Religious Engagement within Refugee Resettlement in Canada: Lessons to Learn

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

In recent years, Canada has become a global leader in refugees and the top world leader in refugee resettlement. Direct participation by civil society, mainly dominated by the religious congregation and faith-based organizations in resettlement, has been the hallmark of Canada's private sponsorship program and a significant element in its success. This paper explores the evidence base of existing literature covering religious engagement within Canada's umbrella of refugee resettlement. Religious engagement is exemplified by the involvement of religious groups, congregations or communities in refugee resettlement which defines and shapes this policy, particularly in the private refugee sponsorship program. Despite challenges shadowing the process, religious engagement contributes to more outcomes given its potential social capital. It is predicted that religious groups will continue to be leading actors within Canada's resettlement programs.

Introduction

Canada is widely known as a nation of immigrants. As a developed nation with high infertility, Canada receives roughly 250,000 immigrants each year to maintain its population and strengthen its economy (Simmons & Bourne, 2013). Among the immigrants are refugees. Thanks to Donald Trump administration's immigration policy that reduced the quota for immigrants arriving in the United States, Canada stood out as a global leader in

receiving refugees. Canada has become the top world leader in refugee resettlement after resettling 28.000 refugees around the world in 2018 (Markusoff, 2019). For the last four decades, Canada has been implementing refugee resettlement as a national policy to accept and resettle refugees from all over the world who leave their countries for humanitarian causes (Bocker & Havinga, 1998; Canetti D et al., 2016).

One of the most striking phenomena in refugee resettlement in Canada is the high involvement of religious congregations or faith-based organizations. Numerous scholars have built an interwoven understanding of the engagement of religious groups within refugee resettlement projects in Canada which further define and shape the involvement of civil society together with the government in pursuing national immigration policy (See below on sub theme: defining and shaping refugee resettlement through religious engagement).

This study explores first how Canadian religious engagement a great influence on refugee resettlement programs in the current configuration of immigrants policy? Second, how interplay between actors and solutions are creating an immigrations policy within religious engagement shaping refugee resettlement programs? What is lesson learned from religious engagement within Canada's refugee resettlement? All in all, a succinct review raised in this article seeks to create analysis of religious engagement nexus that extends beyond the current social policies literature.

Defining and Shaping Refugee Resettlement through Religious Engagement

The research landscape on religious engagement in refugee resettlement has also witnessed a significant surge in the past two decades. This surge aligns with the substantial increase in the

number of displaced people worldwide who resettled in global north countries and the increasingly involved faith-based communities, including the active participation of the religious congregation in refugee sponsorship and refugee resettlement towards refugee integration into the local host community.

Many scholars have discussed how this phenomenon is viewed from multiple perspectives, including how religion entangles with forced migration. Frederiks (2016) asserts there is a debated notion that religion is inseparable from migration since migration also effectuates a change in the religious landscape, and as Zaman (2016) also emphasizes, the intertwined history of religion and migration is undeniable. Religion has contributed to the shape of people's migration over centuries (Saunders et al., 2016), including in the migrant crisis (Johnstone et al., 2018). Kivisto (2014) demonstrates that religion is an essential aspect of personal identity and can facilitate the process of immigrants' adaptation and their fitting into the receiving society.

In the past two decades, there has been a surge of scholarly articles highlighting the involvement of faith communities, predominantly from Christian congregations or Christian-based organizations, in sponsoring and assisting refugees in resettlement in North America and elsewhere. The portrayal of Christian congregations as research objects is relatively overrepresented in numerous studies. Scholarly articles have documented that Christian congregations or churches play a significant role to resettle and integrate new immigrants, including refugees (Beaman et al., 2016; Bramadat, 2014; Cecil et al., 2018; Chiba, 2014; Derwing et al., 2003, 2003; Dwyer, 2010; Ebaugh, 2003; Eby et al., 2011; Good Gingrich & Enns, 2019; Handy & Greenspan, 2009; Hyndman et al., 2017; Ives et al., 2010; Jackson & Passarelli, 2016; Janzen et al., 2012, 2016; Labman & Pearlman, 2018; Ley, 2008; Macklin et al., 2018, 2018; Mavelli &

Wilson, 2017; McKinley, 2008; Reimer et al., 2016; Snyder, 2011; Wilkinson, 2009).

