

Making Familiar: Perceptions of Belonging of Syrian Newcomer Youth in Toronto

تألف : إدراك الإلتواء للشباب السوري القادمين الجدد إلى تورنتو

Catherine Knap

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Supervisor: Dr. Emily Regan Wills

Examiners: Dr. Rebecca Tiessen & Dr. Luisa Veronis

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Abstract

During Canada's Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative, over 40 000 Syrian refugees settled in Canada, over half of whom were children and youth. Given the barriers newcomer youth in Canada experience and lack of power they have in decision-making processes that affect their lives, research emphasizing the voices of Syrian newcomer youth is needed to better support youth well-being in Canada. A collaboration with the Arab Community Centre of Toronto and partnership with Charles Street Video, *Making Familiar* is a participatory photography project with four Syrian newcomer youth that took place from June to August 2017. With point-and-shoot cameras, the youth took photographs of meaningful spaces in their lives according to the themes "What is important to you?" and "Where do you belong?" Using the Capabilities Approach, this study identifies the capabilities youth value and discusses them using an intersectional framework. Differently affected by gender, youth prioritize education and learning, career and paid work, mental well-being, physical well-being, relationships, mobility, time-autonomy, respect, decision-making power, and self-expression. Their relationships to place are experienced differently according to time spent in Canada. The study argues that youth enact these capabilities as strategies of "reterritorialization" to negotiate identity and develop belonging in Toronto. This project also discusses the significance of participatory arts-based methods in social science research and importance of collaborating with non-traditional partners for settlement work.

Dedication

I dedicate this project to Alex, Angelo, Aisha, and Kung Fu Kenny, the four youth participants of *Making Familiar*. You are all such bright, talented, and inspiring individuals, and I am honoured to have had the opportunity to work with you. Thank you.

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"تألف" لم يكن ليُنْفَذ لو لا الدعم الذي حصلت عليه من أطراف و جهات عدة.

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أولاً أودّ أن أشكر مشرفتي الرائعة "الدكتورة إيملي ريغان ويلس" لدعمها اللا متناهي طوال فترة المشروع. لقد أرشدتني إيملي الى كافة المراجع والنماذج المطلوبة لتنفيذ مشروعي، كما زوّدتني بنتائج قيمة خلال فترة المعلومات والتحليل، و أيضاً خففت من حدة القلق في صعوبة معالجة المشاكل. لقد ساهمت إيملي بكل سخاء بتغطية كافة المصاريف الخاصة بمواد البحث و مصاريف التمويل لجميع المجموعات من صندوق نقد أبحاثها. إني حقاً لمحظوظة بمشرفةٍ مثلها. شكراً جزيلاً إيملي.

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The project would not have been possible

وجب القول أنه لو لا مساعدة مركز الجالية العربية

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في تورنتو لكان من المستحيل تنفيذ المشروع الذي ساعدني للدراسة، و - Charles Street Video CSV الشريك الفني. لقد دعمت كلتا الجهتين المشروع في كل مرحلة لما عززه بحد كبير ليأتي بأهمية تناسب الشباب. ساعد مركز الجالية العربية بتخطيط المشروع وتكفل بتقديم الدعم للشباب من خلال إستشاري الشباب، كما نظّم مشاركتهم بالعديد من الأنشطة في المدينة بعد إتمام الأبحاث، و زوّدنا بتذاكر المواصلات العامة. ساعم Charles Street Video بدعوتنا الى مركزه، سهّل ورش العمل الفنية للشباب، قام بتزويدهم بالمعدات المطلوبة و أيضاً غرفة للإجتماعات، واستضاف المعرض النهائي الخاص بمشروع التصوير الخاص بالشباب. كما غطّى CSV بكل عطاء مصاريف التموين ليوم إفتتاح المعرض بالإضافة الى تكاليف إطارات الصور المعروضة، و قدّم عضوية مجانية لمدة سنة لجميع الشباب المشاركين بالمعرض. قدّم جميع أعضاء ACCT و CSV (من موظفين، تلاميذ الصيف، متطوعين، و غيرهم...) كل الدعم والتشجيع والترحيب التام لإنجاز مشروع "تألف".

