program.

Some of the benefits of localism are that it engages and empowers neighbourhoods and communities, can foster trust and social capital, and may improve government accountability and transparency (Ercan & Hendriks, 2013). In Canada's PSR Program, many of these benefits have taken shape. From its roots in the 1940s, faith-based groups have been empowered to take responsibility for resettlement as a humanitarian goal. This empowerment continues today for these same church groups and others. The argument that localism fosters social capital is especially true in the PSR Program. As discussed in chapter four, refugees arrive with high levels of social capital because of their relationship with their sponsor which can result in opportunities such as employment and dental care. Government accountability may be supported by the principle of "additionality" where all sponsored refuges are above and beyond the number of refugees that would otherwise be sponsored by the government through the GAR program. Yet, this principle has not always been maintained in good faith. For example,

the BVOR program which asks sponsors to share monetary responsibility with the government and take on social and emotional supports does not align with the principle of additionality. At other times, sponsors and academics have questioned government accountability and transparency. The cap system, which ended in 2016, "[limited] refugees of some nationalities but not others" by restricting the number of refugees SAHs could select from certain countries (Hyndman, 2019, p. 21). In particular, Nairobi, Pretoria, Islamabad, and Cairo missions were the targets of these caps (Labman, 2016). In response to these caps, Hyndman argued that this "stealth architecture and governance of private sponsorship" demonstrated geographic prejudice toward certain nations (Hyndman, 2019, p. 19). It is likely that these caps were put in place to limit the use of the PSR Program for family reunification.

While localism can empower community groups and increase social capital, there are also a number of important critiques. Localism does not always result in a transfer of power and can exacerbate local inequalities. It has been argued that increased "street-level discretion" can result in inequitable or arbitrary decision making (Ercan & Hendriks, 2013, p. 426). This concern, in the context of naming will be discussed later in this chapter. In relation to scale, "localism initiatives have been criticized for favouring small, one-off, local, participatory events that are disconnected from the broader political and democratic context" and reduce "policy debates to the confines of 'the local'" (Ercan & Hendriks, 2013, p. 423). This is one way that localism magnifies the disarticulation of the PSR Program from its global and national dimensions. As Parkinson remarks, "the localist solution seems to involve people being empowered to make decisions about the colour of their wallpaper, but not about the style of the house, let alone the broader issues of housing development in the context of competing land uses and environmental

protection" (2007, p. 27). Parkinson uses this metaphor to point out the disconnect between the focus of localism and addressing broader issues. A similar metaphor can be drawn about the PSR Program; private sponsorship involves people being empowered to make decisions about the refugees they sponsor, but not about Canada's larger immigration system, let alone the broader issues of forced migration in the context of the geopolitical processes of war, empire, and colonialism. For sponsors in this project, this was articulated in their focus on aspects of sponsorship like supplying appropriate clothing and deciding which rental accommodation would be best, coupled with the absence of connecting their work to broader contexts.

This leads to two larger questions. First, is private sponsorship an effective approach to tackling the complex realities of global forced migration? Abed, a student refugee who later became involved in sponsorship suggested that it is the work of the system, not a small group of people sponsoring, that can change the trajectory of displacement globally. Near the end of my interview with Abed, I asked if he had any thoughts on how refugee resettlement has been tied to social media. He offered this response:

> I mean, I don't know, it's going to be a pessimistic take on it. But I think in general, people can't really empathize for a long time. And we can't empathize with people we don't know, or [when] we don't know the circumstances - we don't understand. So I think when these campaigns come and go, when these campaigns happen it sparks a lot of talk and stuff like that. Just like everything else, like the kids in cages in the States at the border. It was a huge buzz for like two or three weeks. And then, I mean, the kids are still in cages, but nobody's talking about that because something else had popped up…
> So I think this is just like every other cause is basically. It just goes up and down and whatever catches people's attention for like a little bit. And then afterwards people will just forget about it because you can't empathize…
> I think I excuse people for doing that because I think these problems are so huge and I don't think they will be solved by individuals. It has to be solved systematically in order to actually eradicate that problem.

Abed begins by describing what he sees as the biggest challenge to sustainability, that people cannot continue to empathize as media focus changes. Yet, Abed explains that he excuses people for this because he believes that the solution does not exist in the actions of individuals but in systematic change. However, the sponsors who participated in this research were a passionate and dedicated group. There is potential for sponsorships to be repositioned in a way that can lead to a more systematic approach to forced migration. One way for this to happen is to critically restructure sponsorship's connection to scale. Scale is operationalized in geopolitics to organize agendas, responsibility, and power. But, as Jones explains, "scale itself is a representational trope, a way of framing political-spatiality that in turn has material effects" (1998, p. 27). Swyngedouw (1997) captures the power of scale when he argues that it "mediates between co-operation and competition, between homogenization and differentiation, between empowerment and disempowerment" (Swyngedouw, 1997, p. 170). Both sponsors and refugees are disempowered in different ways through the sponsorship program. Hyndman (2017) calls for a rescaling of analyses of the PSR Program that focus more on how refugees exert agency by utilizing resettlement as a strategy. Rescaling, according to Hyndman, means starting analysis from the actions of refugees who act in strategic ways to achieve resettlement. This sits in contrast to approaches that often begin analysis of policies at the national or international scale. Hyndman argues that it is important to "rescale settlement as the purview of the person who begins life in a new place, not as a state outcome or goal" (Hyndman, 2019, p. 7). Instead of thinking of resettlement as a "sedentarist outcome of immigration policy," it should be viewed as a strategy of refugees (Hyndman, 2019, p. 16). Resisting the framing of resettlement as sedentarist, seeks to capture the agency of refugees and combat narratives of passive refugeeness that focus on

vulnerability and victimhood. This same method has been utilized by researchers like Hakli, Pascucci, and Kallio (2017) who approach "refugee subjectivities through the lens of performativity" (p. 185). Rather than collapsing into refugeeness, they argue that in the process of "becoming refugee", migrants become attentive to the refugee identity and develop "performative agencies" where they are able to perform refugeeness in a way that allows them to be noticed and receive the help they need (Häkli et al., 2017, p. 194). They argue that by "conceiving refugeeness as a performed identity we can attune to the ways in which people, even in the direst circumstances, are able to avoid the total subordination that the internalization of the figure of the refugee could mean" (Häkli et al., 2017, p. 198).

The critical rescaling that Hyndman calls for has been applied in the present research in a number of ways. Utilizing feminist approaches to geography, I have selected personal and everyday scales as a starting point for analysis. This is evident in the methodological framing of this project which uses narratives to understand the sponsorship experience. Further, a "critical rescaling" has meant re-imagining the connections between localism and broader contexts. While Hyndman and others have focused on the ways refugees' lived experiences challenge conceptions of scale, an understanding of how the disarticulation of the global and the local has disempowered sponsors in their role is absent from scholarship on the PSR Program. Scale is an important arena where socio-spatial power relations are contested. For sponsors to become empowered, there is a need for a rescaling of consciousness. By this, I do not mean reconnecting the local and the global, but instead, rejecting the premise that the global and the local ought to be thought of as two separate categories. Dominant conceptions of scale in geography tend to focus on "a nested hierarchy of differentially

sized and bounded spaces" (Marston et al., 2005, pp. 416-417). Yet this hierarchical notion of scale has been contested because, among other critiques, "the local-to-global conceptual architecture intrinsic to hierarchical scale carries with it presuppositions that can delimit entry points into politics" (Marston et al., 2005, p. 427). Much like localism, positioning scale as a form of nested hierarchies can confine policy debates to certain realms, often the community and national scale.

Alternatively, sponsors may be empowered by engaging with different notions of scale that produce entry points into the political. One way of conceptualizing this process is Cox's notion of "spaces of engagement" where people move beyond their local scale by constructing networks of association, exchange, and politics (Cox, 1998). These networks are formed by linking various centres of power. Those centres in particular need to have decision making authority or some leverage over decision making. Different types of network building have been utilized in private sponsorship at various levels. As discussed in the previous chapter, Lethbridge was the site for immense network building including multi-organizational sponsorship groups and a multidisciplinary healthcare clinic. This same type of network building aligns with the structure of sponsorships where SAHs are a link between the Canadian government and constituent groups. SAHs play a role in government lobbying, as was the case when the cap system came into practice and when the Interim Federal Health Program received funding cuts in 2012 (Chapman, 2014). These examples suggest that an opportunity exists for sponsors to create "spaces of engagement" where they can enter into the politics of forced migration. However, the challenge is moving beyond engaging with local and national politics toward a more holistic, global approach to displacement. It is in this rescaling of sponsorship that sponsors may be able to engage with the broader geopolitical conditions that create forced

displacement in the first place. As Abed said, “It has to be solved systematically in order to actually eradicate that problem.”

Beyond these concerns about the role of the PSR Program in global forced migration, a second questions arises from increasing localism; Can local groups sustain such pressure for resettlement? A significant part of the economic context of sponsorship is that “defraying of the cost of refugee resettlement” allows the government to save money (Lenard, 2016). These types of money saving measures correspond with practices of localism that shift power and responsibility onto local actors. Carpenter (2015) argues that neoliberal theory has cast inequality as a problem of local origin which has “meant downloading the responsibility for dealing with social problems onto the local” (p. 136). This has resulted in policies that “simultaneously ‘download’ public services onto local communities at the same time that the state organizes a discourse of local responsibility for the generation and resolution of social problems” (Carpenter, 2015, p. 136). Similarly, Ritchie (2018) argues that the PSR Program is a “deeply political (neoliberal) project of removing the state from functions of social welfare” (p. 671). Regardless of intention, a challenge that arises from the practice of localism is the significant demands on communities, NGOs, and non-profits to meet the daily needs of refugees. Questions remain about how much of this responsibility local organizations can continue to sustainably manage.