Several scholars have shed light on the role of the religious congregation in refugee resettlement. For example, in the U.S. context, some scholars (Eby et al., 2011; Ivry, 1992; Nichols, 1988) demonstrate the role of Jewish faith-based NGO in Jewish refugee resettlement, Chiba (Chiba, 2014) explains the role of Protestant churches in the U.S. refugee resettlement program in the 1950s. Besides, Eby et al. (2011) also explain the advocacy role of the faith community in refugee resettlement in the United States., while Ives (2010) explores faith-based service provision to refugees in Philadelphia. Trinidad et al. (2018) contend that the active engagement of communities of faith in refugee resettlement is the main reason the United States has become one of the leading refugee resettlement countries in the world. In the European context, Jackson & Passarelli (2016) map churches' response to the increase of migrants, thanks to the influx of refugees entering European soil in the recent decade, while Khallouk (2018) explicitly studies the Muslim initiatives in assisting recently displaced people flooding Germany.

McKinley (2008) portrays the Canadian churches in the private sponsorship refugees program in his thesis. His argument rests on the thesis of how Canadian churches and Christian organizations provide an invaluable service to the refugees they sponsor, and their dedication to refugee advocacy is commendable. Meanwhile, Bramadat (2014) describes the entanglement of religion and refugee resettlement in British Columbia. Janzen et al. (2016) provide empirical evidence about the current role of Christian churches in immigrant settlement and integration and discuss implications for the broader settlement sector. Reimer et al. (2016) explain how Christian churches support immigrants in Canada, and Good Gingrich & Enns (2019) present an analytical view on

the involvement of the Mennonite Central Committee in the private sponsorship of refugees program in Canada.

The congregations provide support to newcomers through refugee sponsorship, language classes, space provision for immigrant congregations, fulfillment of basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, transportation), and volunteering opportunities (Handy & Greenspan, 2009), a variety of other supportive and developmental activities (Dwyer, 2010), that can include extendable short-term settlement and long-term integration services regardless of the immigrants' religious affiliation (Reimer et al., 2016).

In terms of the assistance provided by religious congregations to refugees, Ives & Sinha (2010) document the descriptions of the programs for refugees, which are divided into 11 kinds of service, including (a) various referrals, (b) housing, (c) job training or placement, (d) legal assistance, (e) education, (f) translation or language assistance, (g) cash assistance, (h) transportation, (i) clothing, (j) food/gatherings/visitation, and (k) health assistance.

Religiosity would appear to be a solid motivator to help refugees when it comes to motivation. Many of the sponsorship groups since private sponsorship became formalized in the 1970s have had a religious affiliation. Eby et al. (2011) assert that strong motivation for service based on core beliefs and values are enshrined in various religious traditions. People from faith communities and faith backgrounds may find themselves motivated to work with refugees out of a desire to fulfil a mandate for service found in many religious traditions. In many faiths, 'the highest level of service is bringing or allowing another to join or rejoin the community' (Gibelman & Gelman, 2003, p. 7). In addition to that, Hollenbach (2014) asserts that faith-based organizations vary considerably in how their faith influences their work style. Chiba (2014) fortifies the narrative that the involvement of religious communities to sponsor

refugees is perceived as a test to follow the example of the Good Samaritan and a call to good neighbourliness. Given that most SAHs are faith-based institutions, the practice of hospitality resonates deeply in sacred texts of several religions that enjoin the faith-based communities to 'welcome the stranger' (Bhabha, 2018; Macklin et al., 2018) and concerns for social justice (McKinley, 2008). In the study on Canadian Christian churches as partners in immigrant settlement and integration, in which a total of 34 congregations responded to an online survey (Janzen et al., 2016), the findings show that many churches are intentionally involved in immigrant ministry, motivated by their Christian and social concern.