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Acronyms

ACCT: Arab Community Centre of Toronto

ARC: artist-run centre

CA: Capabilities Approach

CBO: community-based organization

COD: Call of Duty

CSV: Charles Street Video

DMG: Dames Making Games

EMSC: East Mall Steering Committee

ESL: English as a Second Language

FGD: focus group discussion

FPS: first-person shooter

GAR: Government-Assisted Refugee

GTA: Greater Toronto Area

GTA: Grand Theft Auto

IRCC: Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada

MP: Member of Parliament

ODSP: Ontario Disability Support Program

PAR: participatory action research

PS4: Play Station 4

PSD: Photoshop Document

PSR: Privately-Sponsored Refugee

PSW: personal support worker

ROM: Royal Ontario Museum

SPT: Social Planning Toronto

TSV: Trinity Square Video

TTC: Toronto Transit Commission

UN: United Nations

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

YPAR: youth participatory action research

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Essentialism and refugee youth in Canada

“...the views of children should be heard and given ‘due weight’ in matters relating to them”

-Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The voices of refugee youth are often excluded from policy and programming processes in Canada (Kanu, 2008). In designing programs for refugee youth, well-meaning schools, community centres, and other organizations serving newcomers frequently do not seek the input of those who programs are meant to benefit. The resulting disconnect discourages youth, who are notoriously difficult to engage, from seeking needed support. While age of arrival, exposure to trauma, and family background factor into refugee youth adaptation, critical determinates for adapting well are individual resiliency and the context of reception (McBrien, 2005; Fantino & Colak, 2001), factors that support programs can aim to enhance. With specialized needs, refugee youth need support at the individual, intermediate, and systems level (tailored for and, ideally, created with them).

From 2015-2017, Canada's Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative resettled 40 081 Syrian refugees across Canada (Government of Canada, 2017). Children and youth under the age of 25 comprised 54% of this influx. Of this group, Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) were particularly young, at two-thirds under the age of 25 (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) received the greatest number of people under this initiative, 6843 Syrian refugees as of January 29, 2017 (Government of Canada, 2017). This instigated the creation of new programs targeting Syrian newcomers.

Historically, refugee youth have experienced significant barriers to adapting in Canada due to poor reception. Groups like the wave of Somali refugees in the late 1980s were met with hostility and racism upon resettling. Compared with the arrival of Vietnamese refugees, the Canadian public was not prepared for the arrival of Somalis, and assumptions surrounding the black, Muslim refugee as a threat to security and social infrastructure quickly spread. The combination of discriminatory attitudes and practices with inadequate policies and programs forced Somalis to "assimilate into poverty" (Portes and Zhou, 1993). This began a cycle of poverty that

continues today. The lack of opportunity for racialized youth contributes to a high incidence of gang membership and gun violence (McMurthy & Curling, 2008), with devastating consequences. The stereotype of the refugee as a security threat, welfare burden, or victim does not only persist in Canada today, but has intensified in the wake of 9/11 (Canadian Council for Refugees, n.d.). In the West, a culture of fear has led to increased scrutiny of Arab Muslims, or those perceived to be. In the Western collective conscious, young Arab men are seen as potential terrorists (Amin-Khan, 2015) and Arab girls and women are vulnerable (Zayzafoon, 2005), victims not only to the war but to their brothers, fathers, and husbands.