5.2 Sustainability of the PSR Program

As the number of displaced persons worldwide continues to grow, the Canadian government’s targets suggest that the PSR Program will play a significant role in its refugee policy moving forward. Sponsoring refugees through the PRS program requires significant dedication including raising funds, navigating the bureaucratic steps, and

having the time for resettlement tasks. In my research, concerns about the sustainability of the program arose from two fronts – the need to sustain volunteers and the challenge of sustaining support outside times of perceived crisis.

Many of the people who are involved with the PSR Program are older Canadians. In a survey of approximately 530 sponsors across Canada, 74 percent were over age 50 (Macklin et al., 2018). Excluding members of the student based WUSC group, 62 percent of sponsors from my research who were involved with Syrian refugees self-identified as retired. It is commonly thought that older Canadians take on more volunteering than younger groups. However Canada's 2018 General Social Survey on Giving, Volunteering and Participating, found that those aged 23-37 were most likely to be volunteers (Hahmann, 2021). However, on average Canadians over age 53 volunteered more time. The reliance on older Canadians for sponsorship tasks was brought up by a number of sponsors that were interviewed for my research. Jean for example noted the makeup of his church's sponsorship group:

> The committee is made up of basically all senior members of the parish and very few young people were involved.

Jean went on to share frustrations with the notion that it was the responsibility of retired members to participate:

> Supposedly because they're retired I guess the idea, "Well, you got all the time in the world. You can take care of this and we don't have to give up any of our time to take care of him, of a sponsor family."

Others, like Sharon, posited that young people did not have the time available for resettlement tasks such as driving the refugees to appointments:

> But [younger people] don't have the time to be driving to medical appointments all week because they have jobs, you know? And so it pretty much does need seniors, or retired people, at least.

In making this claim, Sharon spoke about how busy her adult children were. With their jobs and family life, she did not think it would be feasible for them to participate in sponsoring to the same extent. Ryan offered a different reason for the reliance on older community members for sponsorship:

> What I've observed is that there's an institutional suspicion among a lot of, or some younger people, the younger demographics. They tend to be more suspicious of institutions than older people. And so their giving or their contributions tend to be more episodic and more, you know, in response to the kind of the visceral kind of need of the moment or what's dominating social media at the moment. Whereas older people seem to have a bit of a longer view and they seem to have a bit more staying power, as far as it's, it's very difficult to get anybody under 40 to commit to a committee these days it seems, it just is for whatever reason. There are so many, there's economic reasons, there's social reasons, there's, you know, there's a laundry list of reasons. But I did notice those trends in the work with refugees for sure. A lot of young people would show up for this or that thing and they would give a little bit here or there, but the people that were there week in week out, coming to meetings, planning, they tended to be older.

Ryan suggested that it was not just the age of sponsors and the time available that made them more willing to participate in sponsorship. Instead he suggested that there is "institutional suspicion" among younger people. As a result, Canadian Christian churches are seeing reduced membership among younger people. Since the 1960s Christian church affiliation, membership, and participation has been declining. This is important because, as was discussed in chapter two, Christian groups have dominated private sponsorship for some time in Canada.

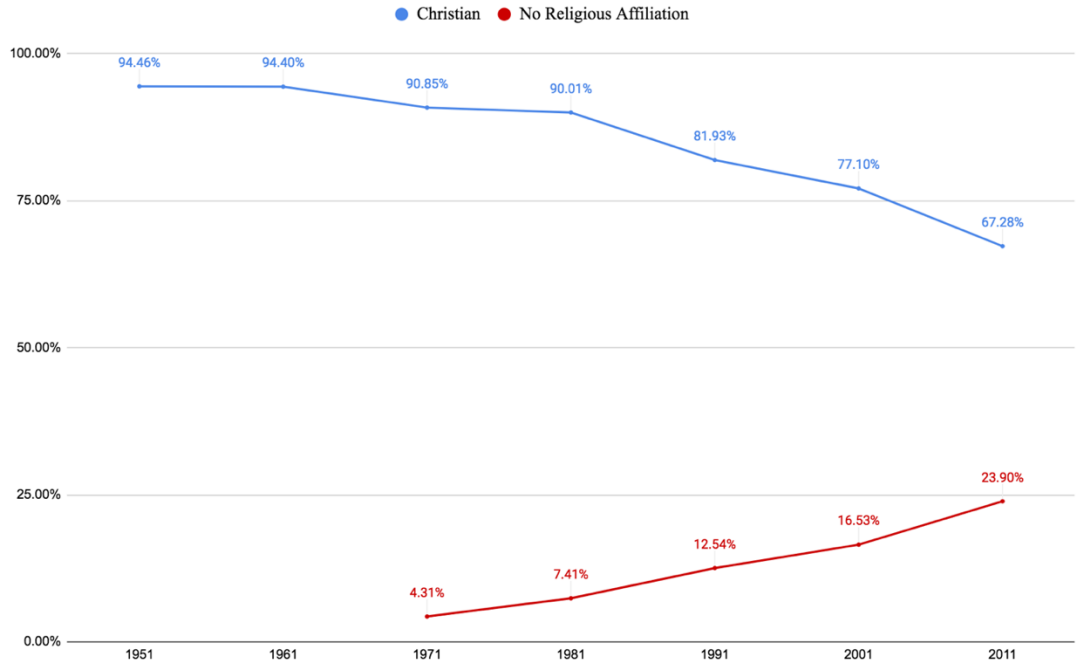

Figure 5.1: Percentage of Canadians Who Identify as Christian or Having No Religious Affiliation, 1951-2011. The data for 1951-2001 are from Canada's national census (Statistics Canada, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001). Data included for 2011 are from the National Household Survey, which replaced the census that year and used a different methodology (Statistics Canada, 2011b). Religious affiliation is only collected every ten years. Before 1971, no religious affiliation was grouped into "other" religions, and therefore was not included.

As shown in Figure 5.1, the number of Canadians who identify as Christian is declining. Macdonald and Clarke (2017) argue that this disaffiliation with Christian churches means that "Canadian society is entering into a new era, a post Christian era," where churches will continue to face empty pews, and "crises of finance, identity, and future direction" (p. 11). One of the critical results of this declining membership is that it will "continue to have a profound impact on civil society, most clearly seen in the decreases in volunteering and charitable giving" (p. 11). The PSR Program is an example of the type of volunteering and charitable giving that may be at risk as membership continues to decline. It is not surprising that Ryan felt this was a concern for future church projects including sponsorship:

> It's not just churches that are dying. It's civic organizations, community groups. Like I hear this all over the place from people that young people just aren't picking these up, and once they're gone, what's going to take their place? And it is a concern of mine. I hope it's not, I hope it's not a well-founded concern. I really hope that I'm wrong.

If Ryan's observations hold true, then the PSR Program, which is currently sustained by civic organizations and community groups, may need to take a different approach. One element that is significant to keep in mind is that while membership to Christian denominations are falling, there is growth among other religious communities, as shown in Figure 5.2.

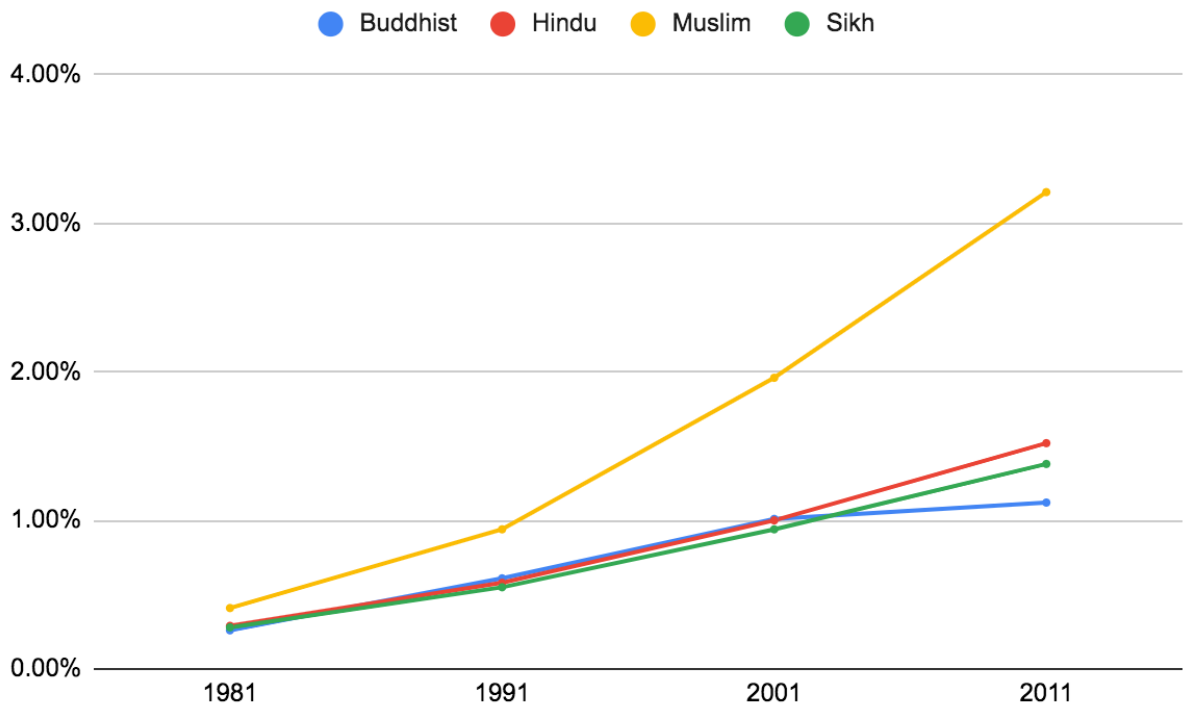

Figure 5.2: Percentage of Canadians Who Identify as Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh, 1981-2011. The data for 1981-2001 is from Canada's national census (Statistics Canada, 1981, 1991, 2001). Data included for 2011 are from the National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2011b). Before 1981, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh faiths were not differentiated, and instead were grouped as "other".