Besides religious motive, Snyder (2011) has identified other reasons, arguing that faith-based communities' involvement, which becomes the umbrella of the religious congregation in settling newcomers, is traced back to three categories. First, transcendent motivation, in which the inspiration for engaging with newcomers—explicitly or implicitly—is rooted in ultimate divine meaning. This inspiration is a religious motive that drives action to help newcomers. Second, organizational nature and strategies where churches function as informal cross-societal communities and bring together people from diverse backgrounds to develop friendships. Moreover, the following reason resource mobilization in which these faith-based communities can mobilize a range of material and human resources such as buildings that can provide space for meetings, social 'drop-ins,' classes and shared meals.

Methods

In this article, I present the recent development of empirical literature on the engagement of religious congregations in refugee resettlement, particularly in Canada. First, the overview of refugee resettlement will be explained. Second, I explore existing literature

on the state of Canada as one of the top resettlement countries. Third, I discuss how religious engagement defines and shapes refugee resettlement. Fourth, partly using social capital theory as a lens, I provide lessons from religious engagement within Canada's refugee resettlement.

Two main search processes (i.e. structured and unstructured) were followed by compiling academic and grey literature from different databases to arrive at the needed literature. Using grey literature in academic resources was necessary since international organizations like the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or Canadian national agencies also produce works related to refugee resettlement and integration.

Since academic research on religious communities in refugee resettlement cuts across multiple disciplines, the structured literature search was first conducted using a range of multidisciplinary databases. The second strand of literature (unstructured) search involved an exhaustive process of backward and forward searches (Wohlin, 2014) on articles included and generated from the initial (structured) search process.

This article uses a literature review to discuss the topic. Review of literature has shown some weaknesses such as lack of explicit intent to maximize scope or analyze data collected; any conclusions may be biased from omitting, perhaps accidentally, significant parts of literature or from not questioning the validity of statements made. However, literature reviews have strengths because they aim to identify what has already been achieved, which allows for consolidation, building on previous efforts, summarizing, preventing duplication, and identifying omissions or gaps (Grant & Booth, 2009).

The literature review consists of two parts: the process and the product. In terms of the process, it starts with searching for literature.

A literature search aims to identify as many relevant publications from all types of published literature that relate to a particular topic as possible (Gash, 2000, p.1). The product is a written document that contains a coherent argument that leads to a proposed study that reflects your viewpoint and becomes a written synthesis of the literature based on a critical stance.

In terms of theory used, this article employs social capital theory as a lens to understand how social services provided by the religious congregation are advantageous for refugee resettlement and integration. Likewise, social capital theory becomes a critical lens to view how refugees still segregate from other communities. Several scholars (Allen, 2010; Ives & Sinha, 2010; Lamba & Krahn, 2003; Moghissi et al., 2009; Serrao & Cavendish, 2018) who discuss the involvement of faith-based communities in providing social services for refugees have applied social capital theory to explain the way interconnectedness be built through bonding, bridging, and linking creation during the resettlement that leads to the integration process.

Result and Discussion

Revisiting Canada as Country of Resettlement

Canada has a history of accepting immigrants fleeing persecution and violence (Government of Canada, 2020). Traditionally, Canada was a country of resettlement long before it became a country of asylum. Through the International Refugee Organization, Canada took in over 100,000 resettlement refugees in the late 1940s. This reception was followed by the admission of approximately 37,000 refugees from Hungary in 1956 and 1957, 11,000 from Czechoslovakia in 1968, and 7,000 Asians expelled from Uganda in 1972 (Labman, 2016).

