‘I’M THE ONE WHO IS LOOKING AFTER MY FAMILY’: REFUGEE YOUTH BROKERS, PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION, AND SETTLEMENT IN CANADA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN GEOGRAPHY

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

JULY 2015

ABSTRACT

Refugee youth are a commonly ignored group in refugee literature and Canadian government programming. This paper canvasses the voices of refugee youths and provides a critical analysis of the value of pre-departure training programs. Through interviews with Bhutanese youths in Canada, this research finds that many participants took on very adult roles and responsibilities within their respective families, almost as a *de facto* heads of household. I categorize these roles as those of *youth brokers* and use this terminology to point to the important function that refugee youths play in authoring their family's future in Canada. Research participants had access to either standard Canadian orientation programming, a pilot youth-oriented program, or no pre-departure training at all. This study critically analyzes these programs, via the thoughts and opinions of participants, as well as considering ways to improve such programming. The research foregrounds the voices of refugee youths by using their thoughts, opinions, and voices to shape a critique of current orientation programming models. I argue that the variety in both the experiences of the youths and their orientation needs, as well as the positive orientation descriptions provided by participants of the pilot project, is a testament to the futility of a 'one-size-fits-all' model for orientation programming. Youth are producers of knowledge and leaders within their families, whose social age does not necessarily match their chronological one.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Jennifer Hyndman for her constant support, patience and guidance. It has been a privilege working with you. Your thoughtful advice and enduring kindness will not be forgotten. Thank you also to Dr. Philip Kelly and Dr. Christina Clark-Kazak for valuable insight and encouragement.

A special thank you to Chris Friesen at ISSBC without whom this project would not have been possible.

Profound and continued thanks to all of my research participants for your time, insight and kindness. Thank you for welcoming me into your homes and communities. Also, thank you for the tea.

Endless love and gratitude to all of my family and friends. Mom and Dad, thank you for your support, confidence and strength, particularly in this last year. Thank you for believing in me. Danielle and Andrew, thank you for grounding me, thank you for being patient, thank you for being family.

And thank you to Matt, for more things than I can say. Thank you for listening.

This research was generously supported by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BVOR	-	Blended Visa Office-Referred (Program)
CIC	-	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
COA	-	Canadian Orientation Abroad
CURP	-	Community-University Research Partnership
ELSA	-	English Language Services for Adults
GAR	-	Government Assisted Refugees
IOM	-	International Organization for Migration
IRPA	-	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
ISSBC	-	Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia
MBC	-	Metropolis British Columbia
NSSC	-	New Social Studies of Childhood
PSR	-	Privately Sponsored Refugee
RAP	-	Resettlement Assistance Program
UN	-	United Nations
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Chapter One: Introduction and Background

> I was thinking that my mom, my dad, they are not speaking English, right? And I am only the one who is looking after them and my brother was in this condition, right? And it's really, really hard for me and then, I just think about that, I, I didn't, I don't know like what I'm going to do, like, you know. I was already nineteen at that time, and then I know that I, I'm not getting chance to go high school and then how I'm gonna get high school and then how does it takes to complete the high school…and then how I'm going to earn, and what I'm gonna work, you know. Yeah, I don't know like that...when I came first I was really frustrated like you know, I have to deal with everything right. Yeah and then we don't have any relatives" (Interview 121, 2013).

> It was really hard, like first three or four months it was really hard. I didn't know the language, right. So I was like a, like a person who never goes out of home. I'm always staying at home and, and yeah, school it was, it was really, really hard school…the subjects were pretty hard, the courses math and science so, and then it was of course hard to communicate with people. So like I was kind of alone, you know, like in for like, among like lots of people I was still alone and yeah (Interview 111, 2013).

The process of migrating as a refugee to Canada can be confusing at best, and at worst it can be stressful, isolating and traumatic. Resettled refugees often grapple with discrimination, poverty, homelessness and unemployment (Sherrell, Friesen, Hyndman and Shrestha, 2011; McLean, Friesen and Hyndman, 2006; Simich, Beiser, Stewart and Mwakarimba, 2005) amongst a variety of other challenges. Resettlement[1] is even more difficult when the individual is a youth. Canada tries to ease this transition to a new country and a new way of life by offering pre-departure

[1] Resettlement refers to voluntary acceptance of refugees by a third country to reside permanently there; it is considered one of three 'durable solutions' by UNHCR (UNHCR, 2012). Settlement is a related term, used most commonly by the refugee-serving settlement agencies in Canada, to describe the arrival, reception, and integration processes that refugees experience once in Canada.

orientation programs to individuals selected to be Government Assisted Refugees (GARs)[2]. In conjunction with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Canada offers Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) to refugees, live-in caregivers and immigrants around the globe prior to their departure for Canada (IOM, 2012). Since the COA initiative began in 1998 these orientation sessions have been aimed at helping newcomers adapt to life in Canada through awareness of challenges, provision of skills and information about what to realistically expect upon arrival (IOM, 2012).

These programs, while aimed at assisting all refugees coming to Canada, tend to be of a 'one-size-fits-all' model wherein people of all ages are given the same pre-departure orientation. Does this type of generic orientation programming meet the needs of all refugee groups, specifically refugee youths? Youths, upon arrival in Canada, face challenges in school, society and within their families that are considerably different than those of their adult counterparts and as such the topics covered in a pre-departure orientation directed towards adults, may not be applicable or very beneficial to youths.

A recent community-university research partnership (CURP) has been made, however, to offer a pilot orientation program that is specifically aimed to assist refugee youths prior to their departure for Canada. This experimental pilot project, facilitated by the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSBC) and part of the Simon Fraser University-led Metropolis British Columbia (MBC) project 'Operation Swaagatem' (Sherell *et al.,* 2011), took place in January of 2011 with a group of young Bhutanese refugees in a refugee camp in Damak, Nepal (Lozano and Friesen, 2011). During the pilot, twenty-one refugee youths who had

[2] Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA) is sometimes made available to Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) and Blended Visa Office Referred Refugees (BVOR) depending on their country of origin.

been selected as GARs and were consequently destined for Canada, participated in an orientation program specifically designed to meet their needs, answer their questions and prepare them, as much as possible, for life in Canada (Lozano and Friesen, 2011). Since the implementation of this pilot, however, there has been little opportunity to follow up on its usefulness or assess its meaning and value to those who received it. Beyond this there has been extremely limited research regarding orientation programming, particularly in a way that recognizes the voices and experiences of youths.

My research addresses these gaps by canvassing the youth who participated in the pilot program for their thoughts and opinions on the project so as to gauge its effectiveness in easing refugee transitions to life and settlement in Canada as well as privileging and acknowledging youth as knowledge producers in and of themselves. The research also highlights the experiences of Bhutanese youths who participated in COA orientation and those without access to any orientation services.

By privileging the voices, thoughts and opinions of refugee youths this research aims to answer the following key questions:

- What are the specific challenges that refugee youths from Bhutan face upon arriving in Canada?
- How does youth-oriented training before coming to Canada shape Bhutanese refugee youth's settlement in Canada with regards to education, peer groups and family dynamics, if at all?
- How is Canada portrayed in pre-departure training and to what extent did participants find this to be accurate?

- What do youth in Canada say they need and want from orientation?

This research could have been conducted with refugee youths from a variety of resettled populations in Canada, but I chose to carry out interviews solely with Bhutanese youths as this was the only group to which ISSBC's youth-oriented pre-departure orientation was made available. The Bhutanese refugees were selected as a group by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and processed in a group in an attempt to provide solutions to those in protracted refugee situations (Sherell *et al.*, 2011).[3]

In the following chapter I outline the calls for research that this work addresses as well as a number of prominent gaps in the literature surrounding young refugees and orientation programming. I touch briefly on the conceptual framework of my analysis, paying particular attention to representations of children, youths and refugees. I then provide a brief background concerning the plight of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) initiative that resulted in their resettlement in Canada, among other countries. The chapter concludes with an overview of my project and methods.

Project Rationale and Gaps in the Literature

The research questions and design were formulated in response to recent calls by academics (Pressé and Thomson, 2007) and settlement agencies (Hyndman, 2011) alike for more research concerning the development of specific pre-departure programs and migrant youth settlement. Pressé and Thomson argue that:

[3] Protracted Refugee Situations are scenarios where refugees inhabit camps and no durable solution to end their state of limbo has been found ten years (or five years by UNHCR's definition) after the initial displacement of a population (Adelman, 2008).

> If Canada is to contribute meaningfully to managing down protracted refugee numbers while serving Canadian interests that include maintaining the public health and security of Canadians and facilitating integration of refugees, then a more strategic focus on individual needs is warranted (2007, p. 51).

They make these comments while pointing to the limited nature of research on the resettlement of refugee youth in Canada. Hyndman (2011) advances this issue by reporting on her consultation with refugee-serving settlement agencies across the country. The report calls for increased research into the settlement of GAR youths in Canada, but more specifically the efficacy of pre-departure orientation and training for refugees as well as a critical analysis of the materials used in such programs. These topics represent significant gaps in the academic literature.

With reference to the 2006-2007 announcement of resettlement of Karen refugees in Canada, CIC acknowledged that the delivery of COA to all Karen refugees was a *best practice* and encouraged more pre-departure orientation for GARs (CIC, 2009). Such recognition lends further weight to the importance and relevance of my research to both public policy and settlement practices. Ultimately, if the Bhutanese pilot project is found to be beneficial to refugee youths in terms of settlement in Canada, then the application of similar programs may be of interest and use for other refugee groups.

The year 2002 marked a shift in resettlement policies when the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) was instated in Canada. IRPA led to a greater focus on protection with regards to GAR selection criteria which tries to identify those who are in need rather than only accepting the "best and the brightest" (Pressé and Thomson, 2007). A study conducted in 2011 found that on average, GARs entering Canada after the creation of IRPA, have been significantly younger than those who entered during the 1990's, with about 60% of post-IRPA

GARs being under the age of 24 (Hyndman, 2011). In recent years Canada has made an effort to resettle a variety of refugees from protracted situations such as the Karen from Burma, the Bhutanese (Lhotshampas) from Nepal, as well as Sudanese and Somali refugees (Hyndman, 2011). These groups have been of a notably younger demographic than the pre-IRPA years and yet the literature surrounding refugee youths fails to reflect their importance as a population demographic. While excellent work with immigrant youth, in Canada, from larger groups is happening (Kelly, 2014; Krahn and Taylor, 2005; Dinovitzer, Hagan and Parker, 2003) research on refugee youths is more sparse because their numbers are smaller and often less traceable.

This research aims to create new knowledge via voices and expressed needs of refugee youth. Even where refugee youths are not represented as active, knowing subjects in academic literature and policy, I argue that they are both of these things. Thus the conclusions drawn from this research are quite unique in their foregrounding of refugee youth (for exceptions see Clark-Kazak, 2009, 2011; Muftee, 2013; Shakya *et al.*, 2014).

Children's Geographies and the Invisibility of Refugee Youths

Children's geographies, as Cindi Katz so eloquently puts it, encompass "notions of children as active producers of space, as geographical subjects, and as environmental agents, at the same time as it recognizes children's limited mobility" (2009, p. 80). Though it has only come to be recognized as a true sub-field of geography in the last fifteen years (Katz, 2009) or so, the roots of such scholarship can be traced back to 1971 when Stea and Blaut first began to study the mapping skills and place knowledge of children (Blaut and Stea, 1971) as well as Bunge's 1973 work on the spatial oppression of children in Detroit and Toronto (Bunge, 1973).

Since this initial work, Holloway and Valentine contend that there has been a split in focus between research on children's mapping abilities and interest in children as social actors (2000). The latter interest, however, is not limited to geography but is an intrinsic part of a wider and interdisciplinary field known as the New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) in which geographers have made major contributions (Kraftl, Horton and Tucker, 2012). Researchers working in NSSC are primarily concerned with 'childhood' and 'youth' as socially constructed concepts, assumptions about the universality of 'childhood,' the individual issues of children and young people as well as the agency of these individuals (Kraftl *et al*., 2012). In line with these foci, research in children's geographies has provided a sense of spatiality to the NSSC by emphasizing place and exploring the everyday spaces of children and youth (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2011).

A number of compilations concerning the geographies of children and young people (Skelton and Valentine, 1998; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Holt, 2011) have emerged in recent decades in tandem with the birth of the journal, *Children's Geographies,* in 2003. These publications have created a space for geographical research concerning children and allowed the field to flourish. Such growth, in both geography and the NSSC, has facilitated wide debate and discussion over the meanings and socially constructed nature of 'childhood' and 'youth.' By some definitions childhood is based firmly on chronological age and is primarily an indicator of biological and social immaturity (Holloway and Valentine, 2000), but the expansion of research in the NSSC has led to discussions of childhood as a social construct that has and does vary through time and space.

Among the more complex and contested concepts in the literature surrounding refugee children is the idea of 'the child.' Many scholars have pointed to understandings of 'children' and 'childhood' as being a social construction (Aitken, 2001; Katz, 2009; Holloway and Valentine, 2000). For example Valentine, Skelton and Chambers highlight the common understanding of childhood as a time when "a child is temporarily set apart from the adult world…a time of innocence and freedom from the responsibilities of adulthood," (1998, p.3) though they acknowledge that this definition of childhood is not always a reality. Under this view physical development is thought to be in sync with social development and as such specific labels like 'child,' 'teenager,' 'adolescent' and all of the characteristics that they entail are often used to describe different phases of physical development (Valentine *et al*., 1998). The way in which childhood is viewed as an opposing narrative to adulthood, is a distinctly Western construction (Holloway and Valentine, 2000), which varies by culture, place and time (Clark-Kazak, 2009). Valentine explains that in this Western view "childhood is imagined as a time of innocence and freedom from the responsibilities of adulthood" (Pg. 37, 2003).

A chronological definition of age, such as that outlined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) in which a child is understood to be any human being under the age of eighteen, conflicts with various societal norms and cultures in which age is not measured chronologically. There is also definitional conflict due to the widespread variation in chronological ages at which varying biological processes such as menstruation, menopause, or growth of pubic or facial hair occur (Clark-Kazak, 2009). Clark-Kazak argues that the concept of 'social age' can be employed to "indicate the socially constructed meanings applied to physical development and roles attributed to infants, children,

young people, adults and elders" (2009, p. 4). Understandings of the social construction of 'the child,' 'childhood,' and 'youth' have thus created space to analyze the variability of such concepts and to discuss past absences of children in research that concerns them (Holloway and Valentine, 2000). I thus adhere to Clark-Kazak's distinction of "social from physical or chronological age in a similar way to gender and sex" (2011, p.11).

Concepts of 'the child' and 'childhood' are difficult to define in terms of human age and physical development without taking into account the culture within which the terms are being used. The binary that defines childhood in opposition to adulthood is not the best basis on which to define 'the child' as the term 'adult' is similarly difficult to delineate. Kesby *et al.* theorize around the idea of "other childhoods" that may not fit into traditional definitions. They suggest that "it is also important to recognize that culturally specific local understandings of childhood also fail to adequately conceptualize the new reality of child-headed households" (Kesby *et al.*, 2006, p 196), a social reality which does not necessarily fit with socially constructed Western understandings of childhood as a time of innocence and development.

Discrepancy in definitions of 'youth' and 'childhood' abound, as noted in scholarship about refugee youths. Some research fails to specify the chronological ages of the children to whom they are referring (Purkey, 2010; Cole, 2000), but the ones that do, provide an array of age ranges. For example Kohli *et al*. (2010) define 'young people' as ranging from ages 12 to 21 years, Hopkins and Hill (2008) say that children are people younger than 18 years old, while Wells (2011) categorizes those under 18 years as *young people*.

My research focuses on the category of *youths*, a label that is admittedly vague, contested and often not distinguished from the greater category of the *child*. For the purposes

of my research I interviewed anyone who *defined themselves* as a youth. In their research with Liberian refugees in Ghana, Hampshire *et al*. leave the definition of *youth* "deliberately unspecified, in order to elicit local interpretations and meanings" and ultimately "define 'youth' as anyone self-identifying as such" (p.84, 2011). During my interviews participants frequently referred to themselves as youths and as such this is how I categorize them. Clark-Kazak avoids this terminology due to its "political connotations" and "gender biases" and instead uses the term "young people," referring to people who have passed puberty but not married (2011, p.11) in her research with young Congolese refugees in Uganda. In contrast Ansell (2005) uses the term 'young people' to group together the categories of both 'children' and 'youth' offering a far broader definition than that put forward by Clark-Kazak (2011). Khan prefers 'youth' to 'children' in his work with migrant students in Nepal, and argues that the term provides "more flexibility with regards to 'age'" (p. 25, 2015). Similarly, Valentine argues that "the boundary between childhood and adulthood is very difficult to define [and is] notably…blurred by the ambiguous period of 'youth'" (p.37, 2003). Thus by categorizing my research participants as 'youths' I point to the vague and contested boundary that links childhood with adulthood. There is no universal definition of 'youth,' but I argue that through self-identification the participants in my research claim ownership of the term in their own right. I use the term *youth* to depict anyone who describes themselves as such. My project participants ranged from sixteen to twenty-seven years old and all indicated that they came to Canada with their parents or guardians.

Invisibility of Refugee Children and Youths

Though children and youth are often discussed in scholarship regarding refugees and migration, they are sometimes represented in a very limited and problematic way. Dobson points out that many articles simply "identify the place and role of children in migration"(2009, p. 355) while ignoring the actual perspectives of the people they claim to be studying. Such scholarship often positions refugee children and youths in relation to adult thoughts and understandings and in some cases migrant children and youth are understood merely as 'things' or 'luggage' (Dobson, 2009). As such, they are understood neither as active agents, nor even as persons and are often under-represented in the literature (Clark-Kazak, 2011). Rather, children have been included in migration research as objects transported by adults (Dobson, 2009). Holloway and Valentine elaborate that in many cases the identities of children and youth are defined only in relation to adults such as parents, teachers and settlement councilors (2000). Such comparisons do little justice to the very 'adult' roles that some children and youths take on within or outside of their families (as my research shows). Kesby, Gwanzura-Ottemoller and Chizororo (2006) point to situations of 'child-headed households' and call for more research on this topic, calling them "other, other childhoods" (p. 198). Similarly Chatty, Crivello and Hundt claim that the relegation of refugee children to the margins of academia is particularly oppressive to youths. They claim that:

> Much of the literature about refugees and forced migrants is devoted first to adults and secondly to young children. Older children and youth have, until fairly recently, been largely ignored, both in the literature, and in practice (2005, p. 388).

Prominent children's geographer Muftee (2013) emphatically points to the history of omission with regards to the migration of children and youths, arguing that even in recent work children's experiences of migration, when researched, are targeted primarily at those who have already resettled in their host country.

Studies of the settlement of refugee children in the 'global north' are particularly salient and often obscure and omit the experiences that children may have had in their countries of origin (Archambault, 2012; Sonnert and Holton, 2010; Hopkins and Hill, 2008). Though some research has been done on refugee children in the global South (Clark-Kazak, 2011; Hampshire *et al.*, 2011; Purkey, 2010; Sporton, Valentine and Nielson, 2006), in the context of children and youth, stories of resettlement and continuity in the host country are privileged. In this way my research fills two gaps by analyzing orientation programming that exists in the country of origin (or first refuge) and takes place prior to departure for and resettlement in Canada, with specific focus on Bhutanese youths as primary and independent actors. Refugee youths are therefore at the forefront of the research, and not being analyzed in a supporting or secondary role.

Unfortunately when research does focus on the experiences, context and history of young people and migration, it often does so in a way that silences the voices of refugee and asylum claimant youths. A trend in such research has been to approach children's issues by evaluating humanitarian and governmental programs designed to assist refugee children, describing the migrations of refugee children (ie. the reasons and patterns of flight), or discussing the education of refugee children both in Western countries and in refugee camps. In some cases, authors argue and make recommendations concerning programs and policies for refugee children and youth, or assess their experiences, without interviewing the group in question

(Valadez and Sherry, 2002; Durán, 1990, Cole, 2000, Purkey, 2010) and thereby privilege the author, and in many cases humanitarian organizations, as decision makers who 'know what is best' for young refugees. Much like Dobson's (2009) assessment that children are treated like 'luggage' in research concerning migration, examples that privilege the voices of academics and other external organizations often omit refugee children and youth as the centre of their own stories and experiences.

Some researchers, however, do include interviews with youths and children in their work. Despite putting these voices at the forefront, such research is sometimes unable to separate the opinions of children and youths from the contextualization of adults. Interviews with young people often include their families, and are typically framed by background information, concerning their experiences in school and the asylum centers, given by service providers and other adults (Archambault, 2012; Kohli, Connolyy and Warman, 2010). The voices of young migrants are included in this research, yet they are not allowed to speak *solely* for themselves. They are not acknowledged as "independent knowing subjects whose voices add something important to debate" (Holloway, p. 382, 2014). In line with this McKendrick denounces population geography for its exclusion of children's voices and claims that "even when children are the focus of attention, adult rationalization of children's experiences often prevails" (2001, p 466). This is evident in research like Kohli *et al.*'s (2010) paper examining young asylum seeker's understanding of food while in foster care. While children were interviewed and their own words included in the research, testimony was supplemented and in some ways undermined by the inclusion of the opinions of social care workers and foster carers. The voices of refugee children and youth rarely stand alone.

Limited Research on Pre-Departure Programs

Canada has been offering pre-departure orientation to refugees and immigrants under the COA program since 1998 (CIC, 2005), but when it comes to research on pre-departure orientation programs offered to refugees, there is very little available. Muftee (2013, 2014) has done work on Swedish cultural orientation programs, but focuses primarily on the agency of youths during and within these programs and not their utility for said youths or other populations. CIC releases periodic reports evaluating the COA program in terms of training, targets and logistical support, but I want to go beyond evaluation by critically assessing such programs in their capacity to affect the resettlement experiences of young refugees. The 2005 version of this report indicates a focus on including Convention refugees, women and children as participants in the program, but it made no reference to programs made specifically for these groups (CIC, 2005). The following 2012 report acknowledges no further development of such specialized programs (CIC, 2012c).