In terms of sustainability and religious affiliation specifically, there are different avenues opening up that could be promising. Though they were not represented in the present

study, there is evidence that these faith communities are involved with private sponsorship as well. In Alberta, SAHs like the Islamic Family and Social Services Association serve as an example. Policymakers may find it useful to continue to engage with groups outside of the Christian realm of sponsorship. It could also include engaging with Christian faiths like the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) who have growing congregations in places like the Lethbridge area and have not historically been involved with the PSR Program. It may also be necessary to look beyond faith-based organizations to other community networks including clubs, school groups, community centres, and less-structured groups. A reframing of the sponsorship program's reliance on community organizations may be an opportunity to improve the sustainability of the program. One way that Canada has encouraged charitable giving is by allowing Canadians to claim a tax credit when they donate to a qualified donee. Qualified donees are registered charities, municipalities, and amateur athletic associations, among others, that can issue official donation receipts for gifts they receive from individuals and corporations (Government of Canada, 2011). Because churches, and other civic organizations are registered charities, when they participate in private sponsorships, they are able to issue official donation receipts. This is an added reason why sponsorships tend to amalgamate around organizations like churches. In my interview with Erin, she shared how this came about in her sponsorship group:

> It worked really well doing that because the churches could actually receipt donations, the docs couldn't, the university couldn't. Like we looked at was that a possibility when we had started all of this and it wasn't without the university taking it on as an official, and that's super complicated. They couldn't. But this worked really well because the churches could. So the church in Coaldale said they would look after the receipting and the books. So we opened a special account just for this and you know, did all the receipting and the rest.
>
> -Erin

Of the seven sponsorship groups represented in this study, only one was not associated with an SAH, community organization, or church. Linda, Ian, and Bev sponsored Vienne's family in 1979 to Stirling, Alberta. Bev recalled that at that time, one of the factors that helped them become involved was that the government was offering charitable status to any group that participated in private sponsorship:

> So the federal government did something very unusual at that time as an incentive for us. This is my opinion, I don't know this to be true. I think this is the reason, as an incentive for us to all give money and put that $5,000 in the bank, they gave each [private sponsorship] group that came together charitable status, unless they were a religious organization that might already have charitable status, but we weren't. We were just a group of friends who got together. So our group got federal charitable status before we even got our provincial societal status. And that's the reverse of the normal procedure.
>
> -Bev

The way that Bev got together with friends to do a sponsorship is an example of one of the ways that people organize and donate today. For example, GoFundMe pages are a common way for neighbourhood and community groups to come together to support causes, events, actions, and people in a less structured format. From a policy standpoint, enabling community practices that form more organically and may not be long lasting to take advantage of tax credits for charitable giving may be one way to encourage sustainable sponsorships outside of faith groups and community organizations.

In addition to sustaining volunteers for sponsorship, there is also the challenge of sustaining general community support. In Ryan's first excerpt, he hinted at the motivation of social media for getting people involved with refugee causes. There are a number of challenges that arise from relying on "crises" to sustain public engagement with refugee resettlement. Notably, it can overshadow the fact that forced migration, displacement, and the need for resettlement are ongoing concerns and raises questions about the

sustainability of the program. Figure 5.3 shows the number of UNHCR refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people between 1980 and 2019.

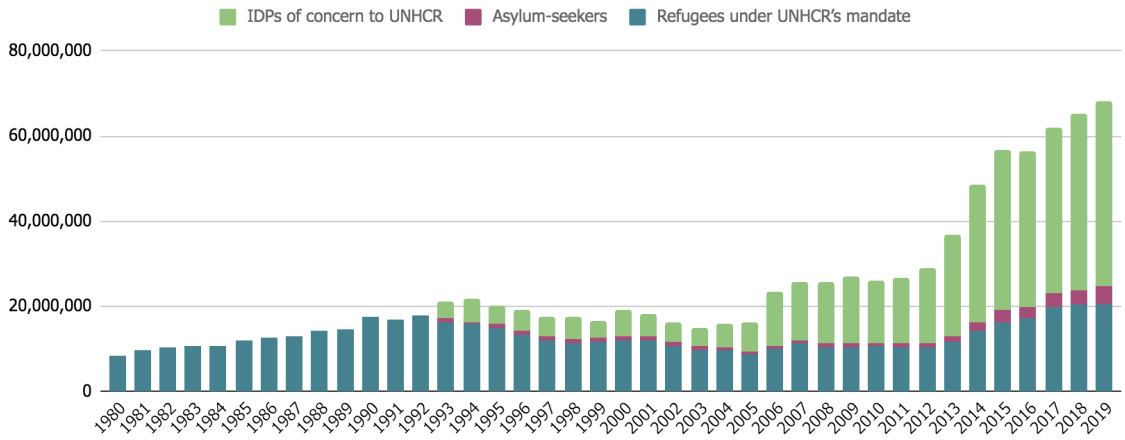

Figure 5.3: Refugees under UNHCR's Mandate, Asylum Seekers, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) of Concern to UNHCR, 1980-2019. This figure was produced from data from the UNHCR Refugee Data Finder (2020).

Over the 40 years represented in the graph, the number of refugees alone has remained between approximately 10 and 20 million people per year. This shows that forced migration, displacement, and the need for resettlement are ongoing concerns. Yet when looking at the number of privately sponsored refugees in Lethbridge over those same years (as seen in Figure 3.1) the trend is more sporadic. While there is evidence that resettlement needs are consistent or growing, there is significant variability in the number of people who are sponsored from year to year. At times when refugee movements are viewed as crises, support for private sponsorship increases. In this research, two time periods presented themselves as key moments in Canadian sponsorship, the Indochinese refugee crisis of 1979-1981 and the Syrian refugee crisis of 2015-2018. All the participants in this study were most closely connected to sponsorship within these two time periods. There are a number of things that happened or were happening that helped to frame these time periods as crises.

Refugee crises are framed by shifts in discourse—where the conversations happening in communities become about refugees. For example, during the 2015 Federal Election season Justin Trudeau made a promise to bring in 25,000 Syrian refugees. This was in response to the conversations that people were having, the push for resettlement, and advocacy that was taking place in Canada during this time in response to dramatic images broadcast on news and social media of hundreds of thousands of people making their way across the Mediterranean in makeshift vessels to seek refuge in Europe. The use of iconic images is one way that changes in discourse such as the one that occurred in Canada in late 2015 are engendered. On September 3, 2015, a photo of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old boy whose body washed up on Turkish shores after his family tried to escape Syria made media headlines. One reason why photographs like that of Alan Kurdi made such an impact during this time is related to what psychologists have called "the identified victim effect" where a single photo of an identified individual will capture more attention, interest, and aid, than statistics (Slovic et al., 2017, p. 641). Images like this compel people to act and shape certain time periods into perceived crises. Together these created a unique cultural moment where interest in and demand for private sponsorships became much more widely present in the Canadian landscape. This created a distinctive setting for resettlement through private sponsorships that took place during these times. Below are four excerpts from participant who spoke about doing sponsorship during a "crisis" moment:

> We were very aware that we did this sponsorship in a very unique cultural moment with respect to the Syrian refugee crisis and with just the explosion of social media and how that affected it.
>
> -Ryan

> The turning point with our group was in September 2015, when a photo was shown worldwide of Syrian two-year-old Alan Kurdi's body washed up on a beach in Turkey, after attempting to escape Syria. When the picture went viral, all kinds of people wanted to support our project.
>
> -Barb

> I mean, it was a big thing with just the stories of the hardships that they went through to escape from Laos and Vietnam. So, you know, that kind of tugged at your heart strings.
>
> -Linda

> And then all of a sudden there were 25,000 Syrians coming. And so all of Lethbridge sort of went onto alert about, you know, Syrians were going to be coming. "The Syrians are coming, the Syrians are coming!" And we were getting so much response.
>
> -Erin

These four community members expressed that doing sponsorship during a so-called crisis enabled them to gain significant community support including donations of money and items, but also in terms of community engagement. It also created visceral reactions, something Linda described as tugging at their heart strings. This level of community excitement and conversation encouraged involvement with the PSR Program. As a result, the support network for sponsors and refugees looked different during this time. For example, in Lethbridge the YMCA gave free memberships to Syrian refugees, city programs were made available for free or low cost, and a city committee which came to be known as the Lethbridge Immigration Partnership was formed. While Syrian refugees were arriving, Lethbridge looked very different as a location for resettlement than it had previously. It is in these times of perceived crisis that the political, economic, historical, social, and geographic contexts create a certain kind of welcome.