Following the Second World War, Canada introduced the first Bill of Rights (1960), which recognized the principle of human rights. The adoption of the Immigration Act of 1976 fulfilled Canada's legal obligations to refugees and laid the foundations of certain aspects of the current refugee system. The Canadian refugee system comprises two components: The In-Canada Asylum Program, and the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program (Government of Canada, 2019)

Adequate reception and integration benefit both the resettled refugee and the receiving country. Governments and nongovernmental organization partners provide services to facilitate integration, such as cultural orientation, language and vocational training, and programs to promote access to education and employment.

In Canada, resettled refugees receive support through the Resettlement Assistance Program. The Resettlement Assistance Program offers three main pathways for refugees to be resettled in Canada. These include Government-Assisted Refugees, Privately Sponsored Refugees, and Blended Visa Office Referred refugees. Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) include refugees referred to Canada by either UNHCR or another referral organization. Their initial resettlement is supported entirely by either the Government of Canada or the Province of Quebec. Nongovernmental agencies deliver support, called service provider organizations, which are funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) (UNHCR, 2021)

GARs are eligible to receive support for up to one year from the date of their arrival in Canada or until they are self-supporting, whichever comes first. Their support includes being met at the airport, housing, clothing, food, employment assistance, and other resettlement assistance. The Canadian government also offers an Immigration Loans Program to refuges to cover travel costs to

Canada and meet additional settlement costs.

Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) are refugees who are supported by private entities in Canada, known as "Sponsorship Agreement Holders" (SAH) or their Constituent Groups. Other volunteers that sponsor refugees include "Community Sponsors" and "Groups of Five." PSRs are entitled to receive support from their sponsors, including help with food, housing, and clothing, during the duration of the sponsorship or until they become self-supporting (if this occurs during the sponsorship period). Most sponsorships last one year, but some may receive support for as long as three years.

In Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) programs, refugees identified by the UNHCR are referred to Canadian visa offices overseas. It is a "blended" program because it is a cost-sharing arrangement whereby the government and sponsorship groups contribute financially to the refugees. The government provides financial support for six months and private sponsors for another six months. They also give up to a year of social and emotional support (IRCC, 2016)

The BVOR option sits between Canada's two traditional resettlement routes: the government-assisted refugees (GAR) program and the private sponsorship of refugees (PSR) program. GARs are selected by Canadian visa officers based on UNHCR referrals and receive government support for their first year in Canada (Labman & Pearlman, 2018, p. 440). The BVOR matches refugees with private sponsors in Canada who meet the UNHCR's resettlement criteria before travelling to Canada.

Historically, a cost-sharing arrangement model in refugee resettlement was initiated in the early 1990s. One means by which the government sought to encourage private sponsorship but regain some control of the program's orientation was through several pilot projects commencing in 1994 that blended public and private financial

support for a targeted refugee population (Labman, 2016, pp. 67–80). These programs, which targeted specific groups such as Afghan Ismaili, Balkan, Sierra Leonean, Iraqi, and LGBTQ refugees, involved 3 or 4 months of government support with sponsors responsible for the remaining 9 or 8 months of support and the power to name the refugees differed with each project. Other measures to control and redirect sponsorship involved administrative caps on sponsorship submissions in 2011 and 2012 and regulatory changes to formalize application procedures and limit eligibility in specific sponsorship categories in 2011. Against this background, the BVOR program was launched in 2013 as a new refugee resettlement scheme (Labman & Pearlman, 2018, p. 441).

Until recently, Canada was the only nation that offered private sponsorships in cooperation with the federal government to coordinate screening and officially admit them. Since the late 1970s, the number of refugees brought by private sponsors to Canada has been above those resettled with government funding (GAR).

In Canada, private sponsorship has a long history. The spirit of volunteerism and the large numbers eventually resettled to Canada were recognized in 1986 when the "People of Canada" were awarded the Nansen Medal, the only time the medal has been awarded to the people of a country (Casasola, 2016). This award was given to the people of Canada for their resettlement of the Indochinese. There have been awards given to private citizens, politicians, royalty, and charities, but this is the only time an award has gone to the entire population of Canada was recognized (Labman, 2016).