Similarly, the Migration Policy Institute has released a report that looks at pre-departure orientation programs in the Philippines, Indonesia and Nepal (Asis and Agunias, 2012). The report, while informative, neglects to analyze programs offered for refugees and instead evaluates and makes suggestions for the improvement of existing programs as they relate to skilled migrants. Many articles surrounding the settlement of refugees make, at the very least, a reference to pre-departure orientation programs (Sherrell *et al.,* 2011; Hyndman, 2011; Pressé and Thomson, 2007). Yet all of these publications reference a lack of information and study concerning pre-departure orientation programs, as well as the need for better programs and

more research into their improvement. CIC analysis appears to be the only source of literature regarding COA programming.

Refugees and Refugeeness

In the interest of consistency, and before delving into the intricacies and assumptions of refugee representation, it is necessary to clarify the definition of refugee with which I am engaging. According to the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is categorized as any person who is residing outside of his or her country of origin and who is unable or unwilling to return due to a "well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UN, 1951). While there are certainly broader definitions of refugees which are structured to include individuals fleeing for environmental reasons or those who never cross an international border in their quest for safety (internally displaced persons), for the purpose of this research the UN definition is used. This definition, however, does not refer to 'helplessness' which is profoundly interesting when considering the strong connections between this term and common understandings of 'the refugee'.

Refugees are often portrayed as a universally helpless group, reliant entirely on the generosity and aid of others. While in many cases this is true, it privileges helplessness as the dominant characteristic of all refugees. Rajaram, for example, suggests that humanitarian representations of refugees "amount to a blanketing and generalizing depoliticized depiction of refugees as helpless victims, thereby obscuring the particularity of different sorts of refugee experience" (Rajaram, 2002, p. 251). Here, Rajaram is highlighting the homogeneity within which refugees are understood to exist. Not only are refugees reduced to what Malkki would

call a “sea of humanity” or mass of “anonymous corporeality” (Malkki, p. 387-388, 1996), but they are stripped of their individuality down to one defining characteristic, *helplessness*. In this vein Szörényi points to the simplicity of the understandings of refugees in a variety of discursive fields. She highlights the assumption that “there is indeed a kind of person that can be called a refugee, and that this person thinks and feels in a particular way” and that “‘these people’ are ‘all victims’” (Szörényi, 2006, p.27). By ignoring their individual histories and politics refugees become “pure victims” (Malkki, 2006, p. 378). They are all refugees, they are all the same, and they are all in need of help. Such conceptualizations allow no room for the agency and characteristics of different individuals, groups and contexts, but rather assume an omniscient and persistent understanding of both *who* and *what* a refugee is.

This helplessness, Malkki argues, translates into voicelessness wherein refugees are assumed to be lacking in voice and opinion and are seldom given the chance to speak for themselves. They are ‘speechless emissaries’ who are ‘heard’ only through their bodies and their helplessness (Malkki, 1996). Humanitarian organizations and states see refugees as requiring an agency or expert to speak for them (Rajaram, 2002) and as such, those who claim to ‘know best’ make decisions on their behalf. Numerous scholars have commented on the sometimes dubious decisions that humanitarian agencies make on behalf of refugees or in the name of humanitarianism (Harrell-Bond, 2002; Nyers, 2006; Rajaram, 2002) but all of them emphasize the fact that refugees, as helpless victims, are very rarely allowed to participate and contribute to the decisions that ultimately shape their own lives (Rajaram, 2002). If refugees are often treated as helpless children, then refugee children are represented as even more voiceless, dependent and without agency or ability.

Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal: A Case Study

Figure 1. Map of Nepal and Bhutan indicating the location of refugee camps surrounding Damak (Human Rights Watch, 2003).

Who They Are and Why They Left

The Bhutanese refugees, now permanent residents of Canada with whom this research was conducted, are more commonly know as *Lhotshampas* or 'people of the south.' Lhotshampas is an imperfect label roughly assigned to this group of refugees but it indicates that the group is made up of ethnic Nepali 'Southerners' in Bhutan in opposition to the ruling elite, the Ngalong, who traditionally live in the Northwestern region of the country (Banki, 2008b). The term is problematic in that not all people who live in the South of Bhutan are a part of this ethnic population or refugee group. More specifically, the term makes reference to the

ethnically and linguistically Nepalese population in Bhutan who generally practice the Hindu religion as opposed to the Mahayana Buddhism practiced by the politically dominant Ngalong (Banki, 2008a; 2008b). The use of this term is further problematized by the reality that not all the refugees from Bhutan are ethnically Nepalese or practicing Hindus (Banki, 2008a) and as such I use the term Lhotshampas to loosely differentiate from other Bhutanese people and other refugee groups in Nepal.

The government and ruling class of Bhutan has long maintained that the Lhotshampas are illegal immigrants and as such they have faced marginalization and discrimination for decades (Lama, 2008). Following a 1985 Citizenship Act, also known as the 'One Nation, One People' policy, and 1988 census which imposed rigid citizenship and cultural/linguistic policies that had not existed heretofore, mass protests by aversely affected Lhotshampas were met by violent police crackdowns (Banki, 2008a; Lama, 2008). These political actions, however, were only the last straw in a long history of government and elite discrimination against Lhotshampas in Bhutan (Lama, 2008). The Citizenship Act and 1988 Census ushered in harsh and discriminatory citizenship laws which ultimately stripped many of the Lhotshampas of their citizenship and declared one-sixth of the Bhutanese population (primarily Nepali-speaking people) to be illegal immigrants (Banki, 2008a; Lama, 2008). The ensuing protests and demonstrations by the newly declared 'illegal immigrants' were met with violence and brutality by Bhutanese police and armed forces and consequently in early 1990 led tens of thousands of Lhotshampas to flee to India and continue on to Nepal (see Figure 1) in search of safety (Banki, 2008a; Sherrell *et al.*, 2011). Lhotshampas who remained in Bhutan were subject to violence, arbitrary arrest, rape, torture and killings at the hands of the King's army (Lama, 2008) to the

extent that in 1992 as many as 600 refugees were arriving every day and by September of 1995, 90,000 stateless Lhotshampas ranging from government officials to farmers had fled to Nepal (Banki, 2008a; 2008b).

Resettling Bhutanese Refugees

Lhotshampa refugees, with some exceptions, are generally confined to the camps in Nepal, despite their ethnic, religious and linguistic similarities with the local Nepalese population (Banki, 2008a; UNHCR, 2012). Local integration is not an option because the Nepalese government, by 'warehousing' the Lhotshampas, will not allow it. Similarly the refugees cannot repatriate to Bhutan because the government, in its categorization of Lhotshampas as illegal immigrants, will not allow for their return or recognize their claims to citizenship (Banki, 2008b, Lama 2008). Thus the Lhotshampas were truly in a state of limbo, until 2005 when the UNHCR introduced a major resettlement plan for the displaced Bhutanese.

In 2005, the UNHCR in conjunction with a core group of eight countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States) decided on resettlement as a means to resolve the protracted refugee situation in Nepal (UNHCR, 2012). The prolonged existence of the camps had led to both donor fatigue and an increasing reluctance on the part of the international community to continue providing for the needs of the Bhutanese in Nepal. Food rations decreased and conditions in the camps began to deteriorate (Banki, 2008b). UNHCR declared resettlement to be the only durable solution to this protracted refugee situation and departures from the camp began in 2008 (UNHCR, 2012). The program has seen the resettlement of nearly 80,000 refugees in eight different countries with

100,000 people referred for resettlement by the UNHCR since the outset of the program (Gurung, 2013). The number of camps in Nepal, has been reduced from seven to two as more and more refugees are resettled (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013).

In 2007 Canada committed to progressively resettling 5000 Bhutanese refugees from 2008 to 2012 (Sherrell *et al.*, 2011). In June of 2012, though, the Canadian government announced its plans to resettle 500 more Bhutanese refugees with Canadian family connections, and then in March of 2013 announced further plans to resettle an additional 1000 Bhutanese refugees (CIC, 2013). As of April, 2013 over 5000 had arrived with a total of 6500 expected (CIC, 2013).

Research and Methods

The initial purpose of this research was to canvass the youth who participated in the ISSBC youth-oriented pilot program for their thoughts and opinions on the project so as to gauge its effectiveness in aiding refugee youths in their transitions to life and settlement in Canada. As the research design developed, I decided to include refugee youths who were unable to participate in the aforementioned pilot program to my sample. I became more interested in highlighting the voices and opinions of refugee youths than my initial research design allowed. I employed a variety of methods to include as many participants as possible, and to offer different options for participation.

I planned to conduct a combination of semi-structured interviews and to host a secure online group discussion forum to allow for breadth and depth in data as well as greater participant numbers. I wanted to interview youths, aged 16 to 20, from each of three different

groups of Bhutanese refugees: 1) a control group of Bhutanese refugee youths who received no pre-departure orientation; 2) those Bhutanese refugees who experienced standard COA before arriving in Canada; and 3) the youth that participated in the 2011 pilot project (there are twenty-one in Canada).

This approach would allow me to compare and contrast the settlement processes and outcomes created by participation in the pilot program against the experiences and thoughts of those who did not have this opportunity. Moreover, I could canvass youth about what they needed most when they arrived in Canada and what their landing was like. When I began conducting my research, however, parts of the project changed. Although the general spirit and goals of my proposal remained unaltered, the realities of, and opportunities for data collection resulted in several interesting and unexpected changes to the research goals, and as such, unique and unforeseen analysis.

The facilitation of these interviews relied largely upon prior connections made with project organizers at ISSBC and the MBC-funded project 'Operation Swaagatem.' This was a community-based project focused largely on the small community of resettled Bhutanese GARs in Coquitlam, British Columbia, and the pre-arrival planning and settlement assistance involved in the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees to Canada (Sherrell *et al*, 2011). This latter part of the project fostered the implementation of the aforementioned pre-departure pilot project for Bhutanese youths. Fortunately ISSBC staff have remained in touch with participants allowing me to use these ongoing connections to access interviewees. Thus my connections with this existing SFU-ISSBC project, through my supervisor, facilitated my awareness of the project as well as access to interviewees and their friends and families.

ISSBC introduced me to the pilot project participants and provided a list of contacts at a variety of settlement and refugee serving organizations across Canada. ISSBC also sent a letter to the pilot project participants introducing me and giving details about the project. My association with ISSBC lent me the credibility of being connected to this established research team and project. Conversely, this association may have also shaped youths' responses.

I interviewed three main groups of individuals: participants of the 2011 orientation pilot project, participants of the standard COA orientation program, and individuals who were not involved in any orientation program prior to arrival in Canada. Although I had initially aimed to interview at least six youths in each of these categories, the reality of the project and willingness of participants meant that the breakdown of groups was not as even as desired. My sample came from individuals with whom I was connected through ISSBC, individuals with whom local settlement organizations connected me, and then brothers, sisters, friends and other family members and acquaintances of participants, contacted through snowball sampling.

I selected five major cities as research sites: Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, Charlottetown and St. John's as, according to the contact list provided by ISSBC, the majority of pilot project participants were resettled in these cities. The sample is not evenly distributed throughout these cities, largely due to the nature of my snowball sampling method (see Table 1). Once I made initial contact with Bhutanese youths, I was heavily reliant on them to connect me with other possible participants. While this sometimes proved to be a fruitful method, on other occasions very few youths wanted to participate.[4] In the case of interviews in Vancouver, most

[4] During an interview in Ottawa, one particularly enthusiastic participant, brought four friends to his interview, all of whom were interested in participating.

participants lived in suburbs and municipalities outside the confines of Greater Vancouver, but for the purpose of clarity and brevity I have categorized these as 'Vancouver' interviews.

	Vancouver	**Toronto**	**Ottawa**	**St. John's**	**Charlottetown**	**Total**
Pilot	0	1	2	2	1	**6**
COA	6	1	2	1	2	**12**
None	2	0	1	0	0	**3**
Total	**8**	**2**	**5**	**3**	**3**	**21**

Table 1. Number of participants in each of three groups by city of residence[5]

In total I conducted 21 semi-structured interviews with resettled Bhutanese youths across Canada. My aim was to have a sample of individuals aged 16 – 20 years, but my project shifted to include anyone who self-identified as a youth, thus creating a sample age range of 16 to 27 years old. For the purpose of this project I use the terms 'young woman' and 'young man' to denote the gender of participants. Though these terms are somewhat fraught in that they have connotations of age connected with cultural understandings of adulthood as well as socially constructed roles (ie. man and woman), I use them to avoid the more impersonal and clinical terminology of 'male' and 'female'. The lack of young women participants was an additional consideration and as such I did not want to exclude two young women who were over twenty years old. The majority, however, fell within my initial desired age range, with 15 youths aged 19 years or younger (see Table 2).

[5] Pilot: participant in pilot program, COA: participant in Canadian Orientation Abroad, None: no orientation program

	16yrs	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	Total
Young women	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	**3**
Young men	4	2	6	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	**18**
Total	**4**	**2**	**6**	**3**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**2**	**1**	**21**

Table 2. Gender and age of research participants

Only one young woman, who took part in the pilot program agreed to participate in my research. This uneven gender distribution persisted throughout my study resulting in only three young women participating (see Table 3). This skewing is an outcome of my snowball sampling method, and it is something I bore in mind throughout analysis. An uneven distribution of participants is also evident between the three groups, a phenomenon I return to in Chapter 4. Nonetheless I believe my findings are applicable to both young men and women.

	Young Woman	Young Man	Total
Pilot	1	5	**6**
COA	2	10	**12**
None	0	3	**3**
Total	**3**	**18**	**21**

Table 3: Gender and type of orientation program research participants received

Interviews were conducted in a variety of locations, all dependent on where participants felt comfortable. I met with youths in coffee shops, on university campuses, in local parks, and in their homes. I wanted to minimize any feelings of nervousness or unease and particularly the uneven power dynamic of the researcher and researched, by meeting participants in places they chose. Such arrangements were not always possible, in which case, I suggested meeting at the relevant settlement organization.

Meeting participants in their homes and places of familiarity served more than one purpose in my research as beyond making interviewees feel comfortable it often led to further

interviews, either immediately after the scheduled one, or to be coordinated at a later date. Many participants had friends, siblings and other family members of a similar age who became interested in my project and volunteered to participate. I interviewed three pairs of siblings, two brothers in Vancouver, two brothers in St. John's and a brother and sister in Toronto. In two of these pairs the siblings were from different orientation groups. These connections may not have been otherwise made had interviews been conducted outside of the home or in places unfamiliar to participants. Beyond this I provided participants with my contact information at the end of every interview and asked them to invite any other youths, meeting my criteria, to contact me. In several cases participants who found it easier to arrange the connections themselves scheduled further interviews *for me*.

I attempted to maintain a comfortable conversational dynamic in interviews by drawing on my own identity as a young person, not much different in age than most of the participants. Interviews began, when possible, in a friendly and casual way with discussion of the city I was visiting, current events, weekend plans and the like. I endeavoured at all times to create a space of open and casual conversation, much more in the vein of two friends as opposed to a formal interview. To this end I refrained from taking many notes during interviews and instead, with the participant's verbal consent, made audio recordings of all conversations. I recorded field notes when the interview was complete and later transcribed all audio recordings in their entirety.

Interviews

Interviews were structured around a pre-determined set of questions after the rapport-building start to my conversations with youth (see Appendix A). I asked about what was missing from the pilot-orientation program, their expectations of life in Canada, and their common experience of settlement upon arriving in Canada. I also further probed areas of youth experience such as school and education, making friends and relating to peers, and changes in family roles and dynamics. In conducting the interviews I gleaned insight on individual challenges, frustrations and successes during settlement in Canada, and began to learn about what participants needed most and whether the pre-departure program was useful. I finished the interviews by canvassing the youth for advice that they would give to other young refugees resettling in Canada, as well as advice that they themselves found useful.

In constructing my questions and during interviews themselves, I drew from Hopkins and Hill's (2008) model for working with refugee children wherein they begin interviews by discussing the present, followed by the immediate past and then, only with the consent of the interviewee, pre-departure experiences. My interview questions were less sensitive in nature and topic than those asked of children by Hopkins and Hill, but nonetheless I paid particular attention to the consent of the youths involved when discussing experiences in refugee camps, if and when such questions arose. Charmaz recommends asking "open-ended, non-judgmental questions" to encourage "unanticipated statements and stories to emerge" (2006, p.26). Accordingly I crafted broad questions that allowed respondents to answer in a variety of ways. For example, rather than asking the youths if attending school or learning English in Canada was a challenge, I asked "what do you think has been your biggest challenge in Canada?" (see

Appendix A). This yielded rich and sometimes surprising data and allowed me to explore experiences with participants, rather than interrogate them.

Interviews, after introductions and an explanation of the project, typically began with general questions about the participant's age, education, employment and family before moving on to more specific questions about the experience of resettling in Canada, and the usefulness of orientation programming. Fortunately, in all of the interviews I conducted, participants consented to discussing the conditions of life, in varying degrees of detail, in the Damak camps and their experience, or lack thereof, of orientation programming.

Furthermore, the techniques that I chose to use reflect an ethical sensibility. Many of the youth with whom I was engaging have experienced persecution and hardship in their country of origin, not to mention experiences of racism, discrimination, loneliness and confusion in Canada. Hopkins advises a sensitivity to difficult topics when engaging with children (2008) and as such I aimed to provide a range of ways for youth to recount their opinions and experiences whether they felt comfortable talking openly, writing about their experiences or engaging in an electronic group setting. The latter medium did not come to fruition during the project for reasons that will be further explained later in this chapter.

Interviews were not conducted with the creators of either curriculum as IOM (the creators of COA) were not available for comment and the pilot orientation creators clearly laid out their methodology in their final report and provided a detailed curriculum. Furthermore, my research is unique in that my methods privilege the voices of refugee youths and only refugee youths.

Ethics Approval and Confidentiality

With the approval of ethics, my research upheld all required research standards (see Appendix B). Before conducting interviews I introduced myself, explained the outline and goals of my research project, and asked participants to sign an informed consent form which further explained the aims and parameters of the project (see Appendix C). I only interviewed participants who were 16 years or older and I asked for verbal permission to audio-record interviews.

Methodological Challenges and Design Changes

The interviews themselves posed additional unexpected challenges and considerations. Interviewees who participated in the COA program, and to a lesser extent the pilot project, sometimes faced difficulty in remembering details of the respective programs. For the pilot project participants their orientation program took place roughly two years prior to my interviews, but for some COA participants it occurred even earlier than this. The extent to which participants could not remember their programs was of course dependant on the individual, and some participants were able to recall their experience with surprising detail.

Some participants were quite nervous about answering questions and at times seemed reluctant to speak. In such situations I gave participants substantial encouragement and time to think about the questions and respond though, in at least two cases this had little effect. Prior to the interview I informed all participants that they were not required to answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable and that we could terminate the interview at any time, but no one chose to invoke this option. All participants were voluntarily involved in the project and

despite my efforts to host interviews in locations of the individual's choosing there were times when people were quite shy to speak.

Language was also a barrier at times. Though all participants had at least some level of competency in English, there were times that participants struggled to understand the meaning of my questions. Despite rephrasing questions and explaining terminology when necessary, several questions were inevitably left unanswered. Such incidents may have contributed to the nervousness of several participants. A number of the youths commented on their limited English abilities, even when they were perfectly fluent. Upon reflection a translator would likely have been a valuable addition to this project to allow participants to feel more at ease and able to answer questions to the best of their ability. I conducted interviews with patience and encouragement in lieu of more suitable translation resources.

Charmaz (2006) suggests that, in seeking rich data and 'thick' descriptions, context and situation of an interview are essential to fully constructing data and meaning. She points to incidents where interviewees may take long pauses in their responses, and encourages researchers to consider the meaning behind some interviewees frequent use of 'ums' and 'you knows.' This could indicate a struggle to find words, difficulty with the language, a struggle to remember, nerves, or any other number of things. Thus I have endeavored to take the realities and context of interviews into account and as such have included this reference to the challenges of memory, nerves and language.

Online Forum

In my initial proposal I designed an online forum to allow participants to discuss their experiences in a variety of ways, particularly if they felt uncomfortable with face-to-face discussions. Unfortunately, this part of the project never came to fruition as none of the interviewees participated in the forum. Participants were informed of the online research component and given tools and contact information to access the program, as well as a formal invitation by email. None chose to participate. This may be related to the accessibility of computers and the internet, or possibly a lack of clarity surrounding this component of the research. After several attempts to facilitate participation in the forum, I conceded that it would not be a viable method for this project and closed the forum.

Key Arguments

Based on this research, my argument is two-fold. First, my work shows that refugee youths as a group face a unique set of challenges and responsibilities upon resettlement in Canada, and second, current orientation programming does not reflect the importance and magnitude of the role that youths play in the resettlement of their larger families. I frame these with an analysis that conveys that refugee youths are knowledge producers in their own right. Their voices, knowledge, and experience should be at the fore of research and policy that affects them. My research uses methods that prioritizes the voices of youths, with as little input from invested adults as possible. I have selected these methods in a deliberate attempt to recognize the voices of youth, which are so often silenced or left out of the literature concerning children and young people. If improvements or changes are to be made in Canadian

orientation programming, and I argue that they should be, then such developments should be grounded in the real needs and challenges of refugee youths, as voiced by youths themselves.

To this end the remainder of this paper is split into four major sections. In Chapter Two, I reveal and question the web of power relations through which current models of orientation are established in Canada. By turning the lens of analysis to question what refugees are being oriented to and why, I highlight the unequal power dynamic through which Canada employs a rescue narrative in which it 'helps' and 'saves' 'helpless' refugees. Chapter Three looks at the experiences that many refugee youths have of acting as *de facto* heads of household and decision makers within their families, a role I coin as *youth broker.* In Chapter Four I compare the resettlement and orientation experiences of Bhutanese youths between different orientation programs to argue that COA programs do not adequately address the unique experiences of refugee youths during resettlement. The fifth and final chapter then concludes my arguments by allowing the voices of youths to shape my recommendations for orientation restructuring to reflect the needs of youths and an increased awareness and acknowledgement of the importance of youth voices and the important role they often play in family resettlement.

Chapter Two: Turning the Lens of Resettlement in Canada

One of the most salient, albeit expected, outcomes of my research is that there exists a clear divide between what the Canadian state thinks [government-assisted] refugees should know before entering the country, and what refugees themselves feel they should know. The specific needs of the Bhutanese refugees who participated in my project will be elaborated on in Chapter Five, but before this I would like to turn my lens of analysis towards the orientation programming itself. Who does the orienting and why? What do orientation programs say about Canada and what do they say about Canada's understanding of refugees? I argue that orientation programming inherently serves the state by establishing specific power dynamics and representing Canada in a glorified and partial way. Canada is making an effort to orient refugees, but the question is what exactly are they being oriented to and why?