However, participants also highlighted that the connection between cultural moments of refugee crisis and support for sponsorship create a challenge for sustaining the program:

> Part of the initial sort of support in Lethbridge was very much tied to like Alan Kurdi and that who are we as Canadians and that's dissipated. So I think, I don't think we could just raise the money we raised as easily as we raised it… five years ago.
>
> -Erin

> Refugees haven't been the highlight in the news currently because at the time... it was the same time that the picture of the baby that washed up [Alan Kurdi] kind of, it spread. That's what got support. But I remember what we talked about very clearly in Ottawa with the members, like with the actual, I mean, the people from the headquarters, is that the refugee crisis has been going on indefinitely. Like it's been prevalent for a long time, and not everybody really pays attention to it unless something like that happens, like, for example, that picture. Like maybe, or it is sad to say, perhaps there's some other people who haven't been quite as focused on it or as aware about it until they saw the picture and until everybody started talking about it in the news. And then now social media or the mainstream are talking about something else. So perhaps like I'm wary or I'm afraid that people have forgotten that it's still an issue and that people still need help. Like, there are still millions of people in refugee camps currently…
>
> -Wynona

Erin and Wynona share concern that when the situations facing refugees are no longer front-page news, it is difficult to sustain private sponsorship; raising money, getting donations, finding interested people, and having general community support becomes more difficult. On one hand private sponsorship offers an outlet for those who are compelled to do something. It takes the energy that exists during these times and makes it productive in the form of private sponsorships. However, the clear challenge is that relying on "crises" to sustain public engagement is not a sustainable way to handle the consistent and ongoing need for refugee resettlement worldwide. However, an opportunity may exist for the short-term support for refugees that arises during times of crisis to be leveraged and used for more long-term sustainable resettlement.

In the fall of 2015 a group of University of Lethbridge students started a local chapter of the World University Service of Canada—often referred to as WUSC. Their goal was to participate in the Student Refugee Program, a national program that resettles

student refugees to Canada, giving them both permanent residency and a scholarship to attend the university. In their first year, the club fundraised and received donations to sponsor their first student. However, as Nicole expressed, they were concerned that gaining this support year after year would become unsustainable:

> There was a pretty strong effort to raising money. And that had been all well and good, but that wasn't going to be sustainable. So they decided that we needed to have a referendum where money from school fees could go into WUSC.

Following the arrival of their first refugee student, they decided to campaign for a levy where every University of Lethbridge student would pay $2.00 per semester as part of their fees that would go toward the Student Refugee Program. Leading up to this Student Union referendum they campaigned on campus for support and were successful in passing the referendum. Reflecting on this time period, Grace shared the following reflection:

> ...this is a moment in media, this is a moment in people's thoughts and we have to kind of, for lack of a better word capitalize on that. On getting people's attention in that way. Again, the thing I struggled with a lot, but found a necessary evil to like, to use this moment to get people's attention. And it worked.

WUSC offers an example of how sponsorship may be able to shift away from a reliance on media moments and crises and toward a more sustainable approach to refugee resettlement. Yet, Grace directs us to question how capitalizing on these crisis moments may be of ethical concern. In times of refugee crisis, some lives are showcased while others are hidden. Those in need who do not come from the crisis zone may be left behind. Resettlement spots are scarce and when receiving them is so closely tied to popular discourse, the media, iconic images, and framing displacement of certain people as a crisis, the equitable allocation of resettlement spots is unlikely.

As the PSR Program continues to be utilized as the largest source of refugee resettlement in Canada, it is important to consider the various challenges that exist in sustaining the program. A large number of sponsors are older Canadians, who are often retired. Relying on them may not be sustainable if younger groups do not commit to this same level of volunteerism. As Ryan suggests, lack of participation in civic organizations and Christian churches may be a concern for the PSR Program. Policymakers should consider alternatives to relying on these types of organizations to ensure the sustainability of the program. A second concern for sustaining the program is whether it can be maintained outside of perceived refugee "crises". Groups like WUSC offer one example of how sustainability can be built into the fabric of a sponsorship group. Other groups that collect regular payments, such as schools, or have mechanisms to support continuous giving, such as workplace giving payroll deduction campaigns, may also be able to make use of this structure. One of the dimensions of sponsorship that has been used to sustain the program is naming. In the section that follows, I argue that naming undermines goals that seek to resettle refugees who are the most vulnerable.

5.3 The Trouble with "Naming"

> Make sure that you sponsor the family who really needs to come here… I feel personally, if my family was doing well there and if I would like to help someone, if my family is doing well and I know someone else who's poor or who needs extra help, I would like to help the other one, even if my family is still there.
>
> -Muna

With growing calls for the demands of global displacement to be shared more equitably, refugee resettlement has become a way for countries geographically separated from refugee flows, like Canada, to take part in responsibility sharing. However, resettlements only accommodate a small fraction of displaced persons. By mid 2020, the number of forcibly displaced persons worldwide surpassed 80 million (United Nations High

Commission for Refugees, 2020). In the same year, only 22,800 of these forcibly displaced persons were resettled. While 2020 was an outlier due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019 the number of people resettled was just 63,726. This means that there is immense scarcity in the number of resettlement spots, and decisions have to be made about how to allocate them.

The distribution mechanism, or the "normative criteria that guides choices" is an important policy consideration (Lenard, 2020, p. 65). It is generally accepted that the most appropriate distribution mechanism is vulnerability, as opposed to merit or economic contributions (See for example Lenard, 2020). Canada's resettlement program has most recently focused on prioritizing urgent and vulnerable cases. As is suggested in Canada's UNHCR Handbook, "if cases are assessed as vulnerable, they will be prioritized before regular refugee cases" (p. 9). Here they define vulnerability as a "person [who] has a greater need of protection than other applicants because of particular circumstances that give rise to a heightened risk to their physical safety or well being. The vulnerability may result from circumstances such as lack of protection normally provided by a family or a medical condition" (Government of Canada, 2018, p. 9). For office-referred refugees selected by the UNHCR, we can expect that choices about who is prioritized are based on their assessment of vulnerability.

However, private sponsors have the option of choosing a refugee selected by the UNHCR or identifying someone by name. This points to an important question for private sponsorship; how much autonomy should sponsors be given in choosing the refugees they sponsor? I argue that if vulnerability is the accepted distribution mechanism for resettlement spots then the practice of "naming" undermines Canada's goals of resettling those who are most vulnerable. A common concern with naming is that sponsors may

select refugees based on discriminatory connections such as "shared religious, cultural, and ethnic identities" (Lenard, 2020, p. 66). For one of the sponsorship groups represented in my research, the leader of their church required that they sponsor a family from their faith. This may also happen in less explicit contexts such as in Haugen's research when a group chose a Christian family because they felt they would be less at risk of negative attitudes and discrimination upon arrival (Haugen, 2019). Aside from these discriminatory practices, sponsors who take part in naming may end up choosing refugees who are less vulnerable.

There is concern that taking away the "naming" aspects of private sponsorships will reduce support for the program, both in terms of donations and people interested in being involved. Chapman (2014) argues that naming is important because, "it is often a personal connection that compels sponsors to commit to the financial undertaking and provide the year of settlement services" (p. 9). Similarly, Lehr and Dyck (2020) argue that the sustainability of the PSR Program without naming is questionable. However, findings from my research suggest that naming may not play as significant of a role in encouraging sponsorships as these arguments suggest. All of the sponsorship groups in the study made the decision to sponsor and began fundraising before selecting their refugees. However, sponsors used naming as a way to more efficiently move their projects forward when the number of visa-office referred refugees were less than the number of sponsorship groups wishing to participate. Erin explains the initial frustration this caused for her group:

> But the government wasn't putting any Syrians on the list. Like we were assuming at that point we would do BVOR except there were none. By eight o'clock Monday morning when the list opened up [the MCC representative] would go on, the handful of Syrians were already snatched up by those blasted Easterners… We were still trying to do a BVOR and finding it very frustrating. So it was now like

> the end of September and we still, you know, we couldn't get a name. We were already getting financial support. We were already getting furniture and, you know, we were like ready to go.

After facing frustration, an opportunity presented itself when a community member reached out in hopes of finding a group to help sponsor her extended family. As Erin explained, this "seemed ideal because it was a name, you know, it was a named sponsorship. So, we didn't have to wait for the government to do anything." In this group's circumstance, naming was not used as the motivating factor for support, but rather as a way to get around the logistical roadblock that existed because of the visa-office referral system. Another large sponsorship group that was trying to sponsor at this same time faced similar challenges:

> The problem at that time was that this was back in the I think Stephen Harper, yeah, Steven Harper was still Prime Minister then and so the policy was somewhat more restrictive and at that time, despite the huge need, there was no Syrians on the list[7]. And so we couldn't even, whether it was just because they hadn't, they were struggling to keep up with the, you know, just processing that had to happen on their end or what. But we just went to the list and there was nobody there. And so we were like this is crazy because we, we have all this money and goodwill and people are ready to and we can't sponsor anybody.
>
> -Ryan

As a result, again of the unavailability of visa-office referred refugees, Ryan's group ended up doing a named sponsorship from a personal contact:

> So it was a personal connection in the end that did it. It wasn't, because again there was nobody on the list when we wanted to do it.