In September 2016, Canada pledged at the U.N. Summit in New York to 'export' the private sponsorship model to other interested states. In December 2016, the Canadian government launched a second initiative, the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, partnered with UNHCR and the Open Society Foundations. Strong government

leadership and civil society engagement are pivotal in maintaining private sponsorship underway. Canadian civil society actively came out ahead of the government initiative to support resettlement in terms of Syrian refugees.

Refugee Resettlement: Interplay between Actor and Solutions

Before moving deeper into the discussion, it is essential to distinguish between closely associated concepts yet need to be distinguished. According to UNHCR *Global Trends* (2014), forced displacement (also forced migration) is an involuntary or coerced movement of people away from their home or home region. The UNHCR defines 'forced displacement' as displaced "due to persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or human rights violations."

International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) (2017) describes forced migration as a term used to describe the movements of refugees and internally displaced persons (those displaced by conflict) as well as people displaced by natural disasters chemical disasters, famine, or development projects. It also views forced migration as a complex, wide-ranging and pervasive set of phenomena. Further, types of forced migration are categorized according to their causal factors: conflict, development policies and projects, and disasters.

The 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR, 2010) defines a refugee as someone who has fled persecution and conflict in their home countries and no more extended benefits from the legal protections offered to their home country's citizens. Accordingly, the 1951 Refugee Convention stipulates that refugees should be protected and have access to national courts, employment and education rights, and a host of other social, economic, and civil rights (Loescher, 2021).

The UNHCR indicates that "the global population of forcibly displaced people has grown substantially from 33.9 million in 1997 to 65.6 million in 2016" (UNHCR, 2016). Further, UNHCR stated that the present number is "the highest since the aftermath of World War II" and "most of this increase was concentrated between 2012 and 2015, driven mainly by the Syrian conflict". The need for global resettlement is still developing as there is a discrepancy between the number of refugees and the third country that can resettle. For instance, in 2012 alone, prior to the aftermath of the Syrian wars, there were 800,000 refugees worldwide; however, only some 85,000 places are available for resettlement on an annual basis (UNHCR, 2012).

Resettlement is a part of the common refugee experience, as Keller (1975) states in his classical literature in which the experiences and characteristics of the refugee at each point in the process will have a bearing on final successful resettlement. Aside from being a refugee experience, resettlement is considered a solution. Resettlement has been widely regarded as one of the three durable solutions to refugeehood alongside local integration and voluntary return as espoused by the UNHCR (Koser, 2016; Macklin et al., 2018). There are three so-called durable solutions for refugees. The first solution, which is typically considered the best, is the repatriation of refugees to their home nations when conditions are safe to return and regain their rights. A second solution is local integration, where refugees settle permanently in the host country in a nearby receiving country; Resettlement in another third country is the final durable solution (Loescher, 2021).

Resettlement is defined in the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (2017) as the process of selecting and transferring refugees from a country where they have sought protection to a third country that has agreed to admit them—as refugees—with permanent residence

status. The status provided ensures protection against refoulement or a situation when refugees are forced to return to a country where they are at risk of persecution. In addition, refugees and their family members have access to the same rights as nationals. There is also the possibility of becoming a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country.

Refugee resettlement is selecting, transferring, and settling refugees in another country. According to this definition, migration processes that are not managed are not included (Lee et al., 2020). This process describes how refugees, usually from camps, are resettled permanently in another country, almost always in the developed world. Refugee resettlement was pretty standard in Europe through the 1970s and 1980s; this was when many Vietnamese 'boat people' and refugees from Pinochet's Chile arrived there (Koser, 2016).

Refugee resettlement involves the organized movement of pre-selected refugees to a destination country in which their settlement is expected to be permanent (Labman, 2016). Although resettlement cannot be the solution for all refugees due to the low availability of place, as Selm (2014) contends, resettlement is the only viable solution for some refugees who will be unprotected in their region of origin. Selm also explains that much of the academic literature on refugee resettlement is frequently from the perspective of communities and states, which focuses on aspects of integration for resettled refugees, particularly health, employment, education, and housing. Although it is a part of a durable solution for the refugee crisis, resettlement itself is not free from the problem. Hassan et al. (2016) demonstrate that the resettlement process brings additional acculturative stress, language barriers, access to health and social services, and socioeconomic distress.