In this chapter I will examine the centrality of the state and its representatives with regards to the resettlement of GARs. This will allow me to frame my critical analysis of the aforementioned non-state 2011 orientation pilot project in Nepal in juxtaposition with Canadian state administered orientation literature in the same camps, specifically in the form of five CIC bulletins. The pilot orientation functioned as a response to a gap in youth-specific pre-departure programming, and was not a government program like COA or the aforementioned bulletins. I argue that despite the best efforts and progressive nature of the pilot project, both orientation tools reveal surprising power dynamics and assumptions about refugees as a whole. Following this, I will turn another lens to highlight the work of Susan Banki and Nicole Phillips (2014) in their effort to reveal the realities of life for those who choose not

to resettle and thus remain in camps. While this chapter does not draw directly from the voices of refugees, it is included as a response to calls for more research on pre-departure orientation and specifically a critical analysis of the materials these programs use (Hyndman, 2011). I aim to highlight the narrative of Canada as the 'rescuer of refugees' in orientation programming, though I am not arguing that this makes orientation any less necessary. Where interviewees described their dissatisfaction with COA and room for improvement in both this and the pilot-orientation program (Chapters Four and Five), this chapter looks critically at what orientation materials can tell us about the goals of such programming.

State Centrality and Refugee Resettlement

It is difficult to deny the centrality of the role the Canadian government plays in the lives of GARs in Canada. From their initial selection, and travel to Canada through to their city of resettlement and assistance in the country, the state has a hand in nearly every aspect of the GAR resettlement process, known as the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). Unlike asylum claimants who make a claim only after they have arrived on Canadian soil, GARs are already recognized as Convention refugees[6] upon their arrival in the country, and provided with permanent residence soon after arrival. Hyndman and McLean (2006) in their analysis of the resettlement of an Acehnese community in Vancouver, British Columbia, note that the state

[6] According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who "owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [sic] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [sic] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [sic] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (United Nations, 1951)

plays a central role in the lives of urban refugees. This observation, I argue, can be applied to all GARs due to the necessary level of government assistance inherent in the granting of such status. Hyndman and McLean, draw from the work of Scott (1998) who argues that the state aims to make society legible and in such a way simplify the classic functions of the state. In the case of the Acehnese population in Vancouver, the selection of specific refugees from abroad and their resettlement in a single Canadian city represents what Hyndman and McLean call a "highly selective and state managed approach" (2006, p. 346).

Orientation tools, programs and services are the direct result of deliberate choices made on behalf of the government concerning what refugees should know before and upon arrival in Canada. It would be naïve to think that programs such as COA and the like are not intentionally created to represent a specific version of Canada and the role of the 'refugee' within it. Though it has proven difficult to find the specific tools and resources employed in the COA program, the following analysis of Canadian orientation bulletins and the 2011 pilot program reveals some of the inherently ethnocentric biases present in such resources.

Orientation: Whom Does it Serve and How?

Canada is making an effort to orient GARs, but what exactly are they being oriented to and why? Using a series of information bulletins issued to potential GARs in refugee camps in Damak, Nepal, as well as the 2011 youth pilot program, I will turn the lens of analysis to the main narratives and assumptions in Canadian orientation tools and address the implications of such narratives and assumptions. Though I am not critically analyzing COA programming, I include an analysis of CIC refugee information bulletins in their stead as a representation of

Canadian government orientation initiatives in a form specific to the population of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. In this way I hope to shed light on the importance of critically analyzing and questioning the nuanced complexities of orientation guides and programs.

The aforementioned information bulletins are a series of documents distributed to Bhutanese refugees from May 2008 to October 2012 in refugee camps in Damak Nepal (CIC, 2013). Starting in September of 2008 a team of Canadian officials visited the camps to conduct resettlement interviews with Bhutanese refugees (CIC, 2013). Interviewees who met the admissibility requirements and underwent medical, criminality and security checks were then eligible to be resettled in Canada (CIC, 2013). The September 2008 interviews were only the first in a string of six "selection missions" (CIC, 2013) during which information bulletins explaining the resettlement process were distributed to resettlement applicants and potential applicants.

To date five bulletins have been distributed in the camps, the most recent in October of 2012, all with a number of similar themes running through them. Namely there is an emphasis on explaining the application process, the logistics and timelines of family reunification as well as generalities about life in Canada including topics such as the weather and seasons, religion, employment and education. Interestingly, three of the five bulletins (the last three) dedicate space to the debunking of false rumours concerning life in Canada. Concern over mandatory military service and the possible effects of the cold Canadian climate on reproduction and family size are circulating in the camps (CIC, 2011), a fact confirmed by participants in my own research.

Narratives and Assumptions in Canadian Orientation

Throughout my analysis of both the information bulletins and the youth orientation pilot, I was able to identify two key threads. The first concerns a variety of assumptions made by policy makers about refugees and their seemingly generic almost inherent nature as a homogenous group. The second is an incessant and recurring narrative of the idyllic history and reality of Canada in relation to the resettlement of refugees and other newcomers. These assessments are based on a discourse analysis of the relevant texts, using key words such as "help", "assist", and positive phrases describing Canada. This follows a 'grounded theory' approach (Charmaz, 2006) wherein concrete recurring *in vivo* concepts emerge from the data and are used to develop a theoretical understanding beyond inductively 'listening' to the data. Thus the trends that I analyze in this chapter are grounded in coded words and phrases drawn from the orientation texts themselves.

Who are Refugees? Assumptions and Generalities

Before analyzing the ways in which Canada represents itself to refugees and other newcomers, it is imperative to consider how the creators and implementers of such refugee orientation programs and tools understand refugees and their needs. The assumption that refugees are a helpless group in need of aid and protection, while in many cases true, tends to privilege this understanding as the sole or most important characteristic of refugees. For example, in the bulletins distributed to Bhutanese applicants and potential resettlement applicants in Damak there is an obvious emphasis on the services that will be provided to refugees should they require them. Bulletin #3, for example, provides the following information to Bhutanese refugees:

> You will get financial assistance to help you pay for your food and a place to live for your first year in Canada. Someone will welcome you at the airport and you will receive help to adjust to everyday life in Canada, such as how to use local transportation and buy food. Children will be able to go to school for free and everyone can get free health care. Depending on your needs, a group of Canadians may help you adapt to life in Canada. You will also receive help to learn English or French, the two main languages spoken in Canada, and to find a job (CIC, 2010b).

The other four bulletins similarly refer, in varying degrees, to the help and services available for newcomers in Canada such as support for the special needs of children, seniors, youth, women and people with physical limitations (CIC, 2011). The emphasis here is on the ways that the state will provide *help* and support to a universally and homogenously *helpless* group of people.

Not only are refugees viewed, in this context as helpless and needy, but through the provision of information about Canadian services for refugees a power dynamic is being established before they even arrive in Canada. This dynamic takes the shape of Canada as the saviour, provider or benefactor in its relationship with the helpless beneficiary, otherwise known as the refugee. The political potential of displaced persons "must be conceived as nonexistent and ineffectual, or must perforce remain imperceptible and illegible if they are to be the needy recipients of international aid" (Sheshadri, p. 32, 2008). The aforementioned bulletins render GARs ineffectual and nonexistent, politically speaking, by establishing a power dynamic where the state offers provisions to the supposed needy recipients. In many ways this dynamic between the helper and helpless is unavoidable, particularly in the context of orientation programming which at its root is inarguably a service to help refugees. I am not arguing that orientation programming is unnecessary or that it is inherently 'bad.' On the contrary, I highlight this relationship to provide a framework through which to analyze the goals

and development of such programs, and more importantly the feedback of youth participants (see Chapters Four and Five).

Rajaram describes this as "top-down analyses of what displaced people need or prioritize" (Rajaram, 2002, p.249) and goes on to describe how humanitarian efforts often generalize and depoliticize refugees by depicting them as helpless victims and "obscuring the particularity of different sorts of refugee experience" (p. 251). This insightful analysis is at the crux of my argument in that refugees are treated in some, if not most, Canadian pre-departure orientation programming and literature, as universally helpless victims who are in need of the help and protection of the Canadian state. Harrell-Bond, with reference to refugees in camps, contends that "this stereotype of the helpless refugee also informs refugees' perceptions concerning the role they are expected to play to gain the approval of the helpers and to be successful in obtaining aid (2002, p.57). This statement also applies, however, to the dynamic of power relations set up between the GAR and the Canadian state in orientation programming and literature. Thus the assumption that refugees are helpless not only affects the narratives of such orientation tools, but it may also play a role in altering refugees' understanding of themselves in relation to the state.

This, of course, extends beyond the mere shelter of residence in a different country, to include resettlement services and programs to assist 'helpless' refugees. I am not, in any way, trying to argue that such resettlement assistance and services are unnecessary or without use, however I *am* suggesting that they may not be universally useful or necessary for all refugees in that not every individual who falls into this category may be desperately in need of assistance. CIC even, in an update on Canada's commitment to resettling Bhutanese refugees, states that

"many speak English and it is not uncommon for the young adults to have secondary, and even post-secondary education" (CIC, 2013). Thus CIC acknowledges the diversity of the Bhutanese refugee population.

A lack of addressed diversity (age, gender etc.) in orientation materials like the Nepal bulletins reveal an assumption that refugees are a generic and homogenous group with generic and homogenous needs and identities despite the reality that "refugee populations are heterogeneous in every respect" (Harrell-Bond, p.56, 2002). Malkki (1996) discusses the way in which refugees stop being individual persons and become, in the eyes of the 'international community,' a group of dehistoricized 'pure victims.' She describes the refugee as "universal man, universal woman, universal child, and, taken together, universal family" (Malkki, p.378, 1996). This universalism in the perception of refugees is evident in the 'one-size-fits-all' model of pre-departure orientation. Granted the 2011 pilot project takes into account the uniqueness of refugee youths as compared to other refugees, but even such a progressive program fails to make any other distinctions about individual refugees. With only a shoestring budget of $23,000 (J. Hyndman, personal communication, March 9, 2015) to conduct two research initiatives in Greater Vancouver, with city, school, and community stakeholders and with refugee youth settled in the city, and to develop and implement the pilot curriculum for youth orientation abroad in Damak, Nepal, the pilot project identifies and addresses a gaping hole in COA programming which itself has nothing for youths.

Narratives of Canada: Glorious and Free

I will now turn my focus to consider the narratives of Canada that some orientation tools mobilize in conjuring images of Canada for refugees and newcomers before their arrival. These narratives are not always an expression of 'real' life in Canada, particularly for resettled refugees. The orientation tools which I analyze present an incredibly idyllic and appealing narrative of life in Canada, stretching from the generosity of Canada's universally free healthcare to the multitude of services available to refugees such as financial help, free language training and a guide to greet GARs at the airport (CIC, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012). The information bulletins in Nepal offer a particularly obvious example of this in that they focus solely on the positive aspects of life in Canada without any mention of struggles or challenges that refugees may face. For example the first bulletin informs possible applicants that they "will enjoy the same rights and responsibilities as other permanent residents"(CIC, 2008) once they arrive in Canada as well as free healthcare, freedom of religion, clean drinking water, equal rights for men and women and a variety of accessible services (CIC, 2008, 2010b, 2011). While all of these things are true, to an extent, they represent an overemphasis of Canadian values, identity and self-image. Acknowledgement of the challenges and hardships that are so common for resettled refugees is missing. In Chapter Four I highlight some of the challenges that participants identified upon resettlement in Canada.

Narratives of Canada as being a haven of successful multiculturalism and a place with a tradition of hospitality are also both explicit and implied in many Canadian orientation tools. For example, the "Guess Who?" activity (see Appendix D) in the 2011 pilot project in Nepal (Lozano and Friesen 2011), highlights the supposed multicultural values of the Canadian people,

encouraging youths to avoid racialized judgements of others in Canada. In the activity participants were asked to indicate the person they would most like to befriend from a series of racially diverse photographs. While the curriculum does not overtly say that Canadian citizens are perfect models of multiculturalism, by exposing the racialized judgments of the youths (the majority of participants indicated a desire to be friends with the lighter skinned individuals) in contrast to the supposed choices of Canadians, the programmers imply that Canadians are, as a rule, well versed in multicultural values and that to succeed in their new home, the participants must adopt these values as well. A detailed explanation of the ways in which multiculturalism is tenuous or problematic in Canada is important at this point. My argument here is that conveying the view that Canada is a purely successful multicultural project is misleading. The project and its outcomes are flawed (Thobani, 2007). Such descriptions of Canada ignore racism and discrimination that occur in relation to refugees and other newcomers in Canada (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2000), including housing discrimination (Carter and Vitiello, 2012; Dion, 2001) and variable access to healthcare (Wang, Chacko and Wither, 2012) among a variety of other challenges. Many of my research participants indicated their struggles with bullying and racism at school (see Chapter Four).

In the face of these observations, one might ask why Canada would choose to represent itself in anything but a positive light. Why would the makers of such programs and publications emphasize a history that is anything but welcoming or discuss struggles and challenges that refugees and other newcomers continue to face in the country? The answer, I argue, is that the supposed purpose of pre-departure and welcome programs or information is to orient refugees and other immigrants to life in Canada, or rather the 'reality' of life in Canada. In many ways

such idealistic narratives of life in Canada are orienting refugees to a Canada that does not exist. I am not advocating a full and complete description of every challenge a refugee might face, or every 'horror' that may befall them; rather I am calling for a more realistic approach to informing refugees in advance about the country to which they are resettling. The youth oriented pilot program aims to do this by including content about bullying and other potential challenges. One might, of course, make the argument that refugees need the hope of a glorious and generous nation rescuing them in the face of the horrors they may have experienced. However, giving newcomers a skewed vision of their future in Canada is both misleading and unhelpful.

Without considering Canadian orientation with a critical eye, idealistic and unrealistic narratives and assumptions have made their way into refugee programming. The main purpose of refugee orientation programs is to prepare GARs for life in Canada, but other power dynamics between Canada and 'the refugee' appear to get in the way. This is reflected in my research findings where youths indicated their surprise at the realities of Canada in opposition to the image of the country they were oriented to.

Forgotten: Those Left Behind

Inherent to assumptions about refugees is a desire to leave the camps and resettle in Canada. Research by Banki and Phillips (2014) points to the population of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal who reject the opportunity to relocate to a Western country, but are in many ways forgotten in the discussion of refugee resettlement. Not only does resettlement represent a less than desirable option for such individuals, but the repercussions of resettlement are being

felt by those who remain in Damak. Such repercussions are manifesting themselves in the form of various crises: the elderly population is facing a dearth of younger family members to care for and support them in their old age, emotional and physical division is being inflicted upon families, drug and alcohol abuse are on the rise, and camp services such as education and health care are beginning to deteriorate in both quality and availability at an alarming rate (Banki and Phillips, 2014). For the 8,510 Bhutanese refugees who have not indicated an interest in resettlement (roughly 8% of the total population) these effects are increasingly problematic (*ibid.*)

Banki and Phillips explain that there are two predominant concerns for those who opt not to resettle. The first is for the wellbeing of relatives who remain in Bhutan in a "liminal legal space" and would be left alone should other family members choose to resettle. The second concern is for the lack of upheld human rights in Bhutan, and the need for such a foundation before any hope of return is possible. Similarly, many refugees claim to be waiting for the resettlement process to conclude, believing that repatriation, or even integration, will become a possibility once the resettlement option has come to a close (Banki and Phillips, 2014). Thus, repatriation is not necessarily held to be a durable or even desirable solution for all Bhutanese refugees.

Maintaining the hope of repatriation by remaining in the camps and thus in close proximity to Bhutan echoes Malkki's (1996) observations with regards to Hutu refugees in Tanzania in the mid 1980s. She describes how the Hutu narrative of history and exile has produced an idea of 'true refugeeness, ' saying that:

> refugeeness was clung to both as a protective legal status and as a special moral condition – for it was only by together passing through a period as refugees that the

> Hutu as “a people” could effect their return to their rightful homeland (Malkki, p. 381, 1996)

In this sense the camp is a place that enables ‘self-knowledge’ in the case of Hutu and also, I would argue Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. If the goal is to return to the homeland, in this case Bhutan, then remaining nearby as a refugee is integral to maintaining this hope. Orientation services are only distributed to those who will be re-settling in Canada, yet it is rarely acknowledged within the literature that there is a distinct voice speaking against resettlement as the only viable option for Bhutanese refugees.

Despite a demonstrated reluctance to resettle among some refugees, the rhetoric surrounding resettlement efforts by Canada and other Western countries portrays the process as an entirely positive and indeed preferable option. The rescue narrative to which resettlement countries subscribe is problematic. It is premised upon an unequal power relationship between the host country and the destination, or resettlement state. This indicates the importance, yet again, of giving very critical consideration to the much-lauded Western resettlement program for Bhutanese refugees (as well as others in similar circumstances). Where resettlement is not necessarily the ‘best’ or most ‘durable’ option for refugees in protracted refugee situations, neither too is the current form of orientation programming put forth by the Canadian government.

Chapter Three: Youth Brokers

Orientation abroad could never meet all youths' settlement and other support needs. Nonetheless, current COA programming is not meeting the needs of refugee youths with regards to resettlement and integration in Canada. This conclusion, drawn from my interviews with Bhutanese youths, offers no shocking revelation, though it lends weight to a little-researched and poorly addressed reality. My research goal was to analyze available orientation abroad programming in relation to youth needs, and yet over the course of the project another major concern became apparent.

Although I asked no questions directly related to family dynamics or youths' responsibilities within their families, this topic became a noticeably recurring theme. Without direct prompting, many of the interview participants spoke at length about the ways in which their role within the family had changed following resettlement in Canada. Oftentimes these discussions focused on responsibilities like translating for other family members, assisting parents and grandparents with health issues and medical appointments, helping to make important family decisions, and often balancing schooling and employment on the side. All of the youths I interviewed migrated to Canada with family members and nearly all of them continued to live with them upon arrival, in arrangements ranging from three family members in a household to nine in a single apartment.

In this chapter I will highlight my findings with regards to changing family dynamics for refugee youths by arguing that they play a significant role in managing their respective families and have taken on new and substantial responsibilities within the context of resettlement. I use

the term *youth broker* to categorize this familial role and to emphasize the weight and importance of the duties young refugees take on in Canada. I will begin by explaining my rationale for the term *youth broker* and reiterating some of the literature from which this terminology builds. I then break down the four main areas of responsibility and influence where research participants indicated a changing role within their family. These include 1) language skills and translation, 2) health issues, 3) family decision-making, and 4) balancing school and employment. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the blurred meanings of terms like child, youth and adult in the context of *youth brokers*.

Youth as Brokers

I use the term *youth brokers* throughout this chapter to conceptualize the leadership, agency, and maturity displayed in my interviews with Bhutanese youths. My research findings indicate that many participants were acting as *de facto* heads of household in that they were responsible for, or at least highly instrumental in, guiding their respective families through the challenges of resettlement in Canada. One young woman in Vancouver explained that:

> Oh my god, when I came here [Canada] I see the future. I don't, I didn't know anything when I was in [my] country, but when I get here… I'm the one who is looking after my family, and thinking a lot (Interview 121, 2013).

This idea of being the caretaker of a family and also the representative of the family in terms of translation and societal navigation led me to categorize such individuals as *youth brokers*. Certainly young in terms if biological age, such individuals take on the role of mediator, go-between and guide for their families in a variety of seldom-recognized ways.

Some research has looked at intergenerational role-reversals in the context of the refugee camp (Hampshire *et al.*, 2011), as well as children who take on "other childhoods" (Aitken, 2001) in their role as caregiver to ill parents and grandparents (Kesby *et al.*, 2006; Robson, 2004). But very little work has been dedicated to the agency and adult roles of resettled refugee youths within family units. Exceptions can be found in the work of Clark-Kazak (2011) where her findings show that among Congolese refugees in Uganda "new linguistic environments due to migration may . . . provoke changes in intergenerational power relationships" resulting in young people acting as "spokespeople for their families" (2011, p. 109). Similarly Shakya *et al.* (2014) address this issue by describing newcomer refugee youths' roles as 'resettlement champions' within their families and isolating key areas of responsibility that are very much in line with my findings. Though this research had not been published when I conducted my fieldwork, the conclusions complement and reaffirm my own. Beyond these two examples, however, the literature is noticeably sparse and has spurred calls for a greater consideration of children's hidden work in the household (Robson, 2004) as well as more research into child-headed households (Kesby *et al.*, 2006). This chapter helps to make refugee youth's work within the home and family more visible, and outlines some of the stress and challenges refugee youth uniquely face.

Challenges of Youth Brokers

After being informed by doctors that his grandfather has Alzheimer's disease, one participant said that:

> Answers and all decisions I have to take because my Dad doesn't know English and no one is there to make him understand and I have, my, another different part that I have to work, work, work right, and I have to study, and I have to take care of them. I have to take my Mom, my Mom is the sufferer of asthma, and she has been suffering from, since twenty years. So sometimes I have to take her to the hospital, my grandfather, my Dad's appointment, you know these are the challenges that we had. Another thing is that for me it wasn't that much but, paperwork. Oh, piles and piles, yes, piles and piles of papers, flyers and my parents they basically, they don't know which one is the flyer and which one is the, you know, documents to keep (Interview 110, 2013).

This excerpt, taken from my interview with a young man in St. John's, Newfoundland, is a valuable example of the varied personal and familial responsibilities that young Bhutanese refugees must juggle in Canada. As he describes the ways he helps his family, ranging from language interpretation to assisting at medical appointments, to dealing with paperwork, the magnitude of his responsibilities becomes apparent. Even when acknowledging that this does not fall into a Western conception of childhood and youth, it is still obvious that this role is a new one for the participant. The participant, in just one response, outlines the four key areas of responsibility for *youth brokers*: 1) language skills and translation, 2) managing health issues, 3) leading family decisions, and 4) balancing school and work responsibilities. Though not all participants voiced responsibilities in all of these areas, they were frequently discussed. My research shows that it is extremely common for youths to be juggling at least one, if not more, of these responsibilities within their family.