[7] Between 2006 and 2015 Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government employed a rights-restrictive approach to refugee policy. This meant making it more difficult for asylum seekers to arrive in Canada, make asylum claims, and stay in Canada (Soennecken & Anderson, 2018). They were criticized during this time for their "seemingly slow and political approach to refugee resettlement" (Levitz, 2015, para. 5). In the lead-up to the 2015 Federal Election when Justin Trudeau promised to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees, Harper's promise was much more conservative at 10,000.

Both Erin and Ryan's narratives show that it was the Syrian crisis moment that was motivating their groups' efforts – despite the context of long-term displacement experienced by people from many other countries who were likely on those visa-office referral lists. However, the framing of this time as being strictly about Syrians led to an erasure of the broader context. That is, the support that was available during this time was conditional on being Syrian.

Importantly, the experiences of Erin and Ryan's groups also suggest that if naming were to be restricted, and replaced by a system that operated smoothly and efficiently, sponsors would not be discouraged from using the PSR Program. If Canada's goals for resettlement are to prioritize the most vulnerable refugees, then the use of naming in the PSR system undermines this goal. For this reason, policymakers should consider restricting the choices of sponsors so that they cannot use problematic criteria to decide which refugees are admitted.

However, it is important to consider that all of the sponsors interviewed for my research participated during times of perceived crisis when refugee resettlement was circulating in public consciousness. It is likely that between these periods of refugee crisis, the PSR Program is used more as a mechanism for family reunification. As refugees are resettled in Canada, it is common for them to encourage sponsorship groups to sponsor their family members. This has come to be known as the "echo effect" or relational migration (Chapman, 2014; Labman & Pearlman, 2018). The "echo effect" has allowed for refugees to help family members who have been left behind in refugee camps or in otherwise dangerous situations. While relational migration tends to focus on specific families or regions, attempts to restrict naming may be one way to "assure resettlement opportunities for those refugees who fall outside of the relational sphere" (Labman &

Pearlman, 2018, p. 447). However, the argument that naming allows for families to be reunited in Canada needs consideration. While family reunification is important, it should not be taking up resettlement spots. I support Lenard's suggestions that private sponsorship be used for non-family members and that, as a matter of course, family members be admitted through another system (2020). This would both ensure that families can be reunited, but also that the PSR Program aligns with Canada's resettlement goals. One of the risks of restructuring the PSR Program in this way is that during times that are not considered refugee "crises", if sponsors are not doing family reunifications, then the number of private sponsorships will fall. Though it is important to consider this concern, there are other ways to improve the sustainability of the program. For example, the WUSC group considered earlier in this chapter created a continuous source of funding so that their student refugee program can be maintained year after year. It is also important to shift away from capitalizing on crisis moments to stabilize the PSR Program so that it can be a consistent and reliable response to the ongoing need for resettlement. Evaluating the structure of Canada's PSR Program, including the principle of "naming", is also a helpful exercise for contributing to the development of community sponsorship models in other countries.

5.4 The Role of Faith-Based Groups in Canadian Sponsorship: Considerations for Policy Transfer

In 2018, after two years of consultation, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees. It aims to improve international cooperation by creating a framework for equitable and predictable responsibility-sharing. The four key objectives of this framework are to (1) ease pressure on host countries, (2) improve refugee self-reliance, (3) support safe return to countries of origin, and (4) expand access

to third-country solutions. As part of this fourth objective, states were asked "to establish private or community sponsorship programs that are additional to regular resettlement" (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2018, p. 19). This has created the impetus for Canada to share its private sponsorship model with other countries. In fact, the compact suggested that Canada's Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) Program be a resource for other countries. One of the most recent GRSI initiatives has been the development of a "step-by-step workbook for policymakers and community leaders" who are designing refugee sponsorship programs (Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, 2021). This is one way that Canada's PSR Program has been utilized for policy transfer, a term defined as "the process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system" (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000, p. 5). Some of the larger scale and more thoroughly documented uses of private or community sponsorship around the world are summarized in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Select Community/Private Sponsorship Programs Outside of Canada

Country	Name of Program	Time Frame	# of Refugees Resettled
Argentina	Programa Siria	2014-present	400 (as of July 2018)
Australia	Community Support Program	2017-present	1,000 per year (quota)
Germany	Federal Lander Sponsorship Scheme	2013-2018	23,500
	Neustart IM Team (NesT)	2019-present	400
Italy	Humanitarian Corridors	2016-present	3,100
United Kingdom	Community Sponsorship	2016-present	400 (from 2016-2019)

Note: This table contains information from Hirsch et al. (2019), Bertram et al. (2020), Bond and Kwadrans (2019), and the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (2021).

Argentina serves as an example of how the GRSI program has been used globally. Argentina's Programa Siria began as a way for Argentinians to resettle their Syrian refugee family members in 2014 (Bond & Kwadrans, 2019). Since then, the Argentine government has worked with the GRSI in workshops and site visits to expand what started as a pilot program. In 2019 the program was expanded to allow groups of three to sponsor Syrian and Palestinian nationals without family ties (Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, 2019). Unlike Canada, Argentina's sponsorship program is not additional to government resettlements. In fact, this private sponsorship scheme is the only way that Syrian refugees can be resettled to the country (Bond & Kwadrans, 2019).

The implementation of community sponsorship programs outside of Canada has had its challenges as demonstrated by the German and Australian programs. Aside from Canada, Germany was one of the earliest countries to adopt a sponsorship program in 2013. The Federal Lander Sponsorship Scheme (FLSS) lasted for five years and focused on family reunification. It was heavily criticized for placing arduous responsibility on

sponsors, including a five year undertaking, and restricting the rights of resettled refugees (Bertram et al., 2020). More recently, the German NesT program which launched in 2019 as a pilot program which aims to resettle 400 refugees in total is mainly focused on having sponsors provide housing. In Australia, the Community Sponsorship Program that began in 2017 was criticized as "an exercise in privatization of resettlement responsibilities and costs" (Hirsch et al., 2019, p. 115). The program did not respect the principle of additionality, instead taking spaces from an existing humanitarian resettlement program, had exorbitant application fees, and prioritized "work ready" refugees who had strong English skills, not the most vulnerable. Together these issues meant that community support for this program was limited.

One of the main critiques of modeling other countries' sponsorship programs on Canada's is that it "mistakenly presupposes the existence of a one-size-fits-all model for PSS [private sponsorship schemes] that neglects crucial differences between countries" (Bertram et al., 2020, p. 254). Bertram et al. (2020) argue that societal culture, defined as their uncertainty avoidance and future orientation, contributes to the compatibility of the program and thus the effectiveness of the policy transfer. However, their argument focuses on the scale of the country. What has gone unexamined in the literature is the role that Canada's faith-based organizations have played in shaping and maintaining the PSR Program and what this means for policy transfer. In the post-war period, where private sponsorship has its roots, religious organizations were key advocates for the development of the Canadian program. Key participants in the formation of the PSR Program include the Canadian Mennonite community, the Canadian Christian Council for Refugees (CCCRR), the Canadian Council of Churches, and various Jewish groups including the

Jewish Immigration Aid Society (JIAS), and the Canadian Jewish Congress[8] (Cameron, 2020). The history of Canada's PSR Program has been shaped largely by faith-based groups advocating and working with the Canadian government. The strength of this ongoing connection between faith-based institutions and refugee sponsorship was expressed by a number of participants in this research. As discussed in chapter four, one of the motivations for sponsors to be involved with private sponsorship was faith. In addition, all but one of the SAHs that participants worked with were religious institutions.

The Mennonite community is one specific group that is critical to Canadian sponsorship, and sponsorship in Lethbridge, past and present. Both their history and institutional culture have created an ethos of refugee sponsorship. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is a non-profit Anabaptist organization that is closely aligned with the Mennonite church. Their goals are to contribute to relief, development, and peacebuilding projects around the world. Some of their contemporary areas of focus include, "caring for the lives and futures of uprooted and other vulnerable people," providing supplies to "vulnerable communities in times of hunger, disaster, conflict and climate crisis," and working with churches and communities to "prevent violence and promote peace and justice" (Mennonite Central Committee, 2021). The organization was founded in 1920 by Mennonites in North America who wanted to support their co-religionists who were suffering from famine and discrimination during the Russian revolution (Enns et al., 2020). Between 1923 and 1930 they supported the resettlement of 21,000 Mennonite refugees from the Soviet Union. In 1979, MCC negotiated with and became Canada's original master agreement holder. In his personal account of this process, William Janzen,

[8] See Cameron (2020) for a more thorough description of the role of various faith groups in shaping Canadian sponsorship.