UNHCR is mandated by its Statute and the U.N. General Assembly Resolutions to undertake resettlement as one of the three

durable solutions. As the only permanent solution that involves refugee relocation from a country of asylum to a third country, resettlement is unique. There were 20.4 million refugees of concern to UNHCR at the end of 2020, but the number of refugees resettled each year is less than one percent.

In 2021 there will be approximately 20.7 million refugees of concern to UNHCR worldwide, about 1.4 million of whom are deemed to require resettlement. Less than 5% of the refugees identified as needing resettlement were resettled in 2018 and 2019. The objective of resettling 70,000 refugees in 2020 was not met, as progress on immediate third-country solutions across all pathways suffered a significant setback due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, the global resettlement needs, as estimated by UNHCR, had slightly increased to 1,445,383 persons, compared to 2020, when 1,440,408 were estimated to need resettlement, reflecting both protracted and more recent refugee situations in more than 60 countries of asylum.

The UNHCR submitted 39,500 refugee files to resettlement countries in 2020. Approximately 18,200 refugees are from the Syrian Arab Republic, 5,900 are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2,100 are from Eritrea, and 2,000 are from Somalia. In 2020, UNHCR assisted 22,800 refugees to flee to resettlement countries. There were 4,600 refugees who left Lebanon, followed by 4,000 from Turkey, 1,500 from Jordan, 1,350 from Egypt, and 1,300 from the United Republic of Tanzania (UNHCR, 2021).

Some 28 countries worldwide currently offer resettlement opportunities, including nine traditional resettlement states with more massive, longer-established programs. In total, The United States, Canada, and Australia collectively provide 90 percent of global refugee capacity (Koser, 2016; Selm, 2014). Before being surpassed by Canada (Markusoff, 2019), The United States has the most extensive resettlement program. According to Eby et al.

(2011, p. 587), its massive program by far, mainly "because of the long-standing active engagement and support of communities of faith in refugee resettlement and local integration."

Lesson Learned from Religious Engagement within Canada's Refugee Resettlement

In the view of Bramadat (2014), it is difficult to properly account for Canada's commitment to refugees without speaking about religion. McKinley (2008) identifies a well-known biblical saying in the New Testament that urges people to "welcome the stranger" and treat them very well, inspiring many Christian followers to express their generosity by welcoming newcomers. In alignment with that, UNHCR (2013) has unveiled a declaration as affirmation for faith leaders to welcome the stranger.

Historically, refugee sponsorship in Canada, as in many 'receiving' Western nations, has been intimately entangled with religion. For instance, the 143,000 Dutch immigrants who came to Canada between 1948 and 1962 were sometimes selected by government representatives or priests based on their suitability (including religious piety) for adaptation to Canadian society. In part, their religious identities, including a replication of the Dutch system of pillarization of religious and ethnic groups, linked to their subsequent patterns of building new lives in Canada (Van Dijk, 2001). Even until the introduction of the 'points system' utilized for the permanent residence program in 1967, British Protestants subjects were the Canadian government's preferred immigrants (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010).

Canada's private sponsorship program is marked by the direct involvement of civil society, dominated by religious congregations and faith-based organizations in resettlement (Macklin et al., 2018; Mavelli & Wilson, 2017). Although Canada is not the only country

in the world developing the private sponsorship of refugees, it is the only country with the longest-running and most successful program, thanks to its strength and depth of the private sponsorship regime in Canada (Lenard, 2016).