Language and Translation

> The biggest challenge was to, you know, handle my family because everybody, except me, were, like, little bit having difficulties in language, and the linguistic barrier is the most difficult one because we can't, you know, interact and make them understand and make our self understand and what's going on, you know. And the challenge was like my, my parents both of them they, they never had been to school, and I have to make them understand. I have to take them to the appointment, you know. Do everything for them. That was my responsibility (Interview 110, 2013).

Like so many of the Bhutanese youths I interviewed, this individual indicated that one of his biggest challenges in Canada is to translate for his family and to "make them understand." He, like the rest of his family, is a newcomer to Canada, unaccustomed to the people, the culture and life in this new country, and yet due to his knowledge of English (participants indicated that English is taught in schools in Nepal), became the *de facto* translator and guide for his family.

He describes this role as his "responsibility," and notes that he has to "do everything" for his parents. This sentiment was not uncommon among research participants, with ten of the twenty-one youths indicating that their parent(s) do not speak any English. The difficulty of speaking and learning English was commonly mentioned as a challenge for the youths. A young woman in Toronto said that she "didn't like talking in front of people" and that she is "more scared when [she is] talking in front of people," (Interview 101, 2013) while a young man in Vancouver described the challenge of trying to talk to Canadians saying: "the first time was really sad because it was hard to conversation, and it's hard to make a friend too" (Interview 117, 2013). For these youths, communicating in Canada was, at least initially, a challenge and yet seven participants indicated that they were responsible for language interpretation within their family.

Consider this exchange I had with a young man in Ottawa:

NM: What would you say has been your biggest challenge in coming to Canada…

Participant: My biggest challenge was like, I'm only the one who is speak little bit English in my family like when I came to Canada and like within my family…and right now my dad is big, like little better and he can understand like what about the other people saying and that was my biggest challenge but at that, at that moment I, I need to go like everywhere with them to translate and, and during that moment I didn't used to understand that accent here…that was a big challenge and right now it's, it's better than before. Like my mom, my mom haven't gone to school at all before and now she can speak little bit English.

NM: …did you expect that when you came here? That you would be the translator?

Participant: Yeah of course…of course cause like, that's why I go, went to the orientation workshop for five days, cause I was, only one who was the like big, biggest son and that's why like, I went to the orientation to learn about it (Interview 106, 2013).

This individual indicated that he was the only English speaker in his family, so despite his own struggles with the language and understanding the accent with which Canadians speak English, he anticipated his role as family translator in Canada and this responsibility was in turn expected of him. For the youths who spoke about their responsibility to translate for family members, not one indicated that this was a shocking or unexpected duty to be fulfilled. Many commented on the challenges of interpreting and the weight of that responsibility, but it seemed as though this role was one implicitly assigned as a result of the English language skills they had.

Beyond the challenges of translating a language in which one is not fully comfortable, the realities of being a translator involve youths managing facets of their parents' and family's lives that they may not otherwise have been involved in. I will further elaborate on *youth brokers'* roles in family health and medical issues as well as day-to-day life and decision-making, but suffice it to say that the challenging role of translating necessarily draws youths into very adult situations within their families. While *youth brokers* fill this vital role of allowing their family members access to information and communication with Canadian society and institutional support, they are drawn into what Shakya *et al.* (2014) describe as a "reconfiguration and intensification of their responsibilities to their family" (p.132). Translation duties essentially draw youths into a realm of responsibility that they likely would not have faced had they not been resettled as refugees in another country.

Managing Health Issues

> Sometimes I have to take my mom and dad in hospital, sometimes I have to take like, different places and appointment…I know how to speak just little only at a time but then also I can talk, able to talk to my mom and dad and I can talk like that (Interview 120, 2013)

Of the youths that I interviewed, six indicated that either one or more family members have a health-related issue around which they play a supportive role. In the sample of youths I interviewed these issues spanned from multiple cases of asthma and hearing impairment to more serious ailments such as bone disease, kidney failure and permanent brain injury. In all of these situations participants, much like the excerpt above, played a role in the treatment of their loved ones by attending medical appointments and translating for parents and

grandparents. This implies that these youths sit in during tests and procedures, listen to test results and diagnoses, and generally support their family member by translating throughout the course of their illness and treatment.

In the above example, however, the participant indicated that his English speaking abilities are limited, a challenge shared by many of the youths. Thus, *youth brokers* often face the dual challenge of struggling with a new language (having varying amounts of experience and ability), while observing and accompanying their parents during medical appointments that may be of a private, sensitive or stressful nature. Such individuals play the role of *youth broker* in such scenarios by acting as an intermediary for their parents and other family members.

For some of the research participants, however, their responsibility with regards to family health issues extended beyond the role of intermediary to one of active decision making. A young man from St. John's describes his experience:

> And another thing was my grandfather, he was also with us at the time we came here and, and he is, he is hearing impaired and he can't speak well and you know with that difficulties I have to make him understand, take him to the hospital and after few months he started having, you know, he started wandering around and it was uh Winter season, and you know we were all sleep, and in the morning 'where is grandfather?' We lose him and we started searching around and the traffic, everything, you know. But that's really difficult and finally we met him maybe one or two kilometres from the church basilica there, and we took him to the hospital and found, the doctor diagnosed that he is having Alzheimer's then…and all questions you know, after his death what we are going to do and in, in, in the situation there is a heart attack for him, what we have to do and those questions, answers and all decisions I have to take (Interview 110, 2013).

For this individual his role in his grandfather's aging and diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease extended far beyond interpreting the doctor's words so that his parents could make a decision. This young man explained that the superiority of his English language skills in relation to his

parents meant that he was actually responsible for making the decisions with regards to his grandfather's health and future. Beyond being a *youth broker* this participant is in some ways acting as a *head of household* by taking on the role of key decision-maker with regards to his grandfather's health. None of the other interview participants indicated responsibilities as great as this, though many alluded to their experiences of "looking after" or guiding their families through their experience of resettlement. Robson's (2004) work highlights ways that the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe has forced many young people to take on care-giving roles for dependent adults in their families. None of the youths I interviewed indicated that they are directly caring for loved ones, but the supporting roles they play are similarly "hidden and unacknowledged" (Robson, p.229, 2004) in both the literature and in Canadian refugee programming.

In another unique situation, one participant from Vancouver was acting as a *youth broker* for his family by helping to interpret for his parents' appointments at the hospital while simultaneously dealing with medical issues of his own. He said that:

> I have sleep disorder like past ten years, like ten, twelve, something. But then also, I thought when I come to Canada I can cure my disease, but 'til now it is same as past. Yeah, right now I am patient at UBC [sleep clinic]…I'm not much cured, like I have, actually I have sleep apnea plus narcolepsy (Interview 120, 2013).

This participant was the only one to discuss personal health issues with me during the interview, though I never explicitly asked any of the youths about their health, so he may not have been the only one struggling in this way. This particular individual further explained how his illness has hindered his ability to find employment, with doctors advising him against work while his illness persists. I highlight this particular circumstance to further the point that in

many cases *youth brokers* have intersecting responsibilities and roles within their family, which they assume on top of their individual concerns. Beyond taking on new and increased responsibilities within the family, refugee youths are also newcomers to Canada and must navigate all of the challenges that such a transition entails. Personal health issues only add to the demands that these youths must address. Such concerns are in line with the assertions of Shakya *et al.* (2014) that "the scale and implications of these changes in family responsibilities are more intense and far reaching for refugee youth" (p. 138) as compared to non-refugee youths who may have similar responsibilities.

Leading Family Decisions

> I was thinking that my mom, my dad, they are not speaking English right, and I am only the one who is looking after them and my brother was in this condition right, and it's really, really hard for me and then, I just think about that, I, I didn't, I don't know like what I'm going to do, like, you know. I was already nineteen at that time, and then I know that I, I'm not getting chance to go high school and then how I'm gonna get high school and then how does it takes to complete the high school…and then how I'm going to earn, and what I'm gonna work, you know. Yeah, I don't know like that...when I came first I was really frustrated like you know, I have to deal with everything right. Yeah and then we don't have any relatives (Interview 121, 2013).

This excerpt shows yet another example of a refugee youth taking on a multitude of *youth broker* responsibilities and essentially feeling like she is alone in looking after her family. She expresses her frustration at having to "deal with everything" and having to do so alone. This participant translates for her parents and helps to care for and make decisions regarding her brother, who is currently residing in a long-term care facility due to a 2010 brain injury, all the while balancing her own stress over education and finding employment. When it comes to

shifting familial responsibilities associated with resettlement many of the youths I interviewed described ways in which they make decisions on behalf of their families and in many ways *guide* them through migration and resettlement in Canada.

One specific locale in which many youths found themselves assuming the role of guide and support for their family was in the airports through which their families passed during their migration to Canada. Many of the youths commented that this was the first time they had ever been in an airport and that their families found the experience to be confusing and overwhelming. A young man in Ottawa described the airport in Dubai, saying "it's kind of like complicated for us, like we never travelled in plane before" (Interview 104, 2013). One youth explained that his family did not eat for the duration of the journey to Canada as they were unaccustomed to the food on the airplane. Yet another, said that his entire family was sick and vomiting on the plane. Another young man in Ottawa described his experience at the airport through the lens of personal responsibility, saying that:

> Actually like, my mom she's kind of disabled, she can't hear, and small brother, and I got a huge responsibility to bring them to Canada and everywhere in airport. You know, talk to them, everyone, and I just, finally we got here (Interview 103, 2013).

From the moment his family left Nepal this young man was already taking responsibility for the well being of his parent and siblings in order to get them safely to Canada. Other participants further described the confusion of the airports and their struggles when trying to communicate with airport officials on behalf of their family. I will return to the confusion of airports in the following chapter, but here I would like to highlight the *youth broker* role that some of the research participants described themselves playing as early as the flight out of Nepal.

Youth brokers also play a vital role in the day-to-day navigation of life in Canada. More than one interview participant commented on their responsibilities with regards to mail, paperwork and document translation. I commented on this excerpt earlier in the chapter and it bears repeating here:

> Another thing is that for me it wasn't that much but, paperwork. Oh, piles and piles, yes, piles and piles of papers, flyers and my parents they basically, they don't know which one is the flyer and which one is the, you know, documents to keep (Interview 110, 2013)

This young man is voicing his exasperation with the "piles and piles" of paperwork for which he is responsible. This task falls to him as a direct result of his parents' inability to read the mail and determine the importance and relevance of the documents they find in it. In a similar way to the youths who translate for their parents during medical appointments, this participant, using his English language skills, is likely privy to sensitive and important information affecting his parents and his family. Here again the youth assumes a *de facto* head of household position by taking on the role of reader, assessor and analyst of important household documents.

A young man from Vancouver lists his responsibility for household paperwork (along with school) as an obstacle to pursuing employment. He says that:

> Yeah school, and then also like some paperworks and all these things, like we have apartment and all these things you know like. Yeah so we were busy at the time. Yeah, so for one year I didn't like, worry about a job and then, later, after one year I tried but it was like so hard to find right? (Interview 114, 2013).

The assumption of these responsibilities is viewed in some ways as a burden by the youths who undertake them, but also just another part in assisting the family's resettlement in Canada.

Another example of youths acting as guides or navigators for their respective families became evident in descriptions of the ways in which youth share the knowledge they gained from orientation programs with their family:

> Another [example is] transportation. First I help them, yeah, I know to buy token and then I tell them [her family member] you have to buy token and then you have to put. I say that and they, they do same (Interview 101, 2013).

> I just went home and I just say 'this is locker' and I show everyone how do you open, you know you have to know the code I, I become myself smart (Interview 103, 2013).

In both of these excerpts the participants are referring to skills and knowledge acquired in the youth-oriented pilot project in which they were both participants. The young woman shared her understanding of Canadian public transportation with her family, as well as her familiarity with local maps. The young man, quoted above, enthusiastically shared his comprehension of combination locks with the rest of his family, part of the youth pilot orientation curriculum developed specifically for youth in Vancouver by ISSBC. Certainly these examples are far more mundane than the active guidance of one's family through as new and daunting a situation as an airport. But these small examples illustrate a dramatic shift in roles and responsibilities where youths are sharing their expertise and essentially teaching their adult parents techniques and skills for getting by in Canada. Youths are acting as brokers when they play an intermediary role between Canadian society and their wider families, and yet they have little to no training and support to prepare them for these roles.

Balancing School and Work Responsibilities

This section addresses the responsibilities that *youth brokers* must balance *in addition* to their roles as guides, intermediaries and translators for their families. Again, I want to stress that not all of the youths who participated in my project necessarily assumed *all* of the responsibilities that I have listed as applying to *youth brokers*. Many of the youths, however, outlined their involvement in more than one role. Not all of the participants juggled school and employment on top of familial duties, though the majority did.

Of the twenty-one youths interviewed in my research twelve indicated that they currently have paid employment in Canada with at least one indicating he had worked in Canada since his arrival. Thirteen of the participants were in high school at the time of their interview (more accurately they were on summer break), while two were enrolled in English Language Services for Adults (ELSA). One was in a post-secondary program, and another was in the process of applying to a post-secondary institution. Seven participants are both working *and* enrolled in some form of education. Four of these individuals work at fast food chains, and at least one youth both volunteers and attends school.

Several of the participants made reference to the balance of school, work or both and their familial responsibilities on a day-to-day basis. In some cases youths felt pressure from their parents to focus on school and not to work. One youth who works, volunteers, assists his parents and recently graduated from high school explained that:

> Yeah it was so hard to find a job, yeah and for my parents it was like, so hard to find a job, and still they don't have a job right now. And then for me, my parents want me to study like, rather than finding a jobs. Yeah, so they want me to go to school and like study hard. Yeah, so I didn't actually start a job for like one year (Interview 114, 2013).

This participant, who elsewhere in the interview indicated a strongly felt responsibility to help his parents, faces the dual pressures of wanting to excel in school, as per his parents' wishes, but also wanting to find work. Although I did not ask about financial issues, it is possible that this young man both desired and obtained a job to supplement his family's income. The multiple responsibilities managed by *youth brokers* are challenging, though unique for each individual.

Youth as a Source of Support and Hope

This research helps to address a knowledge gap (Robson, 2004) in hidden young-people's work, especially in the context of refugee resettlement. By highlighting what Aitken (2001) describes as "other childhoods" and "unchildlike behaviour" through the identification of refugee youth as brokers within their resettled families, this research echoes Shakya *et al.*'s findings indicating youths' strong capacity for resilience. Existing research almost unanimously agrees that children and youth possess agency and are active agents in their own lives (Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Holt, 2011). Prout and James assert that " children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live" (1990, p.8; as cited in Holloway and Valentine, 2000). The concept of *youth brokers* upholds this assertion by highlighting the instrumental and powerful role that youths can play in writing the futures of their families. Likewise, the term acknowledges that societal perceptions and expectations of these youths are very different from the intense responsibilities they face (Clark-Kazak, 2009). My work builds

upon Malkki (1996) and Rajaram (2002) and goes even a step further in arguing that refugee youths not only demonstrate agency and voice, but go beyond this to claim very responsible roles as authors of their family's identity and future.

The current model of mainstream orientation programming for refugees, in the form of COA, fails to address the unique challenges that youths as brokers and family decision-makers must face in Canada. The 2011 youth-oriented pilot program did include some discussion of the ways in which family responsibilities might change upon resettlement in Canada (see Figure 1), and in so doing began a discussion of these issues. The orientation touched on the challenges that parents might face and the dependence they might place upon their children.

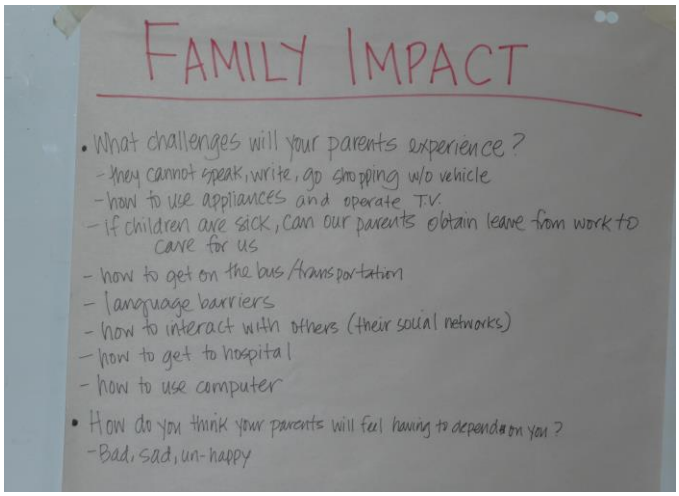

Figure 2 – Poster from discussion of 'Family Impact' at 2011 youth-oriented pilot program, Damak, Nepal. (Photo courtesy of Chris Friesen)

While the pilot program for Bhutanese youth is certainly a step in the right direction, the youth-oriented program was a one-time event, one which most Bhutanese youths could not access. Also, the youths in my study who did take part in the pilot orientation still faced struggles regarding their responsibilities in Canada. Based on my findings, and the manifold responsibilities that refugee youths voiced, I argue for more tailored and youth specific

orientation programming. This would not only address and prepare youths for their roles as *youth brokers* within their families, but also ease the burden by better preparing them for all aspects of resettled life. Many of the Bhutanese youths in my study were filling roles as *de facto* heads of household in Canada and much more needs to be done to support such individuals as they take on the very adult roles of leading their respective families, while navigating the unique challenges of their identities as both refugees and youths.

Chapter Four: Analyzing Orientation

> I just want to give you one example, is that if you have never taste sugar, you never know the taste of sugar right? So, but if someone told you, 'hey this taste of sugar is like, kind of like sweet' and you, you start thinking, okay how is the taste of sugar, then you thinking right, you start imagining. That happened to me right? (Interview 103, 2013)

By telling refugees what Canada is like, much like describing the taste of sugar to an individual who has never tasted it, orientation programming is premised on common frames of reference and builds an expectation and understanding of the reality that newcomers will face in Canada. If one's only knowledge of sugar comes from someone else's description, then there is little on which to base an expectation of the taste of sugar. Similarly, the Canadian government's COA program attempts to orient refugees to their new life in Canada by explaining and describing the realities of a country without known points of common reference with the participants. For those doing the orienting there is a tremendous amount of power inherent in deciding what refugees know, need to know, and why. My research shows that what the Canadian government thinks refugees should know before arriving in the country, and what refugees wish and think they should have been told are different things.

More specifically, what refugee youths *feel* they should have been told is often a different thing entirely. The previous chapter established my findings regarding the unique and important role that refugee youths play within their families, a role I categorize as *youth brokers*. The prominence of this familial responsibility, coupled with the challenges of resettlement and of course more common struggles with school and the rigours of adolescence highlight an acute need for useful and appropriate orientation programming for youths. My

research findings reveal the exceptional responsibilities and challenges undertaken by refugee youths, and in response I argue that orientation programming must take these specific experiences into account. The youths I interviewed participated in different pre-departure orientations and did not have uniform experiences of resettlement in Canada. Some had more challenging experiences than others, but it was apparent that the struggles and difficulties highlighted by participants, often concerning high school and family dynamics, were in most cases specific to their identity as youths. An acknowledgement of these different struggles and an attempt to address these struggles is imperative to improving the lives of young refugees resettling in Canada.

The remainder of this chapter looks at the differing experiences of refugee youths in three categories: those who took part in standard COA programming, those who were involved in the 2011 youth-oriented pilot program and those who had no pre-departure orientation experience at all. What follows is a brief description of the first two orientation programs and what they entail, and then an analysis of the resettlement experiences of Bhutanese youths in these categories grouped into three major sections a) expectations, b) orientation experience, and c) surprises and challenges, followed by some concluding thoughts on the values and successes of the programs.

I must acknowledge at this juncture, the challenges posed to the comprehensiveness of my research by the shortcomings of human memory (Cameron, 2010). Participants had been resettled in Canada for varying lengths of time, and thus the time since they actually participated in an orientation session differs. Many of the youths indicated that they were having trouble recalling the details of the orientations or the initial challenges they faced upon

arrival in Canada. From this I can extrapolate that certain elements of the orientation and resettlement experience may have been forgotten by participants, and thus a participant's failure to include 'transportation' as a topic in their memories of orientation does not necessarily mean that such a topic was not included. To this end I endeavour to highlight only recurring thoughts, issues, omissions, challenges, and memories, as articulated by interviewees, in order to counteract some of the issues caused by unevenness in memory.

Furthermore, when planning this research I wanted to visit a variety of Canadian cities in which Bhutanese youths were resettled: Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, St. John's and Charlottetown. The rationale for this decision was my anticipation of identifiable geographical differences across the contexts in which the youths' settled. I also wanted to offset the small sample size of Bhutanese youth by selecting diverse settlement situations they have faced. Despite careful analysis, my results showed no notable differences among youths' experiences across these five major cities. There were certainly differing experiences and responses among individuals, but none that could be traced to a particular city or region. My sample is not statistically significant so these findings are not generalizable, yet respondents from all research sites identified three key challenges faced by Bhutanese youths: making friends, learning the language, and going to school. A lack of location-specific orientation in advance of arrival posed challenges for many of the youths. They were not being prepared to resettle in a specific city to which they would eventually move; this was an issue expressed by interviewed youths across the country.

Orienting Ourselves to Orientation Programs

Canadian Orientation Abroad

As I previously outlined, a majority of the Bhutanese youths in my research participated in the standard COA orientation before departing for Canada. In conjunction with the IOM, Canada offers COA to incoming refugees, live-in caregivers and immigrants around the globe prior to their departure for Canada (IOM, 2012). Since the COA initiative began in 1998 these orientation sessions have been aimed at helping newcomers adapt to life in Canada through awareness of challenges, provision of skills and information about what to realistically expect upon arrival (IOM, 2014). While a comprehensive examination of the tools and programming used within these orientations would certainly be beneficial, this is prohibited by the lack of data made available about the programs. CIC explains (CIC, 2012b) that the program objectives are to:

- *Provide refugees and immigrants of all categories with accurate information about life in Canada;*
- *Help participants develop realistic expectations regarding their settlement in Canada and increase awareness and skills necessary to successfully adapt to their new lives, especially during their first six months of stay in Canada;*
- *Provide information regarding rights and freedoms, responsibilities, and obligations as Permanent Residents;*
- *Address any questions and concerns regarding their move to Canada.*

Beyond these objectives there is little information provided by IOM and CIC pertaining to the specifics of the programming. The literature focuses mainly on the number of people who have participated in COA programming since 1998 and the countries in which it is offered (IOM, 2014), while CIC (2012b) implies that programs are adapted to specific countries and needs, explaining that:

> *Training hours, methods, and materials reflect the varied needs and circumstances of participants. Consideration is given to cultural, religious, and other practices as well as possible experiences of past persecution or current circumstances in the country of asylum (for refugees).*

Due to the lack of detailed information, I have drawn from CIC program evaluations of generic (for adults but children were included at times) COA programming, and research done for the MBC funded project 'Operation Swaagatem' (Sherrell *et al.*, 2011) and its accompanying youth-oriented pilot project (Lozano and Friesen, 2011) to highlight the shortcomings of the program, as it existed at the time of my fieldwork.