who served as a negotiator for this master agreement outlined several reasons why MCC was so quick to take on this role. These include the "substantial history of being refugees and doing sponsorship," MCC's history working in Vietnam, the disposition of Mennonite people to view the church as "a corporate social actor," and the relationship that MCC already had with the Canadian government (Janzen, 2006, pp. 217-218). MCC has continued to sustain active support for private sponsorship over the past 43 years. Enns et al. (2020) argue that this is due to MCCs heritage which is "steeped in notions of 'refugeeness'", its credibility as a SAH, and its longstanding involvement with international development work (p. 96). They also argue that MCC has maintained long-term relationships with sponsorship groups because of their "structure, reputation, and staff support" (Enns et al., 2020, p. 100). This was echoed by a number of participants in the present research:

> …he had been involved quite a bit with MCC over the years, for whatever purpose. I mean they're a good organization. So they were probably there for humanitarian reasons or whatever.
>
> -Lee

> And so [the MCC representative] sort of took us through what was involved: financially, personally, in terms of support, you know, difficulties, potential difficulties, you know, he didn't want to make this sound like it was all lovey-dovey, you know. He said like, it's often difficult and you're doing it because it's the right thing to do.
>
> -Erin

Beyond the role that MCC and the Mennonite community has played in shaping and supporting the PSR Program, there is also an institutional ethos that exists in the community that supports sponsorship. Ryan, the pastor at a Lethbridge Mennonite Church who was involved with sponsoring a large Syrian refugee family, articulated this very clearly in our interview:

> I'm not sure how much you know about the Mennonite denomination, but it's, refugee sponsorship is kind of in the DNA of our tribe for lack of a better word, because all Mennonites in Canada were refugees, many from the Ukraine or parts of Russia.
> And it's also just a deep conviction of our faith that Christ calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves and to love the people in the margins and those that need help. So it's both an expression of our faith and kind of this bone deep reality of our people that this is our story. We've been there. We know what it's like and so we have an obligation to provide refuge for those who are seeking now.
> So they were always moving, moving to new places to try and find freedom to practice their faith as they saw it. And, but it's a history of a people always on the move, always, you know, trying to find freedom and safety and peace. And so that's kind of, I think, hardwired into us in many ways and also just, you know, so pastoring a Mennonite church, obviously that ethic is deeply embedded in the people of the church.

When Ryan says, "this is our story" he is referencing the inherited family stories of being refugees. While many of these are connected to Mennonites who fled the Soviet Union in the early 20th century, Mennonite heritage is also "rooted in stories of the persecution of Anabaptists in the sixteenth century" (Enns et al., 2020, p. 105). This "bone deep reality of our people", as Ryan calls it, has created a culture of sponsorship that is part of the identity of Mennonite Churches. As Enns et al. (2020) puts it, "sponsorship through MCC gives expression to a past refugee experience, a current privileged position, and a sustained collective identity as people of peace. A unique MCC sponsorship ethos is thereby reinforced" (p. 106).

The Mennonite community serves as an example of how faith-based groups have been critical in both the formation and maintenance of Canada's PSR Program. The Canadian program has been a grass-roots initiative by faith groups who have personal and faith motivations for sponsorship. While Bertram et al. (2020) argue that national culture is an important consideration for policy transfer, this example suggests that smaller scale religious, cultural, and historical factors are also important to consider. The Mennonite community is an example of a group with a shared history of "refugeeness", a culture of

sponsorship, and an identity tied to this kind of service. Without having significant grass-roots support for sponsorship, it is difficult to imagine a private sponsorship program gaining enough support to sustain itself. For policy transfer to be successful, policymakers will need to seek out other groups that share these same features in those countries or build similar kinds of self-sustaining networks.

5.5 Conclusion

A key feature of Canada's PSR Program is that it gives passionate local groups a clear opportunity to become involved in refugee resettlement. However, this localization of consciousness and responsibility has a tendency to separate what happens in Canadian cities and communities from the broader conditions of forced migration. Rather than reconnect these scales, I have used this chapter to show that *here* and *there* are interconnected and mutually reinforced, rather than separate spheres. The localization of sponsorship raises two critical questions. First, is sponsorship an appropriate approach to forced migration? I have argued that sponsors can be empowered by utilizing spaces of engagement through which they can network with centres of power. This rescaling of sponsorship can both empower sponsors and support a systematic approach to forced migration. Second, can local groups sustain the large pressure that is placed on them for resettlement? The sustainability of the program is in jeopardy and policymakers will need to consider alternative groups, like neighbourhood organizations, and mechanisms, such as tax incentives in order to promote the program more broadly. Groups like WUSC who implemented a continuous funding source are one example of how this can be possible.

Beyond concerns about localization, there are a number of other important policy implications that arise from my analysis. I suggest limiting naming in private sponsorships to avoid discrimination and better align with Canada's goals of resettling

those who are most vulnerable. This would involve creating an alternative pathway for refugee families to be reunited. Lastly, I drew on the example of Canada's Mennonite community to show how religious communities have been critical to the implementation and continuation of sponsorship in Canada. As private sponsorship policy is transferred to other jurisdictions, it will be important for policymakers to find similar groups that share an internal motivation for sponsorship and create sustainable networks. In the concluding chapter that follows, I draw this analysis into conversation with future opportunities for private sponsorship and areas for further inquiry.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

> And I remember my parents would have house parties and the music would be Laotian music. Lots of food. My mom would make food for an army and then people would come, eat, dance and sing. And yeah, it's just like any other gathering, get together. And my parents loved it because, you know, it was just like being back at home. You know, you're around the same people, the same culture and music and stuff. But yeah, so they had those opportunities to be able to, you know, be back to their old selves, I guess.
>
> -Vienne

Building refuge looks and feels quite different for different people. For Vienne's parents, it was having opportunities to get back to their old selves. Refuge is not just about the places created and contested in Canada and in the hearts and minds of community members, it is also about a connection to home and the past. The narratives shared by participants like Vienne highlight the variety of experiences that both refugees and sponsors have as they navigate the PSR Program. In popular culture, there is a tendency to think of "the refugee experience" as a homogenous characteristic of all refugees who arrive in Canada. However, this study shows that broader factors, relationships, and individual traits all contribute to the way that sponsorship is practiced, and refuge built.

The PSR Program is unique to Canada because of its long history and large proportion of global resettlements each year. Sustained critical engagement with the program is important because of its projected growth within Canada and its use in guiding similar policy development in other countries. The research site, Lethbridge, Alberta, was chosen because of its history of sponsorship, especially in recent years, the large number of refugees who have been resettled to the area, and its size in light of growing calls for resettlement to smaller cities. Drawing on feminist political geography, this research used the everyday as an entry point to unpack the PSR Program. Through narrative focused semi-structured interviews with 25 participants, and analysis using the listening guide, I

was able to connect the narratives about sponsorship to larger themes, critiques, and opportunities moving forward. The conceptual framework has been a way to both organize this thesis, and guide analysis to show the simultaneous impact of various geographic scales on resettlement.

There were four objectives that guided this research. To (1) position refugees as active agents in narratives of private sponsorship, (2) document narratives from the PSR Program in the Lethbridge area, (3) link sponsor and refugee narratives to the analytical themes used to understand the sponsorship experience, and (4) draw policy suggestions from the narratives shared by participants. The first two were carried out methodologically. In my interviews with both sponsors and refugees I was able to capture how refugees are not simply victims in need of help, but key participants who navigate their relationships with sponsors and communities within a broader contextual backdrop. The second objective was met by interviewing three refugees, one refugee family member, and 21 sponsors who had participated in the PSR Program between 1979 and 2020. The archiving of these interviews bear witness to their experiences of sponsorship and can be used for future research, advocacy, and artistic endeavours.

6.1 Key Findings

The third objective was met through my analysis which I most specifically argued in chapters four and five. The following three sections offer a summary of these findings.

6.1.1 Individual Characteristics

Lethbridge's resettlement landscape is unique in particular because of its size, history, and social, religious, and cultural makeup. When describing Lethbridge, participants often noted the divide between those who hold socially conservative ideas, and those with more socially progressive beliefs. Unsurprisingly, this meant that while refugees and sponsors

experienced positive community welcome, there were also instances of outright discrimination. One of the largest critiques of Lethbridge, which relates to its size and geographic layout was the public transit system which was described by participants as confusing, inefficient, and limiting. Participants also noted the lack of Arabic speaking jobs and specialists in the community. The benefits of resettlement in Lethbridge focused mainly on the size of the community and the ability for resettlement networks to form. This was evident in the multidisciplinary healthcare clinic and large, multi-organizational sponsorship groups. The size of Lethbridge was at times an advantage, and at other times, a disadvantage. Overall it seems to afford more advantages as a place for resettlement because of the balance of services, opportunities, and networking abilities.

Refugees' personal, professional, and faith backgrounds played an important role in shaping their resettlement experiences. Refugees drew on pre-arrival identities and skills for language learning and job finding. Sponsors were aware that the personal backgrounds of refugees would shape the kind of supports they needed and expected this kind of diversity. Faith backgrounds also played a role in the resettlement experiences recounted in this project. Sponsors of Syrian refugees tended to be associated with Christian groups, which is consistent with the dominance of Christianity in Lethbridge and in private sponsorship more broadly. However, during the recent period of Syrian refugee resettlement in the area, community discourse in Lethbridge focused largely on the Muslim and Christian backgrounds of refugees. Both sponsors and refugees mentioned this, noting especially the negative treatment of Muslim refugees.