The vast majority of private sponsors are religious congregations and affiliates (Derwing et al., 2003) supported by Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), in which 75% are faith-based organizations that have formal agreements with the federal government (Hyndman et al., 2017). Further, Macklin et al. (2018)) demonstrate the institutional centrality of faith-based institutions among SAHs, which dominate private sponsorship. In a similar finding, Beaman et al. (2016) find that of the 101 established sponsorship agreement holders for Syrian refugees, 78 are explicitly religious groups. Based on the study SAHs in Canadian provinces, 13 of 18 are churches or religious groups in Alberta. Even in 'secular' British Columbia, 10 of 14 are religious.

Similarly, 2 of 3 in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and 5 of 6 in Saskatchewan are religious groups. In Ontario, 33 of 45 are either churches or religiously affiliated organizations. Church communities are in many ways ideal conduits for refugees – they often have a cadre of volunteers, are accustomed to fundraising and have charitable status, which means that they can solicit donations and offer tax receipts.

The massive and systematized engagement of private sponsors in refugee resettlement can be retraced after the Vietnam War ended in 1975, which resulted in the most considerable and most ambitious refugee resettlement effort in Canada's history. One legacy of the Indochinese crisis was the creation of a network of private sponsors whose willingness to resettle refugees did not subside (Labman & Pearlman, 2018, p. 441). The Master Agreement for the Sponsorship of Refugees was firstly signed on March 5, 1979,

between the government and the Mennonite Central Committee. This agreement provided a unique humanitarian response to the crisis in war-torn Indochina, which made it possible for individual Canadians to act upon their sense of compassion when faced with the plight of desperate families in Indochina. Within five months after this agreement, which became the blueprint for a new private refugee resettlement program, 28 national church organizations and Catholic and Anglican diocese had also signed master agreements (Harder, 2019). In the following years, sponsorship groups mushroomed across Canada. Since then, as a result of an 11-page sponsorship agreement, a new private refugee resettlement program has been created that allows Canadians to play an active role in helping refugees start a new life in Canada. The agreement has transformed the lives of 327,000 privately sponsored refugees over the past 40 years (Harder, 2019).

Using social capital theory as a lens (Bourdieu, 1983; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000), the involvement of religious congregations in refugee resettlement can be framed within the development and extension of social capital. Bourdieu identifies three forms of capital – economic, cultural and social. Social capital is defined as 'the aggregate of the actual potential resources based on the existence of more or less institutionalized connections of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1983). Following Bourdieu's concept (Coleman, 1988) further highlights how social capital is embedded in particular relationships, suggesting that a group based on trust will achieve more than a group lacking that aspect. Thus, social capital is understood by Coleman in terms of social obligations, expectations, social support, elements that are tied to voluntary associations or, as coined by Ives et al. (2010)), voluntary communities that are united primarily by a collective religious identity. Here, established religious institutions function as an incubator of social capital (Greely, 1997).

In other words, Putnam (2000, p. 9) defines social capital along Coleman's line in which social networks, the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness are derived from them. Furthermore, he distinguishes between bonding and bridging social capital: bonding refers to the value of social networks between homogeneous groups, while bridging refers to social networks between socially heterogeneous groups.

The social capital theory also suggests that congregations are both a source of bonding and bridging capital. The religious congregation can offer social capital bonding, which is, according to Weisinger & Salipante (2005), bonding social capital develops before bridging social capital among minorities. Bonding capital is characterized by interactions or relationships that reinforce a collective identity and exclude outsiders and are likely to be found within families or members of an immigrant group. Meanwhile, bridging capital extends across more diverse and weakly connected social spheres, such as business associates or friends from different ethnic groups (Putnam, 2000).

More generally, within the social capital theory, congregations may facilitate linkages to social networks outside of an ethnic congregation for multiple necessary transitions, including finding a home, finding a job, getting a driver's license, accessing medical care, or completing education (Portes, 1995). Accordingly, if a congregation-based group offered sponsorship, it could hypothetically offer more support, more access to community-based networking, and more opportunities for refugees to acquire new skills within and through resources of congregations (Ives et al., 2010). Lamba & Krahn (2003) demonstrated that survey data from a large sample of refugees living in Canada used to profile the size and structure of refugee social networks highlights the value or function of such social capital in the resettlement process.