In an evaluation of Canada's 'Overseas Orientation Initiatives' CIC's Research and Evaluation branch collected data from July 2011 to January 2012 with the purpose of addressing the "relevance, design and implementation, and performance"(CIC, 2012c, p.3) of Canada's three pre-departure orientation initiatives: COA, the Active Engagement and Integration Project, and the Canadian Immigrant Integration Program. The report found that pre-departure orientation is important in supporting refugees and that it helped them in preparing for life in Canada, though this assessment was based on interviews with CIC staff and IOM representatives, not refugees. The evaluation also found that as compared to other groups of COA participants (Federal Skilled Workers, Family Class Immigrants, and Live-in Caregivers) refugees were least likely to want additional or better information to be available in COA programming (CIC, 2012c).

This assessment of COA programming appears to show that it is achieving its goal of supporting refugees as they prepare for resettlement, and that refugees themselves feel the programs need little improvement. These claims are problematic for a number of reasons. The

first is that different methods were used to collect responses from different groups. Unlike other groups of orientation recipients, no focus groups were conducted with refugees. This is due to the determination, on the part of the CIC researchers, that:

> Conducting focus groups with refugees may not be effective in yielding additional information on results. A review of landings data concluded that it would have been difficult to locate a sufficient number of refugees in the same location, with the same cultural background and that landed in Canada within 3-9 months of taking orientation (CIC, 2012c, p. 6)

To compensate for this 'limitation' further research on best practices for orientations was done. This research included review of relevant literature and interviews with IOM program coordinators and orientation representatives (CIC, 2012c). No refugees were interviewed, an oversight from my perspective.

Research for this evaluation included refugees in other ways, however, namely as respondents to a CIC survey about COA experiences. Without elaborating, the report simply states that "given the size of Canada's refugee population, the COA survey contained a limited number of responses from refugees" (CIC, 2012c, p.6). Bakewell (2008) addresses these recurring limitations, calling for 'policy irrelevant' research to capture statistically smaller groups that fall outside of the salient categories of analysis and data collection. Despite the admittedly minimal inclusion of refugees in the survey, the authors claim that when respondents were asked if they wanted additional or better information during COA, refugees were the least likely to say 'yes' (CIC, 2012c, p.7). Again, this analysis points to the successes of COA in providing useful pre-departure orientation services for refugees despite its clear methodological limitations. The table provided by CIC indicates that, when compared to other groups of respondents, refugees were indeed less likely to desire additional information,

though 80% indicated a need (see Table 4). So while a greater percentage of live-in caregivers and skilled workers, respectively, indicated a need for more orientation information, the claim that such a call from refugee respondents was the weakest is misleading. Across the board, *all* respondents expressed a wish for additional information with around 50% of refugee respondents asking for additional information about education, healthcare and rights and responsibilities.

Rated element	Immigration category (%)				
	Refugee	Skilled Worker	Family Class	Live-in Caregiver	Overall
Percent that wanted more information	80.1	94.1	91.4	94.4	89.0
Social services	44.6	53.7	59.1	70.8	53.5
Health care	48.0	45.0	60.1	70.8	51.7
Education	51.3	44.0	52.5	58.3	49.5
Settlement / immigrant services	46.1	46.3	51.5	59.7	48.6
Rights and responsibilities	49.4	33.9	55.6	77.8	47.6
Climate	35.4	26.7	47.5	65.3	37.6

Source: COA Survey. Note that 'n' varies with each figure.

Table 4 - Percentage of COA survey respondents that wanted more information[7] (CIC, 2012c, p.7).

CIC's evaluation encompasses a number of programs and immigrant groups, but excludes refugees in a variety of ways, thus weakening its assessment of the COA program. In many ways refugee voices were not canvassed at all, and in the rare cases that they were (through the COA survey) their responses were numerically fewer than other groups. This report, with little effort on my part, highlights the difficulty in finding comprehensive

[7] The study did not offer numbers for each category.

information about COA programming and the need for a thorough and critical evaluation of what does exist.

That being said, an academic analysis of COA programming is not the only, nor best, indicator of the program's value. Ultimately the tools, information, and hope that refugees actually take with them from the programs, are among the best indicators of what the program is teaching, regardless of the availability of a written curriculum. The aforementioned 'Operation Swaagatem' details the planning process and preparation undertaken by the community of Coquitlam, British Columbia (BC) prior to the arrival of 150 Bhutanese refugees (Sherrell *et al.*, 2011). Part of this preparation involved interviews with 16 Bhutanese *adults* who had participated in a three-to-five-day COA pre-departure orientation in Nepal and since resettled in BC. These interviews revealed that the most helpful parts of the COA session, for those interviewed, included knowledge of road safety and transportation, information about living in Canada, finances and food preparation (Sherrell *et al.*, 2011). Some respondents, however, criticized the program for being too vague and not providing provincially specific information (an issue that came up more than once in my own interviews). Young adults in particular reflected on their frustration at their inability to access high school due to their age (these individuals arrived in their late teens and early twenties). A majority of those interviewed expressed a wish to have known more about the climate and liveability of their Canadian region, while some would like to have known more about finances, Canadian society and the geography of Canada (Sherrell *et al.*, 2011).

With little information available regarding the content of COA programming, and in particular COA in Nepal, these interviews, supplemented by my own, reveal the shortcomings

of the sessions in their current form. My research relied heavily on the reflections of participants to construct an idea of the content offered in COA programs in Nepal. I do not have an outline of the curricula employed, but instead draw upon the recollections of participants. In particular, I probe their answers to questions about the most useful parts of the program and those that were lacking, to provide significant insight into the information that is most valuable in *orienting* refugee youths.

Youth-Oriented Pre-Departure Pilot Program

Where COA programming is offered to most GARs before departure to Canada, my research also looked at a less widely available pilot project that offered a one-time pre-departure orientation program tailored to Bhutanese youths in Nepalese refugee camps (Lozano and Friesen, 2011). This pilot program took place in January 2011 in a refugee camp in Damak, Nepal wherein twenty-one refugees aged 14 to 18 years old participated in a three day orientation program facilitated by ISSBC. The creators of the program contend that the current COA model, while useful, is not as relevant to youth aged 14 to 18 as it could be and as such, created an orientation program, with input from refugee youths, already living in Canada. Interviews with refugee youth now settled as permanent residents in Canada allowed the researchers to glean critical insights about information that was tailored, and in theory more beneficial, to Bhutanese youth (Lozano and Friesen, 2011).

Focus groups conducted with forty-three youths aged 16 to 19 who had resettled in the Greater Vancouver area revealed a pronounced focus on the challenges experienced by youths during their first few days in the Canadian public school system (Lozano and Friesen, 2011).

Youths highlighted the difficulties they faced when moving from classroom to classroom, using lockers and combination locks, and navigating their course schedules. Feelings of isolation and frustration, along with experiences of racism and bullying in school were recounted by many of the interviewed youths as ongoing challenges. Other challenges were similarly mentioned including confusion over Canadian currency, lack of familiarity with shopping practices and feelings of shock when viewing public displays of affection, though school-related difficulties were the overwhelming focus of most interviewed youths (*ibid*.).

The pilot, which they describe in depth in their report, was designed as a three day interactive event where participants were able to ask questions about life in Canada, particularly the education system, health care, currency, transportation, marriage practices, religion and a variety of other challenges they might face (Lozano and Friesen, 2011). The modalities for sharing this information included a variety of discussions, activities and games. Implemented with the support of ISSBC, IOM and UNHCR, the three-day program was delivered in English with a Nepali interpreter present at all times. A major component of the program was an ongoing assessment of the participants' knowledge concerning resettlement and Canada. While facilitators made a pointed effort to build relationships with the youths and make them feel safe, comfortable and informed, they also attempted to adjust and tailor the program as it progressed to better cater to the needs of youths and their questions. Facilitators noted the change in participants' attitudes throughout the orientation, shifting from reserved and soft spoken involvement to outspoken and unafraid participation by the end of the third day (Lozano and Friesen, 2011).

A detailed curriculum of the pilot orientation program (as recorded in Lozano and Friesen, 2011) can be found in Appendix D, including a breakdown of the activities and objectives for each of the 3 orientation days. Among these is a variety of introductory, ice-breaker activities where youths were encouraged to play pre-determined interactive and memory games in order to create a relaxed and fun atmospheres for learning. The impetus for the orientation as well as its rationale and goals were articulated to youth participants early in the agenda, along with activities designed to assess participants' knowledge of Canadian culture, languages, and schools. Facilitators tried to incorporate the responses from these activities into the remainder of the orientation.

Other components of the program included a presentation of basic information about Canada such as the geography of the country and provinces, information about the climate and seasons, currency, languages, healthcare and religion. Mapping activities and public transportation role-playing were also included in the curriculum as well as more intensive presentations and activities surrounding Canadian currency and slang words and phrases. Highlighted topics were a direct response to the needs identified in the earlier youth focus groups held in Canada. This is evident in the 140 minutes dedicated to presentations about the Canadian high school system and interactive practice using combination locks and school agendas.

Another youth-specific component of the orientation involved an extended discussion of the impact that resettlement might have on the families of the youths. This component was intended to highlight the likely role reversals and changes that families might experience in Canada. At the same time, it illuminated some of the challenges that parents are likely to face

and responsibilities that youths may have to adopt. Unfortunately there is no record of how this discussion progressed or the questions that youths may have asked, but its inclusion alone is certainly unique to the pilot project. Other activities include the racism and multiculturalism activity discussed in Chapter Two and the screening of a short video made with the help of focus group participants in Vancouver discussing their experiences of resettling in Canada and encouraging the viewers by offering advice and hopeful messages. The video can be viewed online (ISSBC, 2011).

Initial feedback from participants showed enthusiasm for the project and a positive impact. Youths articulated their gratitude at being included in the program and described the variety of things they learned. This feedback, along with experience of implementing the program, led facilitators to recommend the implementation of similar programming in all newcomer orientation. Facilitators concluded that:

> Youth specific pre departure curriculum and orientation to Canada should be implemented worldwide to better prepare newcomer youth for their unique resettlement process. While the current Cultural Orientation Abroad (COA) program/curriculum is thorough and delivered by dedicated professionals within sometime [sic] very challenging environments, the content is not as relevant for youth between the ages of 13-18 years old. Providing youth with a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities they will face once in Canada is a smart investment that will go a long way to not only better preparing and helping themselves but also their families. (Lozano and Friesen, 2011, p. 10)

This recommendation was made following the conclusion of the program and with the positive feedback of participants. A study of the resettlement of these youths in Canada, however, remains to be done. My research follows up with 1) select participants in this pilot; 2) resettled

youths who participated in standard COA programming; and 3) those who had no orientation at all.

Analyzing the Programs

I endeavoured to interview as many youths in each of these categories (pilot program participants, COA participants, those with no orientation experience) as possible, but the nature of my project and reliance on community organizations and snowball sampling resulted in an uneven distribution of respondents among the three categories. The vast majority of the youths (12) had participated in a standard COA program in Nepal, and a limited number were involved in the pilot orientation (6). Even fewer experienced no orientation at all (3). This reflects the reality of current orientation programming. Most refugee youths, and in this case those specifically in Nepal, would only have access to COA programs. Those who participated in the pilot program were part of a group of only twenty-one individuals and do not represent the most common experience of young Bhutanese refugees.

Those who did not participate in an orientation program were unable to do so for reasons that they did not always disclose. One individual was ill and receiving treatment at a hospital outside of the camp when the COA seminars were being offered. My sample of interviews with non-oriented youths was very small resulting in few or no answers in some categories of my analysis. For example, I was unable to ask them questions about their experiences of pre-departure orientation, and therefore, this group is not included in that particular analysis.

Expectations Before Arrival

Before arriving in Canada, the youths had a variety of expectations about what life might be like. I found no notable trends among the three groups, though concerns about the cold climate and snow where expressed in abundance. Excitement about education programs and healthcare were also mentioned as two of the youths described their hopes that enduring health issues might be remedied in Canada. More generally there seemed to be a fairly polarized view of Canada as either a frightening place to live (namely due to its size and climate) or as a place to live the 'good life.' One young man explained that he:

> Thought it would be like, really good and well they, you know as a human being the first thing that is important is your safety right? And it's, it's safe here. I thought it would be safe so, yeah, it is safe here, and it's like heaven (Interview 111, 2013)

The youths' expectations of Canada were confirmed to varying degrees upon arrival, a topic I will return to later in this chapter, however this brief reference to youth expectations illustrates a need for accurate orientation programs if only to dispel unnecessary fears and uncertainty. False rumours about Canada and other countries of resettlement are rampant in the Nepalese camps and can lead to false expectations about the country. A young man in Charlottetown explained that:

> Some people who don't want to come here they just twist the stuff and then they tell them the bad, bad things like when I was there, like the rumours were, like they would give you uh, a needle to women's like that, you can't have babies and stuff and like that, you know what I mean right. So like yeah, there were some womens were scared of that too but, which isn't, which is totally wrong, which is not true and there are like lots and lots of rumours there you know. And yeah, there are lots of, and some people some rumours were like, they would like you know put your child into uh, like army or place and you know, take them to, if war or something, if anything happens to the country, kind of like that. Yeah so there are lot's of, lot's of false rumours in camps, like and none of them are true (Interview 111, 2013).

Thus accurate and detailed orientation is necessary in curbing such rumours and building realistic expectations for life in Canada.

Orientation Experience

My conversations with Bhutanese youths across Canada revealed the broad variety of experiences the youths had during orientation programming. While there are significant areas of focus that differentiate the youth-oriented pilot program from standard COA programming, the youths also indicated that one orientation was not experienced in the same way by all the youths who participated in it. Recall that varying ability to remember the respective programs may be responsible for such variety in that surely none of the youths I interviewed were able to recollect everything they learned in orientations. But this recurring mention of particular topics indicates their significance in the minds of more than one individual.

Canadian Orientation Abroad

Youths who participated in COA orientation programs did so on different dates, presumably with different instructors and timeframes. When I asked these youths about what they had learned in their orientation programs, what parts they had liked, and what elements they found useful, the responses were often surprising. Responses to semi-structured interviews indicated that many of the youths remembered and appreciated learning practical skills they could use in Canada. These included guidance in western style cooking, using a stove, using a western style toilet, and learning about Canadian currency. Responses also indicated that COA prioritizes information about the use of emergency services. Many of the youths

recalled an intense focus on understanding the basics of calling '9-1-1' during an emergency as well as learning about the healthcare system and access to hospitals. When asked what he felt the most useful thing he learned was, a young man in Charlottetown explained that for him it was "the 9-1-1 system cause they talked a lot, like whole day about it" (Interview 113, 2013). COA participants similarly discussed learning about Canadian geography and government, and how to access and use identification cards such as those issued to permanent residents and provincial health cards. The topic most frequently discussed during interviews, however, and noted for its usefulness, was information about public transit. Variety in COA content was revealed by respondents emphasis on the usefulness of orientation to public transit. While at least five COA participants highlighted transit as important, an enthusiastic young woman with a seemingly thorough recollection of the details of her program indicated that this topic was decidedly excluded from her COA program (Interview 121, 2013).

Interestingly, only one participant out of the twelve I interviewed about COA indicated learning about education or high-school in the orientation program. Regardless of different memories of differences between programs, evidence points to a lack in information about Canadian education systems, a topic of significant importance for youths in particular. A young man in Vancouver explained that "they didn't talk about school, yeah cause I didn't remember them, like talking about school" (Interview 114, Vancouver). I will return to this later when I examine the recommendations made by the youths with regards to improving orientation programming.

Youth-Oriented Pilot Program

By comparison many of the key topics highlighted in COA programming were also a part of the youth-oriented pilot program. The youths who participated in the pilot orientation were not involved in COA programming but, like COA, the pilot orientation was responsible for basic orientation to Canada. Unlike the twelve COA youth participants I interviewed, participants in the pilot orientation all attended the same three-day program, thus offering comparable data.

Basic orientation to information about hospitals and healthcare in Canada, the climate and weather, as well as laws and Canadian currency were all highlighted by youths as important and useful components of the pilot program. Much like respondents from the COA group, almost all of the youths from the pilot program indicated that learning about transportation was a key and memorable part of their experience. A young man in Ottawa talked about the program with great enthusiasm and detail as he described a program activity designed to teach the youths about public transit. In the activity the participants simulated the experience of getting on a bus, with one person playing the role of the driver and the others passengers. The youths learned how to give the driver fare for the bus and pull the cord when the bus arrived at their stop. This young man explained:

> Some of them [the youths] are visual learners like me. I am good at visual learning and I was like 'oh so bus is like this' and they just show the example, right? And they just create an image in my mind and 'okay, oh bus is like this, okay. So I have to do this, I have to do that'…. So I just use my mind and realize and do that, so transportation is so easy (Interview 103, 2013).

Not only did the youths verbally learn about transportation from the orientation instructors, but they were able to participate in an activity that made the knowledge accessible to verbal and visual learners alike.

Similar sentiments were repeated by most of the pilot participants with regards to actual enjoyment of the programs, activities and games. Participants talked quite animatedly about their experience of the program:

> The teachers are Patricia, Vi, Chris and Peter. I don't forget those people. Those peoples are so nice and they, they teach us like very good. And also Nathalie, yeah (Interview 104, 2013).

> They [the instructors] were like, really helpful you know, and the program we did like three days and it was really fun (Interview 108, 2013).

> They just attract the youth by doing different things. The playing the games is the new thing that I learned. They just play a game with us, in a new idea, and giving us a happiness in there. We won't feel any bored there. They just [say] 'game time, game time' and the thing is that they were not saying that you [play] game, you play here, I will say the rules. They just involve in the game and they just play with us (Interview 103, 2013).

Nearly all the participants from this group referenced their enjoyment of the program and the fun they had when participating in it. The kindness and approachability of instructors was similarly something that both surprised and pleased the participants. Many of the youths happily recalled the gifts that the program instructors gave to participants such as a combination lock, a Canadian dollar and chocolate from Canada. One youth attributed to these gifts, among other factors, his excitement and eagerness to complete the orientation. He explained how the gifts he received in the orientation served as experiences he was able to share with his whole family, saying:

> I just start sharing to everyone, every, my parents and, so that's how they, you know they attract the youth, by giving something else, some, sometime they give us a chocolate from Canada, 'this is chocolate from Canada' and I just went home, 'I ate a chocolate from Canada' and I want to go tomorrow now. I won't stay at home.

> I will go tomorrow…and they, kind of like, giving opportunity to talk. Everyone asking questions to everyone, even though they were scared (Interview 103, 2013).

This excerpt is a rich example of the excitement that the pilot orientation program held for this individual not only resulting from program 'gifts' and the shared experience as he relayed his excitement to others in his family, but also from the opportunity to speak, and have a voice in the program itself. My interviews indicate that this individual, but also other participants, felt safe, respected and included in the pilot orientation. It was a fun experience, with kind and helpful instructors and exciting events to share with family. One young man expressed his pride in being able to talk and interact with the Canadian instructors, and the admiration of his friends and family at the knowledge he gained in the pilot. These emotional and impassioned recollections were unique, in my research, to the participants of the pilot program, a finding that I will return to in the conclusion of this chapter.

Beyond these positive memories of the people, environment and nature of the program, the content that most distinguishes it from standard COA programming is the emphasis placed on learning about high school and the Canadian education system. Five of the six respondents in this group indicated that school was a major focus in the program. Beyond general descriptions of Canadian high schools, participants recalled specific attention being paid to some basic skills that high-school students may need. Two participants discussed the value of learning how to use a combination lock prior to arriving in Canada, with one young woman explaining:

> It's like easy for me to school because I know back home it's said about how to use locker, how to talk with people…they give us locker to have…and when I came Canada I'm not confused to lock, right? (Interview 101, 2013).

The pilot program highlighted specific challenges that youths in the original Vancouver focus groups had talked about in their experience of resettlement. Using combination locks was one of the identified challenges as the focus group youths told stories of being unable to open their lockers for days or having their belongings stolen when they could not use their lock (Lozano and Friesen, 2011).

Moving to different classrooms throughout the day was a similar issue identified by youths in the original Vancouver-based refugee youth focus groups, as well as participants in my own research. One of the COA participants explained that:

> Back in Nepal, we like, it was every class, you know teacher used to come and like we were in the same class for the whole day. And when I came to the school here, like we had to move from the class to class. So that was, I didn't thought that would happen with these things (Interview 113, 2013).

In comparison, half of the pilot participants indicated that changing classrooms and using a class timetable was something they learned about in the pilot orientation. A young man in St. John's indicated that the pilot orientation allowed him to navigate this new and challenging system, saying that:

> We have to look the, look the number, the classroom and we have to go there and yeah, I did like the first month and second month it was really hard to find the classroom, and it's like fourth floor, you know up to fourth floor and yeah from, sometimes from one floor to, I have to go to fourth floor to finding the classroom so yeah, yeah this, that, it works like they say. Like you have to go by finding your numbers your classroom and I go like same way (Interview 108, 2013).

Imputing such skills is unique to the youth-oriented pilot program and its expressed interest in catering to the articulated needs of refugee youths. Information about high school and its accompanying challenges is of particular relevance to youths who are resettling in Canada. In

the following section I turn to the surprises and challenges faced by youths upon arrival in the country, and point to high school as one of the most common locations where youths face difficulties in Canada.

Surprises and Challenges

Refugee youths face an often frustrating and ongoing period of tribulation when resettling in Canada. I asked participants what surprised and challenged them during their first months in the country, and while the answers were varied, several challenges were particularly prominent and voiced by many of the youths. For most youths, their three biggest challenges were centred on school, official language ability and making friends, regardless of whether or not they had an orientation.