For sponsors, professional backgrounds played a role in shaping their sponsorships. Sponsors tended to lean on their professional skills in nursing, banking, and dentistry to offer services and supports to the refugees they sponsored. Aside from their

professional backgrounds, sponsors also drew on their personal experiences for motivation to participate. The most common motivations for people to become involved in sponsorship were a desire for connections and friendship in the community, personal experiences living, volunteering, and working abroad, wanting to give back to the community, media coverage, and faith.

6.1.2 Relationships

One element of private sponsorship that separates it from other forms of resettlement, is the unique relationships that are formed between sponsors, refugees, and communities. Participants made use of the sponsor-community nexus in their attempts to reshape community discourses. Participants employed three main strategies to do this; sharing positive stories about refugees, dissociating "their" refugees from broader discourses about migration, and appealing to shared beliefs and values. Though they offer an example of the community-sponsor relationship, the strategies have challenges. The first two disempower refugees' ideas of success and create a tiered system of deservingness among refugees and asylum seekers. The third risks isolating the work of refugee resettlement to certain groups.

The relationship between sponsors and refugees forces both parties to contend with paternalism, power dynamics, and orientalism. A common theme among participants was the similarity between sponsorship and family, often using familial terms like grandma and grandpa to describe the role of sponsors. Sponsors used kinship metaphors both to structure the resettlement before arrival, and as a way of describing the intimacy that developed over the course of the resettlement. While sponsors used these terms to create a welcoming environment for refugees, they should be aware that families are also powerful sites of inequality, exploitation, and dependence, and have hierarchical

dynamics. It is important for sponsors to use kinship metaphors cautiously in order to avoid paternalism and the reduction of refugee agency. Beyond these analogies to kinship, the family unit is also an important element of who gets sponsored. Choices of who gets resettled are steeped in family norms because of their relationship to vulnerability and assimilability. In addition, the way that vulnerability is ascribed to families is highly gendered. While women without families are viewed as at risk, single men are viewed as risky. The focus on families has been enacted in Canadian resettlement agendas, as well as the choices of private sponsors. While vulnerability is an important element of deciding who gets resettled, it is important to pay attention to the ways in which vulnerability is socially and culturally allocated, and who this excludes.

Another key aspect of the relationship between sponsors and refugees is the expectation of gratefulness. Participants in this research expressed that refugees felt obligated to be grateful for the support of their sponsors and their opportunity to resettle in Canada. Though sponsors expressed discomfort with this, noting that they did not participate to be thanked, the expectation of gratefulness manifested in material ways. This expectation is one reason why paternalism and orientalism can be so pervasive in sponsorships. While there were a couple of examples of explicit paternalism expressed by sponsors, more were subtle, nuanced, and covert. Overall, the majority of sponsors resisted paternalism by utilizing what Haugen et al. (2020) call mutualistic approaches to sponsorship. Sponsors expressed how the relationship was mutually beneficial, often noting the friendships and cultural learnings they received from the sponsorship. They were also willing to be self-critical of both themselves and their approaches to sponsorship.

The relationship between refugees and communities came into focus when considering the social capital inherent in the PSR Program. Refugees gain a social network before they arrive in Canada because of the emotional and social support from their sponsors, and potentially their family members. Drawing on Putnam's (2000) notion of bridging and bonding types of social capital, I argue that the social bridges between sponsors and refugees give refugees opportunities to draw on larger community networks, such as for employment seeking endeavors. Social bonds existed in sponsorships where refugees had pre-arrived family members or members of their cultural community who they could rely on. However, it is important to consider the reluctance that refugees may have in using these networks.

6.1.3 Broader Factors

One of the challenges facing private sponsorship in Canada is the dissociation of what happens *here* from what happens *there*. Rather than simply reconnect these two spaces, I suggest that the PSR Program ought to be analyzed through a lens that incorporates the interaction of multiple simultaneous scales. I have drawn on elements of feminist political geography, particularly using the everyday as an entry point to uncover how political, geographic, historical, economic, and social elements have shaped sponsorship experiences. The increased reliance on local communities for humanitarian projects is one way that sponsorship is separated from its national and global dimensions. While local groups have been empowered to participate in resettlement, it can also limit entry points into political decision making and concentrate efforts on one-off local events. This contributes to the disempowerment of sponsors' contributions to the global field of forced migration. Sponsors can be empowered by utilizing spaces of engagement through which they could create networks of association and exchange, and access centres of power.

Increased localism also calls into question the sustainability of the program. Concerns about sustainability expressed by participants focused on the need to sustain volunteers and the challenge of sustaining support outside of times of perceived crisis.

6.2 Moving Private Sponsorship forward

The fourth objective for this project was to draw policy recommendations from the narratives of participants. Feminist approaches in geography suggest that the end point of research is not only critique, but rather what Dowler and Sharp (2001) call "positive politics", or a constructive path forward. This can include highlighting how communities and individuals challenge, rewrite, and push back against forces of geopolitical power. However, in the context of private sponsorship, a positive politics also involves drawing attention to the opportunities to move sponsorship forward in a critical, reflexive, and hopeful way. Drawing from the narratives themselves, and the themes described above there are a number of areas where this can take place.

My description and analysis of settlement experiences in the Lethbridge area suggests that small cities offer a balance between offering settlement supports and services and hosting support networks where sponsors and refugees can easily access what they need. In Lethbridge, large sponsorship groups and a collaborative health model offer examples of these types of support networks. Policymakers should continue to utilize small cities like Lethbridge for the resettlement of refugees.

An area of debate within private sponsorship is the practice of naming. Evidence from this research shows that when sponsors are given the ability to name the refugees who are sponsored, discrimination based on faith takes place. Further, it does not align with Canada's goals of resettling those who are most vulnerable. I argue that sponsors should not have the autonomy to select refugees for private sponsorship through naming.

There are two common arguments that support the continuation of naming. The first is that it allows refugees who arrive in Canada to have their family members who are still in refugee situations sponsored. However, I support a separate system, as suggested by Lenard (2020) that admits these family members as a matter of course, rather than using PSR spots. The second common argument is that without naming, it will be difficult to sustain the program. The circumstances of participants in my research show that naming was not the motivation, but rather, a way of avoiding the logistical challenges that existed with the visa-office referral system. However, it is important to consider that naming plays a more significant role in the PSR Program outside of times of crisis. Rather than using naming as a mechanism for sustainability, I argue that there are other systematic opportunities to improve the program's sustainability.

Sustainability is one of the most pressing concerns for Canada's PSR Program. Participants identified the immense support for refugee sponsorship that took place during times of crisis but noted that this has not been sustained. While the support during this time was useful, it is important to stabilize the PSR Program so that it can be a consistent and reliable response to the ongoing need for resettlement globally. Participants also shared apprehensions about sustaining community support and volunteers. With many sponsors being retired, there are worries that young people are not taking part in volunteer activities, joining churches, and aligning with civic organizations to the same extent as older generations. Since the 1960s, there has been a growing decline in membership with Canada's Christian churches. Because they have played such a significant role in both the formation and implementation of sponsorship, this is concerning for the sustainability of the PSR Program. Policymakers should engage with groups who have been involved with sponsorship in more recent years such as those of Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist

denominations, and other Christian faiths like the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is also necessary to look beyond faith-based groups to less structured organizations like clubs, school groups, and community centres. One example of this is the WUSC group at the University of Lethbridge that created a continuous source of funding through a student tuition levy and is able to sponsor a student through the student refugee program every year. Other prospects to improve the sustainability of the program include offering different types of groups the opportunity to issue charitable giving receipts and taking advantage of continuous giving schemes. Taking these steps to improve the sustainability of the program is important if Canada wishes to meet its targets of increasing the program. It will also be useful to other countries as they implement their own forms of community sponsorship.

Through the GRSI program, Canada continues to share its PSR Program with other countries, notably Argentina. As the impetus for this policy transfer continues, it will be important to consider Canada's background with relying on faith-based groups. Dating back to the 1920s, faith organizations like the Catholic Immigration Aid Society, Jewish Immigration Aid Society, and Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, among others, have played a significant role in both the development of sponsorship schemes and sustained support for the program today (Cameron, 2020). The Mennonite community was noted by participants for having a strong background in sponsorship, a history of being refugees, and a community ethos that supports sponsorship. For policy transfer to be successful, policymakers will need to consider the religious, cultural, and historical factors in their own countries that might help or hinder the development of similar programs. In order to sustain the grass-roots support that Canada has from groups like

MCC, policymakers should partner with groups that have a similar internal motivation for being involved.

6.2.1 Opportunities for Future Research

One of the limitations of this study was the difficulty in recruiting refugee participants. This meant that many of the stories shared about the sponsorship experience came from the perspective of sponsors. As discussed in chapter three, there are also a number of examples where refugees were reluctant to share challenges they had experienced due to a concern that they would seem ungrateful for the help of their sponsors or their opportunity to resettle in Canada. For example, only sponsors shared stories of overt discrimination and Islamophobia with me. To paint a more complete picture of the sponsorship experience, future research should continue to include refugee perspectives. One way that this could be possible is through an ethnographic approach where a researcher takes part in a sponsorship process. Participant observation that immerses the researcher into the everyday practices of sponsorship would afford a more nuanced, though highly subjective, analysis of the sponsorship experience. Having an "insider" role would also offer a more detailed account of one specific sponsorship experience. Several ethical questions would need to be navigated including whether to make use of deception to get an even more unfettered view. This method of research would help uncover the types of experience and events that often remain untold in interviews and would allow refugee participants' perspectives to come through.