Studies have found that refugees sponsored by religious congregations had better outcomes in terms of employment, host-country language acquisition, community integration, and overall experiences of resettlement than those who were sponsored by a family member or who received assistance solely from a resettlement agency (Breslow et al., 1997; Ives, 2007). Rohe (2016) also argues that religion is not hampering but advancing the process and integration progress. It helps refugees meet social and economic needs in a way that enables them to encounter linguistic, cultural, and religious familiarity in the new country.

Despite the Social Capital theory promises a degree of certainty to explain why refugees resettled or sponsored by religious congregations are most likely to integrate with the host community, it is not always the case. Social capital can also exhibit negative consequences (Adogame, 2013). In particular, Portes (1998) identifies four harmful elements of social capital: the exclusion of outsiders, the excessive claims on group members, the restriction on individual freedom, and the downward levelling norms. Having explored the downside of social capital, Adogame agreed that the negative of social capital, especially the potential of exclusion, is very evident in social capital as a collective good, a resource possessed by a social system that helps the system as a whole to solve problems. For instance, Adogame (2013, p. 107) notes how community norms can be tied to religious beliefs and symbols and ethnicity in ways that exclude others. Bonding social networks can reinforce and deepen ethnic and class distinctions and conflicts. Churches and other religious congregations are considered a form of social capital as they are networks of relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition based on trust, expectations and social obligations. Likewise, churches and other religious congregations are also in danger of developing the harmful elements inherent to social capital.

For instance, when ethnicity is a significant bonding tie between church members, it risks excluding all other church members.

Moreover, a recent study by Serrao & Cavendish (2018) acknowledges that church members can become overly dependent on their churches. In the congregation, they may be isolated from society, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation by more established co-ethnics. This finding by Serrao augmented what Moghissi et al. (2009) warn the risk of religious communities reducing the possibilities for their constituents to develop social interaction with others outside their groups in the larger society. Another interesting finding has been found by Allen (2010), who examines the role of religious congregations in the lives of refugees living in a city with a small, but rapidly growing immigrant population. Evidence from interviews with Catholic and Muslim refugees and participant observation at two houses of worship suggests that there is a different function of religious institutions among refugees from the majority and minority religious traditions. He suggests that in a non-gateway context, religious institutions affiliated with a minority religious tradition play a bonding role for refugees, while religious institutions affiliated with a majority religious tradition can play both bonding and bridging roles for refugees. Catholic refugees use their church for bonding and bridging, while Muslim refugees use their mosques primarily for bonding purposes.

Given its demographic posture amidst the ageing population, shrinking of working age, and more importantly, the history of Canada in resettling refugees all over the world has undeniably shaped its identity, refugee resettlement will continue for a couple of years to come. After resettling thousands of Syrian refugees in the last five years and now thousands of Afghani refugees fleeing from the Taliban, what is next? That is a question to rise following the engagement of Canada in active refugee resettlement in the world, and the engagement of

religious groups will be again in favour, and more religious groups from diverse religions will be invited to welcome the strangers.

Conclusion

As a country of resettlement, Canada has been actively involved in refugee resettlement for decades as part of its commitment to humanitarian efforts aligned with its national immigration policy. Despite its secular country, religious groups have an avenue to define and shape refugee resettlement policy. The benefits of religious engagement within refugee resettlement lay in the outcomes given the potential social capital it accrues and generates. They are reproducing and transforming social capital from bonding to bridging and eventually framing the refugee trajectory to live, settle and adapt with new living in Canada. However, social capital can also hinder further integration with the broader community if the refugees are still in the bonding stage in their circular network. It can be predicted that Canada will accept and resettle more refugees to come as part of the immigration program and part of national identity as a nation of immigrants.

Acknowledgement

Author's Declaration

Authors' contributions and responsibilities

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis,

interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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