No Orientation

Due to the small sample size of youths without any orientation experience (3), trends were difficult to identify. One of these participants was so shy and seemingly nervous that he answered very few of the questions. The two participants who did answer highlighted a lack of North American English and experiences at high school as their most notable obstacles. The following excerpt from an interview with a young man highlights the interconnection between struggles with school, language and making friends. When asked about the first time he went to school in Vancouver, he responded:

> Actually the first time was really sad because it was hard to [have a] conversation and it's hard to make a friend too because, actually, I'm new. There's no one right, so I have to find the friend. And it's hard to understand what teacher is doing, like

> what's going on…actually it was easy for me to understand but it's hard to explain like, like the language we didn't understand English in the camp too but it was British English so it was hard to explain American English. Even now it is hard, like sometimes…the pronunciation is different…the way of speaking is like totally different (Interview 117, 2013).

Despite learning English before arrival, this young man did not learn the *right* type of English, leading him to challenges at school, in meeting people and in forming friendships (Ager and Strang, 2008). This was a common refrain among participants of all three groups, though for this youth his trials do not indicate any shortcomings in orientation programming, as he did not participate in any. Rather, his observations highlight settlement and orientation needs of refugee youths.

For another young man, his lack of familiarity with English led to conflict at school, particularly with other students. He explained that:

> When I went to the school there are a few guys there, like trying to bull, bully you know, like I don't, I was like, they were trying to say something and I don't understand and I gave wrong answer, I have wrong way to answer it. Then they act as, you know, like tough people, like cool (Interview 105, 2013).

High school can be a difficult place for any student, but being unable to speak the language is a particular concern for these refugee youths. The young man quoted above did not indicate that there were challenges with the style and pronunciation of English, but rather went on to say that when he first came to Canada he was resettled in Montréal, Quebec, and was not aware that he would need to speak French. Perhaps, had he been able to take part in an orientation program, he might have known that he would be resettled in a French-speaking city, though it is unlikely he would have had any knowledge of French. I cite this example to show the various ways in which language might pose a problem for youths, whether it is in pronunciation or

familiarity. Without comprehensive orientation, youths may be unaware of, and ill prepared for, the challenges that language barriers can create in a new school system.

Canadian Orientation Abroad

For Bhutanese youths who participated in COA programming in Nepal there were a variety of surprising experiences during resettlement in Canada. A number of the youths articulated their shock at seeing tall buildings and construction that did not consist of plastic, bamboo and mud, while others were surprised to see snow for the first time. Others did not expect the vast differences between Canadian and Nepali schools. Like the focus group with refugee youths in Vancouver whose experience and feedback provided the basis of the pilot, COA participants expressed their initial confusion when having to change classrooms and with the different styles of buildings. Only one of the twelve COA participants indicated that they had learned about school or the Canadian education system in their orientation, so the youths' lack of familiarity is not surprising.

What was surprising was the indication by some participants that COA material was misleading or poorly explained to the youths. Another young man in Ottawa was initially resettled in Montréal, and was not aware that he would need to speak French in school. He explained: "like I never heard like French before" (Interview 107, 2013). He goes on to elaborate that before leaving Nepal he spoke some English, but was not aware that people in Montréal might speak French. In this instance it seems that the COA program failed this young man, as he was unaware of one of the most basic and crucial facts concerning the city, and

school system, in which he would ultimately live.[8] Another participant, quoted in Chapter Three, expressed his initial fear of coming to Canada because a video shown in his COA orientation depicted what he thought to be a country covered in water. He said that:

> When I saw the video on the orientation workshop I thought like, I saw like water everywhere, like I used to think like there's water everywhere and we have house above that…yeah and when I did the orientation workshop, due to those like water and house like, house above the water, it makes me feel like not come to Canada…but when I get here it was totally different…I thought like the water everywhere but it wasn't so (Interview 106, 2013)

One can assume that the video described by this young man showed images of ocean and lakes and possibly raised houses in the Maritime Provinces or another region of Canada where this might occur. Misunderstandings happen from time to time, but the images selected for the video may have caused this confusion. A participant leaving with the impression that Canada is entirely under water is hardly an indicator of a successful orientation to Canada.

A participant in Vancouver similarly explained that during the orientation they were shown pictures of places that had no relevance to their own resettlement saying:

> The picture which I saw in the, yeah in the orientation was of like, I think Newfoundland or somewhere else and then now I come to Vancouver and it was like 'oh that was the different place' and then yeah, I thought like that (Interview 114, 2013)

These excerpts show that participants are not being oriented to the city or even region of Canada to which they are being resettled, but are instead being oriented to the entirety of the country. This may be difficult to customize, though a greater variety of imagery could be of use.

[8] French is the official language of Quebec and as such immigrants are expected to attend elementary and high school in French (CIC, 2011b).

High school and language were some of the biggest challenges faced by all refugee youths consulted. After saying that he wanted more detailed information from the COA orientation, a young man in Charlottetown explained:

> By detailed I mean like how, I can't really put it. Like how the school system or how they work you know, and what happens in them, like they didn't show us…they did, like we had to, we have to go to school and like get a different, they showed us a video about how, like the school goes, but it would be better if they like showed us, like, like how, you know, other things that were in there (Interview 113, 2013).

> It's so difficult to understand like, like teach, the teacher teaching, the way they are speaking. Like one year I'm just like, I do not speak with anybody because I do not have communication with them (Interview 107, 2013).

> It was really hard, like first three or four months it was really hard. I didn't know the language, right. So I was like a, like a person who never goes out of home. I'm always staying at home and, and yeah, school it was, it was really, really hard school…the subjects were pretty hard, the courses math and science so, and then it was of course hard to communicate with people. So like I was kind of alone, you know, like in for like, among like lots of people I was still alone and yeah (Interview 111, 2013).

The combination of minimal information about high school in the orientation and lack of familiarity with the language renders school a difficult and overwhelming experience for many. As discussed earlier, youths who learned English in Nepal were taught by teachers with British accents, and as such the Canadian-English accent added an additional layer of confusion. Again and again youths from all three groups emphasized the struggles of going to school in Canada, struggles that are unique to refugee and potentially other immigrant youths. Among the struggles that plagued the youths while attending high school was the difficulty in making friends, often tied to issues of learning the language. Six participants indicated that it was difficult and took a long time to make friends, often one to two years.

> When I came here like, there was only one Nepali like, one Nepali guy like, who was my sibling, like sibling who came before me. He was the only my friend, one of my friend, and in class I used to be quiet like all the time. Yeah pretty much all the time (Interview 106, 2013).

> To be honest with you, being honest with you I haven't had that much friends, but whoever I work with, they are very friendly and you know everybody is like friendly so, I don't need any friends here (Interview 110, 2013).

> When I first got here like, it was pretty hard you know like, because it was like completely different language for me and like, I didn't really, I couldn't really make friends with them, cause we had like language barrier, but I could like, I could talk to like people who were from different countries you know like from China and stuff but like, uh like the Canadian people like, it was hard for them to understand my accent. So yeah that's pretty much, pretty hard (Interview 113, 2013).

Six of the twelve COA youths I interviewed indicated that making friends in Canada had been difficult and that in many cases struggles with the language was a factor in this. The frequency with which this topic was discussed by the youths indicates that it is one of importance and concern, particularly when taking on *youth broker* responsibilities.

The responsibilities that many of the participants held within their families, and the adult roles they sometimes play are obvious challenges faced by refugee youths as outlined in the previous chapter. Part of this, however is the challenge that some of the COA participants articulated, of finding employment in Canada. A youth I interviewed in Vancouver said that:

> It was so hard to find a job. Yeah and for my parents, it was like so hard to find a job, and still they don't have a job right now, and then for me, my parents want me to study like, rather than finding a jobs. Yeah so, they wants me to go to school and like study hard. Yeah so I didn't actually start a job for like one year…and then later after one year, yeah I tried but it was like so hard to find (Interview 114, 2013).

For this individual, like many of the others finding employment was a necessary but difficult task for which the COA orientation did not prepare him. He goes on in the interview to suggest that the program focus more on employment skills and finding work, though I will return to this issue in the concluding chapter.

Youth-Oriented Pilot Program

For the youths that participated in the pilot program there were no real trends in the things they found surprising about Canada. Some were shocked to see snow for the first time, while others were unaccustomed to the visibility of the LGBTQ community in Canada, or the multicultural demographic of their new city and the widespread proliferation of visible tattoos. None of these things, however, was mentioned by more than one of the pilot program participants, and as such I interpret these as individual experiences uncommon to the group as a whole.

The most challenging parts of resettlement, for the pilot program youths, however, were strikingly similar to those expressed by youths in the other groups and across all cities. They primarily revolved around the common issues of learning a new language and attending high school. A young man in Charlottetown remembers the pilot program instructors explaining that school in Canada would be a safe space, like a home. He commented that:

> It was true. It is true. It's like a home in school, but when you don't know the language you are not a family member anymore (interview 111, 2013).

This excerpt eloquently demonstrates the integral connection between language and education. This young man did not feel like a 'family member' in the 'home' that is high school,

likely a sentiment that many of the youths would identify with. Other participants recounted struggles with bullying, being unable to do homework, struggling with the system of changing classrooms, and generally communicating at school. With regards to her first few days at school in Toronto, one young woman said that:

> Some people, some student[s] are nice right, some are just, yeah. I don't think so…Oh it's too hard for me to, for us, when I come to school, it's too hard because nobody understand[s] when I'm talking right (Interview 101, 2013).

Five of the six youths who took the pilot program referenced challenges they experienced at or because of school. Difficulty making friends was similarly voiced by five of the participants, often tied to language and school. These individuals, however, unlike those who participated in standard COA orientation programming, had learned about high schools in Canada prior to arriving. Even with this specific orientation, school was still challenging. This does not demonstrate any lack of value in specific orientations to school, but rather demonstrates the necessity for more and better orientation and settlement support for youth. The youths themselves called specifically for more information about schooling in orientation programs. When asked what he wished to have known before arrival in Canada, a young man in Charlottetown replied:

> So like lots of information about airport and about school for the teenagers and kids worry about school cause like it's different here, and you know like, I felt really, really bad. I felt like going back to Nepal. Like first two weeks of like a month of school year, cause I didn't know anything (Interview 111, 2013).

I return later to specific recommendations and suggestions by the youths, but this excerpt shows that the youth-specific programming of the pilot orientation was only a start. Orientation abroad is just one step towards orientation, inclusion, and genuine participation in one's new

home. The previous section of this chapter showed that many of the pilot project youths were grateful for the youth-tailored information they were given about high school and found that part of the orientation to be helpful, but there is much room to do more and improve this portion of the orientation.

The previous excerpt also highlights the challenges that at least three of the pilot orientation participants experienced at the airport. In St. John's a young man noted that his:

> Biggest challenge is like on the airport you know, like in the transition, you know like while come Canada…It was hard to find the plane you know…we had problem with that like you know, we couldn't find the right place like, you know, like sometimes yeah, we missed the flight and yeah it was like really challenging, yeah…yeah we wait like in Bahrain, we wait like six hours or something…and yeah we didn't do anything, like we didn't eat. You know like the food is like really uh different in flight (Interview 108, 2013).

None of the youths I interviewed in any of the three groups talked about preparation for flying to Canada. It seems that neither COA nor the pilot program included this content and for the youths, many of whom were leading their families, the experience of navigating airports and planes was incredibly stressful and challenging. Other youths explained that for both themselves and their family members this was their first experience travelling on a plane and that they did not know what to expect.

Conclusion

Across all the groups I interviewed, challenges surrounding school, making friends and learning a new language were constant and recurring. These challenges speak to the very similar ones articulated by the non-Bhutanese Vancouver-based focus group youth respondents

who had come to Canada as refugees. Almost every pilot participant who attended high school discussed all three of these struggles. While the orientation pilot helped some of the youths with specific things like using a combination lock, navigating classrooms and a timetable, and feeling comfortable using transit, in many ways it was not enough and challenges remained upon resettlement in Canada.

These findings align with those of Hyndman, D'Addario and Stevens (2014) in a recent survey of current refugee research. Hyndman *et al.* find that refugee youths are exposed to very specific challenges during resettlement and integration in Canada and point to the variations in these obstacles between youths in different refugee groups. Hynie (2014) points to the ongoing struggles that refugee youths in Ontario face with regards to social isolation, language, and finding work, all of which are challenges identified by the youths in my research. Furthermore, she identifies a lack in support for older refugee youths (19 years and older), who do not have access to high school guidance counsellors and other related support services (Hynie, 2014). Pre-departure orientation programming is important, but cannot stand alone in supporting refugee youths. Though it is beyond the scope of my research, I concur with Hynie's (2014) assessment that better and more services, specifically targeting language and older youths, could help young refugees to better face the challenges of resettlement.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Moving Forward

Whether it is acknowledged in the prevailing literature or not, refugee youths have much to say about their own experiences of orientation and resettlement, and offer constructive feedback with regards to improving these experiences. My fieldwork and the contributions of these youths resulted in three salient findings 1) refugee youths take on the role of *youth broker*, and of *de facto* head of household, within their resettled families, and in so doing adopt immense responsibilities that differ significantly from their social age (Clark-Kazak, 2009); 2) current cultural orientation abroad models do not meet the needs of refugee youths as articulated by these youths, though the youth-oriented pilot orientation represents an improvement over the 'one-size-fits-all' sessions; 3) when given the opportunity, refugee youths have invaluable knowledge and insight to contribute to any analysis of their own experiences and as such their voices should be intentionally sought out separately from adults.

Youth Brokers and Social Age

This research did not set out to analyze the role of resettlement in changing family dynamics, yet the finding that youths hold key roles as decision-makers and designers of their families' futures is a significant one. Refugee youths act as *de facto* heads of household by taking on responsibility for translation services, managing health issues, and leading family decisions, all while balancing school and work obligations. By establishing the leadership role that youths may fulfill in their families it becomes obvious that the 'social age' (Clark-Kazak, 2011) of these youths is in many ways far older than their biological one. Youths are not

helpless, voiceless victims (Malkki, 1996) by any means, but rather are motivated and independent actors playing instrumental roles in the settlement outcomes of refugees in Canada. To this end refugee youths have unique challenges and needs that differ from their adult counterparts, but also their Canadian-born peers, and these must be acknowledged in their own right.

Youth Perceptions of COA and the Youth-Oriented Pilot

In foregrounding the voices of youths, I purposefully avoid any analysis, comparison, or ranking of the relative integration or successes of Bhutanese refugees in Canada. Instead my argument that COA does not serve the unique purposes of refugee youths is based on the words of these youths themselves. One COA participant living in Charlottetown explained that:

> For the orientation I thought like they were gonna, like show us detailed stuff, you know, but they like showed us the basic of like how things goes….you know like by detailed I mean like how, I can't really put it, like how the school system or how they work, you know, and what happens in them. Like, they didn't show us (Interview 113, 2013).

Another young woman, despite feeling satisfied with her COA program, said that she:

> Hear[s] lots of the [people from] Nepal…they are [saying] 'I didn't learn anything from the orientation of Nepal, they didn't teach us, everything is different,' you know (Interview 121, 2013).

The Bhutanese youths revealed a variety of shortcomings in the orientation programming they received. Many COA participants heard about the pilot orientation program or knew someone who participated in it and were vocal about its value. When asked what advice he would give to other youths who are resettling in Canada, a young man in Ottawa said that:

> Different orientation like, like they had, like those guys from Damak. Like when I was back home…I didn't get the chance to do like [do the youth pilot] orientation like them. Yeah, if, if they get chance to do orientation like them, like it'll be better for them to be, how do I say, better for them to…cause [in the pilot program] they mostly talk about like, the youth, youth experience in Canada and what do we, what do they need to do when they get to Canada and how do they need to support their family…and they will get chance to learn about the education system (Interview 106, 2013).

Not only did this young man acknowledge that the pilot orientation was a preferable option to COA programming, but he specifically referred to the youth-specific topics as a desirable part of the program. Understanding the concept of 'youth brokers' and the experience many refugee youth have had in supporting the family was explicitly wished for by this participant. Another participant in St. John's chose to talk about the pilot orientation that his brothers attended while referring to his own program as "general orientation." He said that:

> My brothers they got very good orientations. They were saying, and every time 'we did this and that' and we encouraged them. But I was a little bit older and I, I couldn't meet with that age, so that I couldn't be in [that orientation] (Interview 110, 2013).

I had not asked this individual to talk about the youth-oriented pilot, but he chose to describe this "very good" orientation, before talking about his own experiences with COA.

When talking to COA participants it became obvious that there is a great deal of variation between individual programs. Without access to any sort of program curriculum I relied on the interviewees responses to construct an idea of the content of COA orientations. Where some youths emphasized learning about high school and education in their orientation, others stated that they learned nothing about these topics. Similarly five of the COA participants indicated they learned about public transportation during orientation, while two

indicated their desire to have learned these things. I have established that memory was an issue for some of the participants, and these discrepancies could certainly be attributable to different memories. Whatever the reason, some youths are not learning the crucial information that they feel they need to resettle in Canada.

The youths who participated in COA were vocal about their preference for the pilot orientation and those who did participate in the pilot had much to say to the program's credit. Below are some of the comments regarding the pilot orientation itself:

> I just feel myself that three days changed my life. Three days get me experience and three days increase the confidence to myself that I never expect that I can do…I just want to say that usually in the like, some of the family the youth have a huge responsibility, youth can have a power that they can go to the challenge, so [if] this pre-orientation goes to every youth in the country who were resettling I will probably say, I will guarantee that the youth can fulfill the responsibility, they won't go bad. They won't just backward themselves as I was doing before the orientation. So I can proudly say that every youth that attend this orientation can go through the challenge and can adapt [to] a new life in a new country (Interview 103, 2013).

> It's a wonderful program. Like I before I don't like those peoples, like they're all like more like twenty or fifteen peoples. I don't know like, I don't know those peoples. Like I know only two or three peoples in the orientation…but I meet those peoples and I have, I be like, I have friends with them and be like share, share the feelings about Canada and share feelings about yourself like that (Interview 104, 2013)

> [The youth pilot] was helpful to me, but to my parents I don't think [COA] really helped, cause you know, they didn't really know anything (Interview 111, 2013).

Among the interview participants there was much enthusiasm and gratitude expressed about the youth-oriented pilot program. Certainly the above excerpts point to the specific help it provided with regard to family responsibilities (*youth brokers)* and addressing the challenges of making friends, by facilitating friendships among program participants. At no point were the

youths asked to compare the qualities or usefulness of the two programs, but such comparisons arose and in the opinions of those interviewed the pilot orientation program was the desired structure for orientation.

This in no way means that the pilot orientation was a perfect model for youth orientation services, but rather it represents a positive direction for pre-departure programming development. Among the three groups of Bhutanese youths that I interviewed, language, school, and making friends were constant challenges in resettled life. The pilot program addressed these concerns, among others expressed by resettled refugee youths in the initial 'Operation Swaagatem' focus groups, but resettlement in a new country remains a challenging process that orientation programming alone will never be able to fully address. The following section highlights the information that refugee youths wish they had known before arriving in Canada along with specific changes that they would like to make to Canadian orientation programming and as such represent my own recommendations as a researcher.

Youth As Producers of Knowledge

The voices of refugee youths are valuable, especially when it comes to making recommendations for improvements to programming that affects them. As producers of knowledge in their own right, my findings point to areas for the improvement for orientation programming that come directly from the interviews I did with youths. The three groups (those who participated in COA, those who participated in the youth-oriented pilot program, and those with no orientation experience) had thoughts on what they wish they had known before arriving in Canada and how orientations could be made better. These suggestions build on the

challenges articulated in the previous chapter and show what youths are calling for in their own words.

The Bhutanese youths that did not participate in any orientation programming had no recommendations to make for the improvement of programs, though the things they wish they had known are telling. The three youths wished they had known about public transportation, school, the language spoken in their destination provinces (one participant was resettled in Quebec) and more general information about Canada. While these statements do not indicate any failure on the part of current orientation programming, they certainly highlight the need for such programs along with youth-specific orientation and support upon arrival in Canada. These youths were able to comment specifically on the information that would have benefitted them prior to departure for Canada.

For youths who participated in standard COA programming one of the most common suggestions regarding orientation relates to more information about the region of resettlement. Canada is a huge country and there are significant variations in geography, culture and life between different provinces and cities. I referred earlier to a COA participant who was shown a video of Canada that focused so much on the oceans and lakes that he assumed the country was entirely covered in water. Youths indicated that their orientation familiarized them with Canada as a country and not with the specificities of the cities in which they would be resettled. A young man in Charlottetown explained that:

> Like when we were like orienting they, what they did was like they showed us city areas, you know, like the, the urban area like. They had like, how the urban stuff works, like big buildings and stuff. But when I got here there was like no buildings and stuff. Like yeah, so it was different (Interview 113, 2013)

> The picture which I saw in the, yeah in the orientation was of like, I think Newfoundland or somewhere else and then now I come to Vancouver and it was like 'oh, that was the different place' (Interview 114, 2013).

These two young men's expectations of Canada were informed entirely by their orientation programs and yet the country they were expecting was not the one they experienced upon arrival. A number of the youths expressed similar sentiments that their orientation was not applicable to the places where they were actually resettled and that they wished they had known more before arriving. This begs the question: what is the goal of orientation if youths are not being oriented to the realities of the place they are going?

Of the twenty-one youths I interviewed, twelve indicated that they are currently employed in Canada and a number talked about the challenges involved in finding work. Three of the COA participants expressed their wish to have known more about finding employment in Canada. A young man in Vancouver said that:

> Yeah I think they [should] like mostly talk about school and then also about the jobs….cause like they didn't give us like, training or like something else, that we need to have in Nepal, yeah so that we can get a job here (Interview 114, 203).

For this youth both school and finding work, two major concerns, were not included in his orientation and as such became suggestions for improving programming. Other participants talked about wanting more information about schools in Canada and better preparation for speaking English. These, among other disappointments, show a need for more detailed and specific information in orientations. As a young man in Ottawa explained, many of the youths just wanted a better picture of what their lives would be like. He said:

> Yeah more details about the stuff going on here. How peoples act like, how people like treat people here and, and more about the education for the high school and

> what other requirement do we need to need or, what are the documents that we need to bring here (Interview 106, 2013).