With growing calls for regionalization in immigration and refugee resettlement, smaller communities will continue to welcome immigrants and refugees. There is a need for continued research in small cities and smaller towns. Barb, one of the sponsors in this study had become involved with an Eritrean family who moved to Lethbridge after being

sponsored by community members in Tatla Lake, BC. Tatla Lake is a small community on the Bella Coola Road about half way between Williams Lake and Bella Coola. The family moved to Lethbridge for several reasons including access to jobs and health care specialists. Though a small community created some challenges for the family, Barb was quick to point out many of the opportunities that were offered to them in the community including one-on-one language classes and learning skills for living off the land. The network of community support in Tatla Lake was really strong. Continued research on both the experience of resettlement in small towns and the ways that small towns can become better equipped to offer the services and supports that newly arrived refugees need would be a benefit for future private sponsorships. This type of capacity building may make it possible for community members in smaller towns and cities to become more involved with the PSR Program, which could also contribute to the sustainability of the program.

6.3 Conclusion

Over the past 43 years, Canadians have been sponsoring refugees through the PSR Program. Those refugees have come from all over the world, bringing with them diverse identities, perspectives, and skills. Sponsors and refugees have made a mark on Canadian communities and will continue to in the future. This research adds to the growing literature on Canada's private sponsorship program, specifically from the perspective of refugees and sponsors. In particular, my conceptual framework which describes the intersection of individual characteristics, relational factors, and broader contexts is a potential analytical tool to better understand the sponsorship experience. Further, it builds on feminist discussions and conceptualizations of geographical scale by seeing sponsorship through the everyday. It is my hope that the critiques and opportunities

presented in this thesis can be used by policymakers, sponsors, community groups, and refugees who seek a purposeful move forward for the program. While sponsorship contends with challenges to sustainability and a push to provide guidance to other countries, it is key that the policy suggestions be utilized, and the analysis considered. Policymakers can make use of this research by taking serious steps to improve the sustainability of the program, fostering sponsorship opportunities in smaller communities, reconsidering the use of "naming", and acknowledging the role of faith-based groups when helping other countries implement community sponsorship models.

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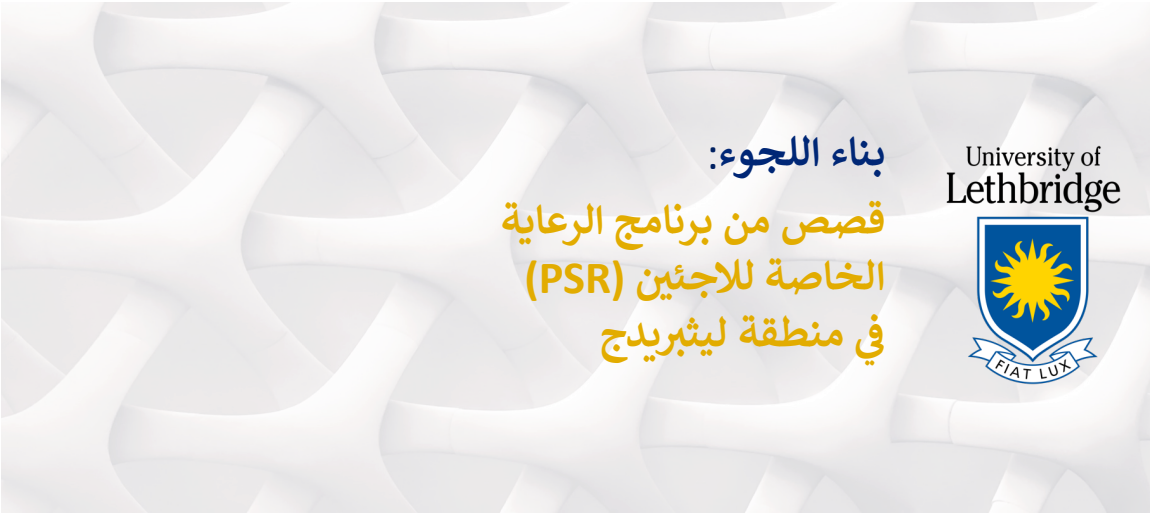
APPPENDIX 1: ENGLISH RECRUITMENT POSTER

APPENDIX 2: ARABIC RECRUITMENT POSTER



المشروع

مشروع الرعاية الخاصة للاجئين

- أرغب في التعرف على تجربة الرعاية الخاصة في منطقة ليثبريدج من خلال التحدث مباشرة مع اللاجئين والرعاة.
- إذا وافقت ، سيتم تخزين قصصك وذكرياتك في المجموعة الرقمية لجامعة ليثبريدج.

سيكون هناك مترجمون

من يمكنه المشاركة

أرغب أن أتحدث مع...

- أشخاص تزيد أعمارهم عن 15 عامًا وتمت إعادة توطينهم في كندا من خلال برنامج PSR في أي وقت!
- أشخاص تزيد أعمارهم عن 15 عامًا وشاركوا في رعاية اللاجئين بأي شكل من الأشكال!
- ستشمل مشاركتك اجتماعًا أوليًا مدته 30 دقيقة للتعرف على المشروع وتحديد ما إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة ، ومقابلة لمدة ساعة إلى ساعتين (عبر الهاتف أو من خلال دردشة الفيديو)
- سوف تتلقى 25 دولارًا مقابل مشاركتك في المشروع.

الخطوات التالية

إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة في هذا المشروع

- اتصل:

ماريا بيسبلاغ
جامعة ليثبريدج
قسم الجغرافيا والبيئة
403-634-9438
Mariah.besplug@uleth.ca

تمت مراجعة هذا المشروع البحثي من ناحية المقبولية الأخلاقية وتم اعتماده بواسطة لجنة أبحاث البشر المشاركين من جامعة ليثبريدج.

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SPONSORS

Demographic information – Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? (date of birth, place of birth, sponsorship group affiliation, faith background (later in interview))

1. Let's just begin by talking about how you became involved with sponsorship.
    - Motivations (global, background, faith, media), community connections
2. Would you be able to walk me through the sponsorship process from the beginning when
you became involved?
    - Group dynamics, networks, choosing the refugee, community connections, media, raising money.
    - What it felt like when they arrived, expectations vs reality, drawing on previous experience
    - Decision making – where to live, schools
    - Would you do it again?
3. Can you share a time in your experience as a sponsor when you were proud?
    - Of yourself, of the refugees
4. What were some of the biggest challenges that you faced with sponsorship?
    - Cause, solution, anything you would do differently
5. The title of this project is building refuge. From your perspective, what might building refuge mean?
    - Yourself, refugees, agency, resiliency, resistance
6. With the situation we have been experiencing with Covid-19, I am wondering whether the relationships you developed through sponsorship played a role? If so, in what ways or how?
7. Sometimes in our community I hear people using stereotypes when they are talking about refugees. How has this been a part of your experience?
    - Resiliency, agency, empowerment, resistance, broader structures, why they exist
8. 20 or 30 years from now, what do you think Canadian refugee sponsorship will look like?
    - Who will be sponsoring? Social media role? Steady or crisis oriented?
9. Do you ever think about how your work as a sponsor here is connected to the bigger picture or global situation of refugees?
10. If you could give advice to future sponsors, what advice would you give them?
11. Are there any other stories that you think are important to document or that you'd like to share?
12. Do you have any questions for me?

Conclusion:
If I have any questions about the interview in the future, would it be okay for me to contact you?
Do you know of anyone else who you think could participate in this study?

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR REFUGEES

Demographic information – Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? (date of birth, place of birth, time in Canada, faith background (later in interview))

1. Let's just begin by talking about your background before you came to Canada.
    - Pre-arrival identity, job, family, important events
2. Would you be able to walk me through the process of how you ended up coming to Lethbridge?
    - Circumstance of leaving, getting accepted, getting matched, Canada, travelling
3. When you arrived in Lethbridge, what happened then?
    - Sponsors, decision-making, new things, first thoughts and feelings
4. Can you tell me about an experience where you felt proud?
    - Agency, resilience, open to any time, then prompt for after arrival in Canada
5. What are some of the biggest challenges that you have faced since arriving in Canada?
    - Cause, solution
6. Is there anything that you wish your sponsor had done (past) or did (present) differently?
7. Do you think having a sponsor(s) changed your experience coming to Lethbridge? In what ways?
8. With the situation we have been experiencing with Covid-19, I am wondering whether the relationships you developed through sponsorship played a role? If so, in what ways or how?
9. The title of this project is building refuge. From your perspective, what might building refuge mean?
    - Yourself, sponsors, agency, resiliency, resistance
10. Sometimes in our community I hear people using stereotypes when they are talking about refugees. How has this been a part of your experience?
    - Resiliency, agency, empowerment, resistance, broader structures, why they exist
11. *20 or 30 years from now, what do you think Canadian refugee sponsorship will look like?
    - Who will be sponsoring? Social media role? Steady or crisis oriented?
12. If you could give advice to future sponsors or refugees, what advice would you give them?
13. Are there any other stories that you think are important to document or that you'd like to share?
14. Do you have any questions for me?

Conclusion:

If I have any questions about the interview in the future, would it be okay for me to contact you?

Do you know of anyone else who you think could participate in this study?

*only if it seems reasonable to ask