Evidently COA is not fulfilling its goals of preparing youths for life in Canada. However, COA participants are not the only ones who felt this way. My interviews with participants of the pilot program did not reveal anything they wish they had known before arrival in Canada, except for a common desire for better preparation in speaking English. When asked what they wish they had known before arrival in Canada the youths from the pilot orientation's responses ranged from wanting to know how to buy food and how to use debit cards to information about the weather and how to make friends. Their suggested changes to the program, however, were more specific and frequently repeated. A key suggestion, given by three of the participants and mentioned by many others, is for the program to include more information about the airports they will encounter en route to Canada. A young man in Charlottetown eloquently said that:

> I think it's better if they could you know, like give more information about the airport and stuff like, you know how to, how to like if you lost your baggage or like right after you get out of the plane like where do, where do you go? How like, how do you know like where your baggage are, luggage are and stuff like that cause some like, it's, like it's good we had like some people who like supervised us and like they took us everywhere and they did, they help us you know do our boarding passes and stuff, but like some people don't have helpers in the airport. It's like they have to be, they have to like do everything by their self. So yeah, so like I think it's better if they could, in the orientation they could teach them like if there's no one to help them, like where to go, how to do like boarding passes. How do you know like where your luggages are, and you know who to go and who to talk to if you lost your luggage or something or if you are hungry what do you want to, like how do you do or who to ask, kind of like that. Lot's of information about airport…Yeah I know, and like people, like no one has been to airport before, since they are refugees and, so no one, so it's totally different world right, and, and, and then on the top of that they don't know the language right, so it's, it's very, very hard in the airport but thank god we had some people who helped us but not all of them have like people so, they have to do it by them self. And then like people are, when you

> don't know the language you are you know, like automatically shy so you don't want to speak, you don't want to talk to anyone, and things like that. So like lots of information about airport and about school for the teenagers and kids, worry about school cause like it's different here (Interview 111, 2013).

The youths were very specific in their suggestions for changes to their already youth-specific orientation program. The above excerpt shows this young man's dual concern for more information about airports and also school, despite the fact that the pilot orientation already features more about high school than the standard COA program. The airport and high school were challenging situations articulated by many of the youths and highlighted as suggested areas of improvement.

One young man called for a longer orientation (longer than three days) and recommended that it include more games and activities, while another discussed the need for more information on socializing in Canada and making friends in school. One individual felt that the orientation misrepresented Canada:

> Yeah, um first of all like in the orientation they showed us a video, right? Well I was a kid I was fourteen years old, I was kind of kid so the first thing I feel really bad about was like they showed us a video and then there was like you know amazing places of Canada and, and when I came here it wasn't like that I thought. Now I know like what they did was like they like film like the amazing place of Canada like from different provinces and then they put in a video and, and then showed us so. I thought all of them would be in one place…but it's different here, it's like different province and different provinces and…it's like, you know, giving you hope. Kind of like that, you know, giving you hope and then like breaking it kind of like that so. Yeah I felt really bad about it (Interview 111, 2013).

His description of the false hope the pilot orientation gave to him is a salient reminder of the importance of *accurately* orienting refugees to the place in which they will be resettled. Again, orientation to Canada as a whole is nonsensical given the varied realities of different provinces

and cities. These suggestions, coming directly from refugee youths, offer pointed, specific and valuable insight into the real needs and desires of this group during resettlement. Youth are producers of knowledge whose social age does not necessarily match their chronological one.

Moving Forward

For the Bhutanese refugee youths in my study relocation via resettlement, led to a change in family dynamic culminating in a redetermination of family roles. Due to a lack of translation services and relevant preparation either before or upon arrival in Canada, "for many refugee families, youth may be the only source of support and hope" (Shakya *et al.*, p.142, 2014). Providing such services, however, can take a toll on the resilience of young people. Hampshire *et al.* argue that "while young people demonstrate great resourcefulness in negotiating identities and transitions, there can be costs, both to young people and to the wider community, of very rapid social change" (p. 84, 2011). Despite their role as "independent agents of social change," Kesby *et al.* argue that children and youth must also be seen as "vulnerable social becomings in need of protection" (p.185, 2006). This is evident in the frustration and stress described by many of the youths in my study as they recounted the myriad duties and responsibilities that weigh on them daily. Youths are resilient, but based on my findings I fear that such resiliency has its limits.

Where Shakya *et al.* (2014) argue for more supportive policies and services (like language training and translation services) for *adults*, so that youths will not have to fill these gaps, I contend that such services for adults will never be comprehensive enough to fulfill all the roles that a *youth broker* plays. As such, programming aimed at youth that directly benefits

and prepares them for changing familial roles would be of better service in protecting these "vulnerable social becomings" (Kesby *et al.*, p.185, 2006). I agree with Clark-Kazak when she says that "rather than considering children and young people in isolation, we need to take into account inter- and intra-generational power relations" (p. 14, 2009). Developments in orientation programming must acknowledge the changes in family dynamics that refugee youths face upon resettlement.

My research findings put the voices of refugee youths at the forefront and establish them as the key creators of knowledge concerning refugee youths and thus the key informants when theorizing and creating policy concerning this group. This addresses Robson's call for "more child-centered radical approaches to research and policy making" (p.243, 2004) as well as Chatty *et al.*'s concern that "much academic research on children is published in scholarly journals and does not find an audience with policy makers and practitioners" (P.389, 2005). I argue for both a theoretical shift towards acknowledging the leadership roles that resettled refugee youths hold within their families and a recognition of their agency and the importance of their contribution, while also arguing for policy that improves orientation programming to better suit their needs. Where Bakewell (2008) calls for a move away from policy relevance so as to avoid the invisibility of forced migrants who do not fall into salient policy categories, my work here has attempted to foreground a minor policy category and constituency, namely youth, but providing policy implications and practical suggestions for them as well as more astute theorizing around refugee youths.

Although my sample is small, the findings show that current COA programming is, in the eyes of the participants, not serving the needs of GAR youths. The youth-oriented pilot program

exemplifies a step in the right direction, one to be built upon using the responses of participants[9]. Creating a youth-focused training and support program both before arrival in Canada, but also after they land would more fully address the unique issues faced by resettled refugee youths, particularly with regards to the responsibilities many hold as *youth brokers*. Resettlement is a difficult and personal experience, and I am not naïve enough to contend that there is one ideal program or fix that would make this process easy.

Furthermore I do not believe that pre-departure orientation programming is the only space in which policy measures can be taken to better support refugee youths. In all of the cities I visited there were varying numbers and types of programs available to assist youths in Canada. ISSBC in Vancouver, for example, offers a GAR youth-young adult case management program as well as three youth leadership programs (C. Friesen, personal communication, June 2, 2015). Such programming, though beyond the scope of my research, could certainly work in collaboration with pre-departure programming to better serve refugee youths. Sharing youth programming among refugee-serving agencies in Canada is also an important way to support the settlement workers and organizations in meeting their mandates.

That being said, the accounts of the Bhutanese youths whom I interviewed reveal distinct and vocalized needs for more youth programming. More English language training, more information about school and education, and more preparation for socializing and making friends were resounding calls throughout my interviews. Most importantly, current programming abroad does not prepare youths for a situation in which they might become a

[9] Ideally all resettled refugees, privately-sponsored or government-assisted, should have access to COA. In Canada PSR numbers are rising, while GAR numbers are dropping (Reynolds and Hyndman, forthcoming)

youth broker upon arrival in Canada. Youths who were not a part of this program similarly expressed their wish to have been involved.

Ultimately my research addresses gaps in the scholarly literature in two ways. Firstly, it examines pre-departure orientation programming, particularly in Canada, a topic that is little researched and poorly evaluated. I draw attention to the merits of this form of orientation while simultaneously evaluating the current Canadian format and its relevance to refugee youths. Secondly, my work illuminates the reality that humanitarian and refugee-serving agencies, as well as academic scholarship, largely overlook youths as knowledge producers and decisions-makers, and underestimate them as dependents and *mere* children. In response to this I base my research findings primarily on the thoughts, opinions and suggestions of refugee youths and argue that these are of the utmost importance not only when creating programming for youths, but also for the production of knowledge within academic literature.

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Interview 121. (2013). Young woman, Vancouver, British Columbia. September 5.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Welcome: Verbal explanation of the purpose of the study and the interview plan.

Basic Information:

1. What is your current age and how old were you when you came to Canada?

2. Are you employed or do you go to school? Tell me about this ie. where do you work/study, what you do there.

3.Who did you migrate to Canada with? (ie. family members)

4. What is your current living situation? Who do you live with and in what type of residence?

Coming to Canada

5. Before your arrival in Canada what expectations did you have? What did you think the country would be like? Did the reality match your expectations?

6. What was your initial experience of arrival like in Canada? Tell me about your first experiences and perceptions of school, your home or finding a job.

7. What do you think has been your biggest challenge in Canada? What has been your biggest success?

8. Do you feel "settled" in Canada? Why or why not?

Pre-Departure

9. What types of things did you learn in your pre-departure orientation (if you participated in one)? What did you think was useful? What was not useful?

10. Can you think of any examples where you were able to use the knowledge or skills that you gained in your orientation?

11. Is there anything you wish you had known before arriving in Canada? Can you think of things that the pre-departure program could have better prepared you for?

Final Thoughts

12. Have you remained in touch with any of the other program participants? If so, how, if at all, do you think these relationships have affected your resettlement?

13. What advice would you give to other refugee youths before coming to Canada?

14. Is there anything else that you feel is important or that you would like to discuss?

Appendix B: Ethics Approval

YORK
UNIVERSITÉ
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Certificate #:	**STU 2013 – 080**
Approval Period:	**06/13/13-06/13/14**

Memo

To: Nicole Maine, Department of Geography, nmaine@yorku.ca

From: Alison M. Collins-Mrakas, Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor, Research Ethics
(on behalf of Duff Waring, Chair, Human Participants Review Committee)

Date: **Thursday June 13th, 2013**

Re: Ethics Approval

Orienting Refuge Youth Moving to Canada: The Potential of Pre-Departure Programs

I am writing to inform you that the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee has reviewed and approved the above project.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at: 416-736-5914 or via email at: acollins@yorku.ca.

Yours sincerely,

Alison M. Collins-Mrakas M.Sc., LLM
Sr. Manager and Policy Advisor,
Office of Research Ethics

Appendix C: Interviewee Consent Forms

Informed Consent Form for Interviews

Study Name:
Orienting Refugee Youth Moving to Canada: The Potential of Pre-Departure Programs

Researchers:
Nicole Maine – Masters Candidate, Geography, York University
email: nmaine@yorku.ca
phone: 416-805-3158
office: S407 Ross Building
York University
4700 Keele St.
Toronto, ON

Purpose of the Research: The purpose of this research is to understand the role that pre-departure orientation programming plays in the resettlement process of refugee youth in Canada. The study employs multiple research methods including individual interviews with resettled Bhutanese youths as well as online forum questions and discussions with the same group.

What You Will Be Asked to Do in the Research: You have been invited to participate in this study because of your experience migrating to Canada as a young Bhutanese refugee through the Canadian resettlement program. I am interested in understanding more about your thoughts on Canadian pre-departure programs and how they did or did not affect your resettlement in Canada. I wish to conduct a semi-structured interview with you. The interview is expected to last between 30 and 60 minutes. Interview questions are intended to be exploratory and open-ended. I also hope to include you in a private, online 'Google Groups' forum wherein yourself and other participants will be able to answer and discuss questions relating to your experience with pre-departure programming and resettlement in Canada.

Risks and Discomforts: I do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research. Should you feel any discomfort or concern, you may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time.

Benefits of the Research and Benefits to You:
A summary of the findings of the study will be shared with you. The study

should provide insight on the successes and faults of pre-departure programming and will hopefully be used to improve such programs for future refugee youths and newcomers.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence my relationship to ISSBC or your relationship with ISSBC or York University either now, or in the future.

Withdrawal from the Study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. If you decide to stop participating, or refuse to answer particular questions, your decision will not affect your relationship with the researcher, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence and unless you specifically indicate your consent, your name will not appear in any report or publication of the research. The interview will be recorded and taped record of your interview will be transcribed, and only the investigator will have access to the data. All data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and/or on a password-protected computer for five years after which time it will be destroyed in all forms. You may request a copy of your own data at any time. If your data is referred to during any subsequent writing about this project, you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your anonymity, and no other identifiable data will be used. If requested, any notes taken from the interview will be destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Nicole Maine by e-mail (nmaine@yorku.ca). This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, please contact the Sr. Manager & Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University (telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca). Alternately, you may contact the Geography Graduate Program Office at York University (416-736-5107).

I _____, consent to participate in Orienting Refugee Youth Moving to Canada: The Potential of Pre-Departure Programs, conducted by Nicole Maine. I have

understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____ Date _____

Participant:

Signature _____ Date _____

Principle Investigator: Nicole Maine

Appendix D: Youth Oriented Pilot Curriculum

(Lozano and Friesen, 2011)

DAY 1

Making Nametags

Time: Objective:

Material:

Instructions:

(10 min) Creating Nametags

To encourage participants to relax and talk with one another in a welcoming, fun and friendly environment.

Nametags, markers, stickers, glitter, glue, feathers, color paper

1. Create a space in the centre of the room with a variety of art supplies to make creative nametags.
2. Introduce yourself, remember to smile and ask participants to make a nametag for themselves. *Remember to extend a warm welcome to the group, they may be nervous and unsure about what to expect and what they will be doing.*
3. Encourage each participant to create their own name tag which best represents them

(10 min) Post-it activity

To ensure various forms of communication are available to youth participants, particularly those whomay be shy and/or nervous and unwilling to speak in front of the group

Post it papers or loose small papers, envelope or box and pens

1. Show the youth the location of the information and feedback box.

2. Explain to them that the information they write in the box is anonymous. The can write at any time throughout the day. Facilitators will be checking them
periodically to ensure that all questions are answered and all feedback addressed. A New Start ©

Post-its

Time:

Objective:

Material:

Instructions:

3. Tell them that throughout the 3 days you expect them to write feedback for the facilitators about activities they liked or disliked.

4. Ask them to write questions they have of the information they got during the day or ask them to write down topics they want to know more about.

Introductions

Time: Objective: Materials: Instructions:

Time: Objective:

Materials:

Instructions:

(10 min) Welcome and Introduction of Facilitators

To introduce the facilitator(s). None

1. Facilitators talk about themselves, their life experiences as they relate to the youth they are about to give the orientation to. Have they been refugees themselves? Have they ever immigrated to another country? Where are they from? Clarify that they are not experts about Canada but that they are here to deliver information identified as important by other youth their age who previously immigrated to Canada.

(20min) Participant Introductions

To introduce the participants to one another, share who they are, how they are doing and the reason they think they are here.

None

1. It is important to encourage the participants to say what they need to say, and for everyone else to be respectful, listen carefully and don't interrupt.
2. Ask participants to answer the following questions when they introduce themselves: A

Time: Objective:

Materials: Instructions:

- What is your name? Does your name have any significance?
- Tell us 3 things about yourself. (Hobbies, interest, languages spoken, number of family members, etc.)
- What do they think the orientation will be about?
- Do they know which province they will be immigrating to?

(15min) Name Game

To create a fun and relaxed environment for facilitators to get to know participants

None

1. Ask participants to stand in a circle and tell them you are going to play a name game.
2. Their task is to remember everyone's name in the group.
3. Tell them that you are going to introduce yourself "My name is Tek", and then the person on your left is going to introduce him or herself and their friends on their right "**My name is Nathalie, and this is my friend Tek**. The person on Nathalie's right will then introduce themselves and their friends "My name is Jane, and these are my friends Nathalie and Tek" and so on...
4. Remind participants that if they can't remember someone's name, all they have to do is ask the person or read their nametag. Remember the game is just for fun!!

Informal Intro to Pre-Departure orientation project

Time: (15min) Pre-departure Orientation Project

Objective:

Materials:

Instructions:

It is important to explain the context and reason for the orientation, as well as outlining the topics that will be covered.

None

- ▪ On June and July of 2010, 44 refugee youth from different countries attended focus groups to identify the challenges and barriers they faced when they first arrived in Canada.
- ▪ The information collected was used to create a curriculum for youth living in refugee camps in Nepal and adapted after the pilot was delivered on February 2011.
- ▪ The goal of the orientation is to provide basic information for the participants so that they are familiar with certain things before they immigrate to Canada.
- ▪ The orientation will take place over 3 days covering topics about geography, weather, currency, culture and school in Canada.
- ▪ It is important for the youth to know that the orientation is not linked to their official paperwork nor will it affect their status. The youth might have pre-conceived ideas of why they were called and might even be afraid or cautious to participate.
- ▪ Explain that the orientation is for them and their families to find out more about Canada and therefore ease their culture shock, adjustment and settlement process.
- ▪ Finally, talk about the responsibility that comes with knowledge and how what they learn in the orientation should be shared with their families, friends and neighbours.

Time: (20 min) Forming Group Agreements

Objective: Brainstorming group agreements or ground rules

Materials: Instructions:

Flip-chart paper, sticky notes and pens

1. It is important for participants to brainstorm and develop their own set of group agreements. Ask participants to think about what makes them feel comfortable (and respected?) when they are at school, with their families or friends. Write all the guidelines the youth share on the flipchart.
2. If they are unable to share guidelines provide examples such as: listening to each other, raising their hand before they speak, not interrupting, have fun, respect each other, etc.
3. Another option could be to get each participant to write more needs down on a sticky note. This is added to the main agreements by the facilitator.
4. Participants sign the agreement on the flipchart to show they are committed to following them.
5. **The facilitator needs to emphasize that there are never silly or dumb questions.** The idea is for everybody to feel respected in the group. Even though they will only be meeting for three days it is important to have guidelines so that participants feel safe and comfortable.
6. Post the guidelines in a visible location so that they may be referred to throughout the training.

Time: Objective:

Materials: Instructions:

(30 min) Brainstorming Expectations

A group discussion on the rules of brainstorming

Flip-chart paper and pens

Breakdown the term “brainstorming”. Explain that the “brain” part refers to the ideas, thoughts and knowledge we have about a topic and “storming” refers to a set of thoughts/ideas compiled from a group.

We brainstorm because if we share all of the information that we know, then, the whole group will know more about a topic.

In a group round, ask the youth to share with the group what they want to get out of the three day orientation. Address expectations and let the group know if there is something they want to know more about that will not be addressed during the orientation. ***Facilitator Tips:***

All ideas/thoughts are written down There are no stupid ideas

There are no right or wrong answers There are to be no put downs

(30 min) LUNCH

▪ ▪ ▪ ▪

Mapping Their Knowledge

Time: (40 min) Group maps

Objective: This activity gets participants to work and share things that they know about Canada in small groups. The youth can learn from one another and the facilitators can assess their level of knowledge about Canada while addressing any misconceptions.

Materials: Instructions:

Flip chart paper and tape

1. Divide youth into two or three groups.
2. Give each group four sheets of flip chart paper taped together to make a large person-sized sheet and markers.

Time: Objective:

Materials: Instructions:

3. Ask for a volunteer from each group. This person will have to lay on top of the paper while their group mates draw an outline of him/her.
4. Ask the youth to write inside the outline of the person everything they know about Canada (schools, culture, languages etc).
5. Then ask the youth to write outside of the outline the kinds of things they would like to know more about. They can repeat things they know about but feel they need more information on. Ask them to be as specific as possible.
6. After, ask the youth to present to the larger group as the facilitator takes notes.
7. Have discussions about misconceptions and try to incorporate the information the

youth wanted to know into the following two days.

(15 min) Animal Families

To have fun, take a break and get youth energized

Pieces of cloth for blind folding purposes.

1. Ask participants “What is your favourite animal and what type of sound do they make?” Agree on 2 – 3 animals and a unanimous sound they make.
2. Ask participants to close their eyes and tell them that you are going to go around the circle and whisper in their ear the name of an animal that they will be assigned to.
3. Alternate the choice of animals e.g., cow, duck, sheep, cow, duck, and sheep.
4. When everyone has been whispered an animal, tell participants that the objective of the game is to find their animal family with their eyes blindfolded or shut if no blindfolding material is available. When you say go, they will begin moving throughout the room making the sound of their animal while listening for their fellow animals.
5. The facilitators keeps their eyes open and makes sure that all participants are clustered in their families. When the game is over the facilitators tell participants to open their eyes.
6. Before you start, ask if there are any questions.
7. After the youth have found their groups, ask them to sit with their ‘new families’ briefly ask the group how it felt when they found their families and relate it to belonging and inclusion both in the group and once they go to Canada.

Canada Presentation

Time: Objective:

Materials:

(35min) Presentation About Canada

To introduce participants to brief information about Canada.

Pictures of cities, homes, people, seasons, currency, map of the world, map of Canada,

Instructions:

Deliver a concise presentation about Canada (see below). Tell participants that the information given will be needed for an activity later on in the orientation.

flags.

1. Before giving the information, ask questions, some youth might be very familiar with the basic information about Canada. Rather than telling them the capital city of Canada is Ottawa, ask them if they know the capital city of Canada.

- ▪ Canada is the second largest country in the world.
- ▪ Capital city (Ottawa),
- ▪ Flag (show picture)
- ▪ Provinces (10-New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia) and territories (3-Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut). ~ Show where in the map they are located.

- ▪ Official languages (English and French).
- ▪ Currency (Canadian dollar).
- ▪ Canada has four seasons: Fall, winter, spring and summer (clothing).
- ▪ There are many resources offered to people who live in Canada (i.e. job centres, youth
  programs, community centres etc).
- ▪ Canada is a multicultural country with people from all over the world who speak many different languages.
- ▪ Health care is free.
- ▪ Popular winter sports like snow boarding, skiing and hockey.
- ▪ Technology is important; computers and email are used all the time at school.
- ▪ Libraries, once they get a library card, these are places where they can borrow books, access computers and internet for free.
- ▪ All religions are respected in Canada; there are mosques, temples, churches etc.
- ▪ Talk about arranged marriages in Canada; they exist but they are not the law.

Finding Canadian Provinces and Cities

Time: (45min) Using Maps and Getting to Know Canada.

Objective:

Preparation:

Participants will familiarize themselves with the geography of Canada, using city maps, weather and language

Prepare 4 or 5 packages with different questions about Canada. Each group will receive one package to work with. An example is given below; use the information delivered during the presentation about Canada to make up the remaining packages. If possible, and in cases where the youth know which city they will be going to in Canada, try to use relevant questions to that city.

The example below can be changed with information the facilitator deems pertinent for

Materials:

Sample Package 1

Big sticky dots Small sticky dots

Cue card number one - On the big Canada map, place a big red dot in the following locations

Ottawa Vancouver Halifax

2 Street maps for example Vancouver and Toronto (you can print them from Google maps).

Cue card number two - Place a small red dot in the following locations:

Intersection of Drake St and Seymour St. David Lam park

Vancouver Public Library

Stadium Skytrain station

Canada Quiz ** Attachment #1

1. Divide the youth into groups of 3 or 4 and provide each group with a package.
2. Clarify that all of the information they learned during the day will be needed during

this activity.

3. Give an overview of how to read a map if they are unfamiliar: use a city map as an example to explain that parks are shaded green, intersections are corners where streets/avenues meet, libraries have a book picture on top and that metro/skytrain/subway stations have a transportation picture on it.
4. Explain to the youth that they have received a package with instructions, a quiz and a series of names of places they need to locate in the maps, dots to mark the locations they find and street maps.
5. Ensure that all members of the group are contributing to the completion of the activity.
6. When all tasks are complete review the answers to ensure they are accurate.
7. Debrief with the youth what was challenging about the activity and how they think these skills will be useful to them when they go to Canada.
8. Ask youth to think about questions or areas of concern for the next day session.

Instructions:

the youth.

Completion

Last Items:

(15 min) Evaluation Form ** ***See attachment # 2.***

- ▪ Before participants leave, ask them to complete and hand in the evaluation form for day 1 of the orientation.
- ▪ The evaluation will include questions around further information they would like to discuss for tomorrow as well as feedback about the day.
- ▪ Remind the youth that they can also place notes in the suggestions box before, during or after each day of orientation.

Pre-Departure Orientation Day 2

Objectives:

The youth will:

- ▪ Share further concerns or questions they have about immigrating to Canada;
- ▪ Review and process the information they learned the day before and be comfortable asking further questions.;
- ▪ Build confidence and knowledge so that their immigration process is easier;
- ▪ Explore culture shock and the possible impact on their family;
- ▪ Learn about First Nations and Indigenous people in Canada;
- ▪ Learn about multiculturalism in Canadian society;
- ▪ Have fun and feel less anxious about immigrating to Canada. **Materials:**

o Flip Chart Paper, Pens and Masking Tape o Ink, Felt and Marker Pens and Crayons

o Pictures of public transportation and tickets/passes from some of the largest Canadian cities.

o Nametags,StickersandGlue

o BalloonsandMarkers

o Hand-out on culture shock taken from ISSofBC's MY Circle Youth Program Resource Booklet

(2010)

o Many coins of different denominations, small sack for coins and pictures of bills o Handouts of the Canadian youth slang sheet

o AWorldandCanadaMap

Trainer Preparation:

- ▪ The second day of orientation will be used to introduce the culture shock process, the impact of migration on their families, as well as practical concerns such as using Canadian money and understanding slang.
- ▪ It is important to set time aside in the morning for any new concerns about their immigration process immigrating to Canada.. It is also important to address comments from the previous day evaluation process. Remind participants that their feedback on the orientation is very important as it will be used to adjust the curriculum for future groups.

DAY 2

Time: (10 min) Game: Human Machine

Objective:

This is a group building game with high energy that illustrates group cooperation and that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts".

Materials: Instructions:

None

Facilitators need to be high energy and take a risk for this game. Don't be afraid to be silly! Be ready to be the first person!

2. Participants stand in a circle.
3. Explain that this is a drama game of group cooperation where you will make a giant "human machine" with your bodies. The machine will have many moving parts that all make sounds. Each person represents one movement of the machine (for ex. Moving their arms up and down like a piston, or swinging their torso back and forth like a pendulum), and makes cool sounds like, "Whoosh", or "beepbeep". As each person joins, one at a time, the machine grows. Each person must place themselves in a way that overlaps with another person's movement and keeps the same rhythm.
4. Encourage participants to be creative, and not be afraid to be silly. Tell them to think of how the machine can include different levels (ie. some people sitting or laying down, and others standing or on chairs).
5. Demonstrate by going in the middle of the circle and starting your movement and noise. Invite participants to join in one by one, as they see a spot to fit in.

6. When everyone has joined and the rhythm is steady, start speeding up your part, and tell the participants to speed up too. Keep going until it is crazy! Then start slowing down, until it is really slow. Then bring the machine to a stop and thank participants.

Check-in

Time: (20 min) Check-in and recap

Objective: To see how participants are feeling today and to refresh information learned during day

Material: Instructions:

one of the orientation.

None

1. Ask participants what the sessions were about the day before? You may need to recap or refresh their memories.
2. Go around the circle and ask participants to identify how they are feeling based on a A colour and also to include any questions, concerns or thoughts they have about day 1.

Q&A

Time: Objective: Material:

Instructions:

Transportation

Time: Objective:

Material:

Instructions:

(20min) Questions and answers

To answer any questions that might have arisen from Day one's session.

None

1. Answer questions youth might have written in the sticky notes or evaluation forms. 2. Go in a round asking each participant if they have a specific questions they want to share with the group and encourage them to write down their questions
throughout the day if they are too shy to speak.

(20min) Brainstorming Transportation

To familiarize youth with some of the most common transportation systems found in Canada.

Pictures of public transportation and tickets/passes **from some of the largest Canadian cities**

1. Ask the youth what they know about transportation in Canada. You may record the questions on a flipchart.

2. Explain that there are different methods of transportation in all the main cities but that an overview might familiarize them with the basics of most Canadian transit systems

3. Explain that large cities use subways, skytrains or metros in Canada but also make sure to explain that smaller cities have more limited forms of transportation.

4. Show pictures of public transit tickets and how to purchase them (generally only with coins and they do not give change).

5. Explain to the youth that there are bus stops (pictures), and that buses only stop in designated places so waving at them does not work.
6. Front chairs are courtesy chairs (pictures)
7. Pulling the cord or ringing the bell to request a stop (pictures)
8. Pushing the door to open the back door (pictures)
9. Remind youth that buses, tickets, student passes, etc., might be slightly different from city to city.

Role Play: Ask for a couple of volunteers. Tell the youth that with the help of volunteers we will simulate a real bus experience in Canada. Assign the role of the driver to a co-facilitator and place a box at the 'entrance' of the 'bus'. Ask the youth to demonstrate how they would use the bus tickets, request a stop and open the doors to get off.

Canadian currency and slang

Time: (20 min) Explanation of coins/bills used in Canada Objective: To familiarize youth with Canadian currency

Materials:

Instructions:

Many coins of different denominations, small sack for coins and pictures of coins and bills.

1. 2.

Show pictures of Canadian coins and bills and explain the denominations Explain what each coin is called: penny, nickel, dime, quarter, loonie (buck) and toonie.

- ▪ Place coins from different denominations into a sack.
- ▪ Tell participants they will be able to keep the coin they pick as a souvenir if they are able to name it correctly.
- ▪ The facilitator will go around and one at a time ask a youth to take a coin from the sack and ask the youth for the name of the coin. If they are able to guess it right, they can keep the coin.
  ▪
- ▪ Youth can only receive one coin.
- ▪ The facilitator should ensure that all of the participants get a coin at the end of this session.
- ▪ If a youth guesses incorrectly they will have the opportunity to guess again after the rest of the youth have had one turn.

Time: (10 min) Currency game

To have fun a reinforce the use of the dollar system. **Materials:** none

Objective:

Instructions:

1. Explain to youth that you will play a currency game where the facilitator will give them a value and they will have to demonstrate.
2. Each girl is the equivalent of $1 and each boy the equivalent of $0.50 cents.

3. The facilitator will yell out an amount and the youth will have to group themselves into this value.
4. For example: $2.50 cents could be two girls and a boy; or five boys; or a girl and three boys etc.
5. The youth who fail to group themselves into the correct value will have to step out until there are three or four people left.

Time: (10 min) Slang

Objective:

Materials: Instructions:

LUNCH (30 min)

To review different words identified by refugee youth in focus groups that are commonly used by their peers but often not found in the dictionary.

Sheet of list with slang Appendix #3

1. Explain to the youth what is "slang"
2. At schools they will encounter words and phrases that are not in the dictionary we are reviewing some but it is best to ask people as you encounter them.
3. Ask participants if they have any questions.

Challenges Activity

Time: (30 min) Balloon Game

Objective: To get youth thinking and sharing about the kinds of things they are nervous about when immigrating to Canada. The game will also serve as an opportunity to get youth thinking about the kinds of challenges they will face in Canada.

Materials:

Instructions:

Balloons and Markers

- ▪ Have participants stand around in a circle
- ▪ Get participants to inflate one or two balloons and take a marker
- ▪ Ask participants "What is/are the areas they are most nervous about concerning their immigration to Canada?" and Why?
- ▪ As the issues are identified they are written on the balloons and tossed into the group
- ▪ The group then has to keep the balloons in the air
- ▪ As more and more balloons are added it becomes evident how difficult it will be to juggle all of the things going on in their new lives.
- ▪ Debrief with the group about their fears.
- ▪ Assure them that other people have also gone through the process and although it is difficult at times there are resources that will support them in their settlement process.

Phases of Adjustment

Time: (20 min) Phases of acculturation

Objective: To become more familiar with the acculturation process that immigrants and

Material: Instructions:

refugees face when they first come to Canada.

Hand-out taken from ISSofBC's MY Circle Resource Booklet (2010) Appendix #4

1. Introduce the process of adjustment graph (see handout above).
2. Explain the 1. honeymoon phase, 2. the culture shock and appearing to adjust phase, 3. the feeling loss and integration problems phase and lastly, 4. the integration and starting a new life phase.
3. Pay special attention to the feelings that could accompany each stage or phase.
4. Invite a discussion about how each individual's experience could be different; people may not experience the phases of adjustment in the same way, but each A New

Family Impact

person's experience is valid. However, being aware of how the settlement process includes different feelings and ups and downs is helpful in being prepared

Time: (40 min) Family Impact Discussion

Objective:

Material:

Instructions:

To spark discussion about the impact that immigration has on the family.

None

1. Talk about the frustrations that both youth and parents face when they arrive in Canada
2. Discuss: Make sure you ask what the challenges might be for their parents as they immigrate.
3. Talk about role reversals;youth will likely act as interpreters for their families.
4. Youth usually end up accompanying parents to places such as banks, health clinics, and others, and orienting their parents to local community resources as well as answering questions about how Canadian society works. This is a lot of responsibility and can be overwhelming but it also gives them a lot of power they should not take advantage of.
5. Talk about how this will affect the youth but also what kind of effects this situation will have on their parents. There is the likelihood of intergenerational conflict that can arise from the pressure and frustration immigrants face.
6. Talk about the importance of having open communication with their parents and also of having empathy.
7. Talk about the kinds of challenges they think their parents/guardians will face when they go to Canada. How are they challenges different from those of youth?
8. What can youth do to help their parents transition more smoothly? Encourage youth to have conversations with their parents about how both sides are feeling and how they can better support each other.

Game

Time: Objective:

Materials:

Instructions:

(15 min) Group Knot

This game is an exercise in group cooperation and team work None

1. Divide participants into groups of 7-10 people.
2. Ask them to form a circle with their shoulders touching
3. Tell participants to extend their hands at shoulder height and make sure that their hands overlap.
4. Ask them to grab two different hands in the circle. Make sure they are not the hands of the same person, and, if possible, not the hands of people immediately on either side of them.
5. Tell the groups they have now formed a group knot. The object is now to untangle themselves without dropping their hands. Ask if there are any questions. 6. If a group untangles themselves right away, ask them to try again.

(10min) Go-go-stop Game

To create a fun and relaxed environment None

1. Ask participants to go to one end of the room.
2. Explain that you will be at the other end and while having your back to them you will yell go-go-go and stop.
3. When you yell stop you will turn around to look at the group and whoever is caught moving must go to the end of the room again.
4. Their goal is to advance to advancet to the same point where the facilitator is at.
5. Once this happens this new person will be the one yelling go-go-stop and so on.

Game

Time:

Objective: Materials: Instructions:

Break or Game Do You Like Your Neighbour?

Time: Objective: Materials: Instructions:

(10 min)

To relax and have fun None

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. One person stands in the middle and one chair is removed.
3. The person in the centre points to someone and asks them, Joey “How do you like your neighbours Susan and Danny?” If the person replies, “I like them”, everyone in the group gets up and moves to another chair.
4. There will be one person left standing, who then takes their turn in the centre of the

circle and asks someone, “How do you like your neighbours Rachel and Mary?” If the person replies, “I don’t like my neighbours”, the person in the middle asks him/her “Whose neighbours do you like?” The person calls out a name, for example “I like Mike’s neighbours”and the people sitting beside him/her have to change chairs with Rachel and Mary.

5. It is important that participants use one another’s names in order to learn them.

(15 min) Thank you and evaluations

To evaluate the usefulness of the orientation Evaluations.

(15 min) Evaluation Form

▪ Ask the participants to complete and hand in the evaluation form

The evaluation should include any questions they would like to discuss on the last day as well as feedback on Day 2.

Pre-Departure Orientation Day 3

Completion

Time: Objective: Materials: Instructions:

Objectives:

The youth participants will:

- ▪ Share further concerns or questions they have about immigrating to Canada;
- ▪ Review and process the information they learned the day before and feel comfortable asking further questions.;
- ▪ Learn about Racism and Discrimination;
- ▪ Hear from refugee youth peers who have already settled in Canada;
- ▪ Learn about multiculturalism in Canada;
- ▪ Learn about the Canadian public education system;
- ▪ Have fun and feel less anxious about immigrating to Canada.

  Materials:

  ▪ Flip Chart Paper, Pens and Masking Tape ▪ Ink, Felt and Marker Pens and Crayons

  ▪ Nametags, Stickers and Glue

  ▪ Multicultural pictures, cue cards and pens

  ▪ Transitions DVD’s, DVD player, youth survival tips bookmarks

  Trainer Preparation:

- ▪ The third day will primarily focus on hearing directly from refugee youth peers already in Canada as well as on Canada’s public education system.
- ▪ It is important that there is time set aside in the morning for any new concerns about their migration process to Canada. It is also important to address in Day two any comments from the previous day evaluations. Remind participants that their feedback on the orientation is very important as it will be used to adjust the curriculum for future groups.

DAY 3

Time: (10 min) Tap-Tap

Objective:

Material:

Instructions:

To get participants moving.

None

1. Everyone kneels on the floor in a circle, hands on the floor, and places their right hand over the left hand of the person to the right (you'll end up with someone else's right hand between your hands).
2. The facilitator begins by slapping his right hand on the floor, setting off a wave of slaps, each hand slapping the floor in succession, keeping a steady rhythm as you go. As you can imagine, because your hands are overlapping other people's hands, there will be some visual/mental confusion.
3. If a hand messes up and misses a slap, it is removed from the circle. The game continues until only two hands remain.

Check-in

Time: (20 min) Check-in and recap

Objective:

Material:

Instructions:

To see how participants are feeling today and to reflect on day one and two of the orientations.

None

4. Ask participants what session was covered the day before? Provide a recap to refresh their memories about the topics covered during both days
5. Go around the circle and ask participants to identify how they are feeling based on a colour and also to include any questions, concerns or thoughts they have arising from any topic covered in day 1 or 2.

Guess Who?

Time:

(40 min) Multiculturalism, Racism and Discrimination pictures activity

Objective:

Materials: Instructions:

To explore how Canadians come in different colours, shapes and sizes; how they and their families might be perceived when they immigrate to Canada and to spark them to think about misconceptions they might have about certain races, genders etc.

Pictures of different people who live in Canada (e.g. diversity, size, ages, gender, etc.), red and green sticky dots.

- ▪ Put the pictures on the walls.
- ▪ Give the youth 5 red dots and 5 green dots
- ▪ Ask the youth to place a GREEN dot on the pictures of the people they would

like to be friends with once they go to Canada.

- ▪ Ask the youth to place a RED dot on the pictures of the people they would not like to be friends with once they go to Canada.
- ▪ Debrief about what it means to be Canadian and about the many types, ethnicities and races of people who live in the country.
- ▪ Address major misconceptions and ask them why they picked the people they did. The goal is to get the youth to start thinking about all the negative misconceptions they have about certain races, as well as to begin to understand how other people may view them and their families once in Canada. For example, the way they eat, the language they speak, the clothes they wear, etc.
- ▪ It is important to address negative comments or stereotypes the youth might have about people of different skin colours.
- ▪ The idea is not to shut participants down but to question why they think some races are better than others.
- ▪ The facilitator needs to clarify to the youth that they will be going to school with other youth from different parts of the world with a diversity of cultures and skin colours.
- ▪ An excellent way to get the youth to think about how stereotypes is to ask them how people in Canada will see them. What people in Canada might think about refugees and whether or not they would make friends easily.
- ▪ It is important to get the point across that being hesitant about getting know youth from different countries based on their skin colour will make it difficult for them to find friends, practice English/French and learn about new cultures.

(60 min) Video and Bookmarks

To expose participants to messages from their peers who have already immigrated A

Time:

Objective:

Materials:

Instructions:

to Canada. To highlight some of the common challenges youth face and their successes, as well as to ensure that youth participants know they are not the only ones facing re-settlement challenges.

DVD player, Transitions video and Youth Survival Tips bookmark

- ▪ After watching the Transitions videos debrief the messages offered by former government assisted refugees.
- ▪ Ask questions about what they thought about the video and what messages they liked or identified with, which messages were unexpected and which messages made them nervous.
- ▪ Make sure that the youth talk about the impact that immigration could have on their families.
- ▪ Based on the video ask youth about the challenges they think they will face once to go to Canada.

- ▪ Communication and understanding are very important with teachers, classmates, guardians and other support people around them. Others will not be able to help them if they do not communicate what they are feeling.
- ▪ Hand out the bookmark and discuss the survival tips
- ▪ Answer any further questions

  (80min) Presentation about the Canadian public school system

  To introduce youth to some of the concepts found in Canadian high schools Flip-chart paper and markers

  7. What is a high school in Canada?

  Points to highlight:

  What grade and ages.

  How big could the schools be

  Typically close to their homes but sometimes they might have to take buses Day 1 and day 2 or semester terms

  They will have to do an English/French and Math assessment test when they arrive in the school which will tell them which classes they have to take

LUNCH (30 min)

Guess Who?

Time: Objective:

Materials: Instructions:

What is ESL? And what is Classe d'accueil? How does it work?

Classroom and class format including common interaction behaviour between students and teachers

Teachers stay in the same classroom and students move from classroom to classroom according to their schedule.

The concept of student numbers

Always ask questions about the classes you are taking and if they will be useful to graduate from high school and go to university or college.

High School Lockers (pass around samples of high school locks, if possible) Agendas (Show samples of high school agendas, if possible)

Counsellors their role and function; they are there to support youth academically but also to refer them to other resources if facing personal challenges.

Lunch time and cafeterias; youth can bring lunch to eat in the cafeteria. Most people eat with cutlery (if possible, if delivering the curriculum in a place where eating the hands is common practice how to eat with forks, knives and spoons)

Youth could also purchase food in the cafeterias but could be expensive if done everyday.

There are many school clubs to which youth can sign up and meet new people. They could be social, art or sport clubs.

Time: (60 min) Familiarize with agendas, schedules and locks for High School lockers

Objective:

Materials:

Instructions:

Get youth to practice how to open locks for their lockers, look at agendas and review typical high school schedules.

Locks, agendas, examples of high school schedules and worksheets

1. Hand out schedules and explain how they can use them as tools at school. Go over a couple of pages with them.
2. Hand out schedules and explain where the student number, classes, teacher's name and classroom numbers are.
3. Hand out locks, talk about how they are used in high schools and demonstrate to youth how to open them and give time for the youth to practice opening them themselves while supporting them one-on-one if needed.

*Leave plenty of room to practice and to ask questions if necessary.

If there are not enough resources available for all of the youth:

Game and Break

1. Divide participants into the same 3 groups. Give them different stations one belonging to locks, another to agendas and another to schedules
2. Show each station how to their tools work and get them to do their exercises from worksheets already prepared
3. For example: The locks station will get all of the group members to practice a couple of times how to open a lock so that they become familiar with it.
4. In the agenda station get them to explore and find dates and other tools in the agenda
5. In the schedule station get them to talk about how long are the classes, how many they have per day and also what they could be about. i.e. find student number etc, teacher's name etc.

Time: (20 min) Break for 10 min and Animal families Objective: To relax and have fun

Materials: Instructions:

None

1. Ask participants "What is you favourite animal and what type of sound do they make?" Agree on 2 – 3 animals and a unanimous sound they make.
2. Tell participants that you are going to go around the circle and whisper in their ear the name of an animal that they will be.
3. Alternate the choice of animals I.e., cow, duck, sheep, cow, duck, and sheep.
4. When everyone has been whispered an animal, tell participants that the objective of the game is to find their animal family with their eyes shut. When you say go, they will begin moving throughout the room making the sound of their animal while listening for their fellow animals.
5. The trainer keeps their eyes open and makes sure that all participants are clustered in their families. When the game is over the trainer tells participants to open their eyes.

6. Before you start, ask if there are any questions.

Time: Objective: Materials: Instructions:

(20 min) Final Evaluation

To assess how people feel about the entire orientation program. Paper and small markers

1. Explain to participants that this is an individual activity
2. Hand out a legal size sheet of paper
3. Ask the youth to do a drawing that represents them, it could be a gingerbread person. Get them to draw something where they leave enough room inside and outside the drawing to write.
4. On the inside of the drawing the participants will write everything they feel like they now know, are more familiar with and/or found useful; outside of the drawing the participants will list all of the things that they would like to have more information on and/or are still unclear about, as well as how the activities can improve for future orientations.
5. Ask youth to circle inside all of the activities they found useful and outside all of the activities that need improvement.
6. If time permits it, collect the maps and quickly address some of the gaps they express.

Finish the session by reminding them that going to Canada won't be an easy journey, there will be challenges and frustrations along the way but that many youth before them (including the ones shown in the video) are slowing adjusting and settling in their new homes in Canada.

Mapping Graduation

Time: (20 min) Certificates hand out

Objective: To give closure to the orientation, hand out certificates of completion and celebrate

Materials: Instructions:

Previously prepared certificates of completion, cake if possible and camera

Thank participants for attending the orientation. Talk about some quick things the facilitator learned throughout the three days (information sharing goes both ways). If desired collect participant's email addresses and or give out your contact information for future questions. Take a class photo and celebrate.