As the focus used to be on asylum-seekers in Canada, the Syrian refugee crisis is arguably the most enthusiastic movement for refugee resettlement in Canadian history. Many targeted programs and initiatives have been created to support the arrival of Syrian newcomers. This resettlement, however, has been caught up in a seemingly conflicting discourse of liberal humanitarianism and xenophobia. Within each body of discourse on humanitarian or xenophobic views, a pattern of reductionism and essentialism emerges and the refugee is reduced and essentialized as either a victim or threat. Characterizing much of humanitarian discourse, essentialism is the idea that specific groups of people have intrinsic qualities or a defining “essence”. This is seen in the way humanitarian agencies represent refugees, particularly women, youth, and children, as incapable (Rajaram, 2002) and sometimes reduce people to mute bodies or statistics. This essentialization is not unique to the Syrian crisis, but has been recurrent throughout history. Those fleeing persecution become a homogenous group to the country of settlement (Malkki, 2007, 337; Loughry, 2009, 166), their experiences conceived in universal terms (Zembylas, 2010, 38). This binary bears on more than just how refugees are spoken about; it is a tension especially felt by refugee youth. This uncertain oscillation between victim and threat is what some scholars have argued results in a superficial altruism in Canada: resettlement policies that are humanitarian by appearance but which do not serve those they are intended to aid (Shakya et al., 2010). This is evident in the education system, which is prone to binary categorizations itself in that it decides who is “at-risk” and who constitutes “success,” a dualism complicit with essentialized notions of refugees that disallows refugee youth a spectrum of being and strips them of agency. As the primary site of socialization for refugee youth (McBrien, 2005; Stewart, 2012; Kanu, 2008), schools are critical in meeting their needs. Yet, based on recent research into the educational needs and barriers of refugees from war-torn countries in urban

Canadian schools (Stewart, 2012; Shakya et al, 2010; Kanu, 2008; Phan, 2003), the evidence suggests Canadian schools are not meeting these needs.

Research into the needs of refugee youth in Canada indicates a gap between policy and lived experiences of refugee youth from war-affected countries, which reflects the divide between politics and ethics of humanitarianism in Canada. Policies are humanitarian on the surface but are not ethically grounded (Shakya et al., 2010). The disconnect between policy and practice is seen in Canada's policy of sending government-sponsored refugees to communities it chooses rather than allowing refugees to choose and in the minimal support it gives to refugees once in Canada. Such depoliticized humanitarianism treats refugees as passive victims deserving only of the bare essentials. With specialized needs, refugees enter a system that is already marred by structural inequalities. The intersection of these needs with such a system increases the likelihood that newcomers of low socio-economic status, which so often intersects with factors such as race, gender, sexuality, ability, etc., will fall into a cycle of poverty. Often, such barriers cannot be overcome by refugees themselves.

In 2016, the City of Toronto made "exploring strategies to address emerging issues including identifying and addressing gaps in supports for Syrian youth" (City of Toronto, 2016, 1) as one of its priorities for its Syrian Refugee Resettlement Program. This priority is critical as most refugee support programs are not informed by the input of refugees themselves (Kanu, 2008, 916). On a macro scale, as youth are often not part of decision-making processes, school and community programs and services do not reflect their realities nor sufficiently address their needs (Lind, 2008). The tendency for programs and services that are not designed with youths' real desires and current needs highlights a gap between policy and practice that can be an opportunity for better support for Syrian refugee youth adjusting to life in Toronto. As Toronto schools and community-based organizations (CBOs) are responding to the settlement, research is needed to identify necessary supports for Syrian refugee youth as well as targeted capacity building efforts. These efforts must be guided by the priorities of Syrian newcomer youth themselves.

1.2 Defining “refugee”

Canada uses the internationally recognized definition of the refugee from the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, established by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). According to UNCHR, a refugee is someone 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 nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. In the case of a person who has more than one nationality, the term “the country of his nationality” shall mean each of the countries of which he is a national, and a person shall not be deemed to be lacking the protection of the country of his nationality if, without any valid reason based on well-founded fear, he has not availed himself of the protection of one of the countries of which he is a national.” (UN General Assembly, 1951, 153-154).

Some development scholars (Gunning, 1989; Levinson, 2010) have found this definition limiting, as it excludes involuntarily displaced persons, stateless persons, and economic migrants, who are displaced from and flee their homes for the same reasons. The definition impacts how and for whom action is taken (Levinson, 2010), what rights are given and to whom. Scholars such as Levinson (2010) thus propose broadening the definition.

I am interested in the continuum of forced migration and view the notion of the “refugee” from a sociological rather than legal perspective. The sociological perspective disregards conventions to put “emphasis on some degree of force in the causes of migration (Brun, 2001, 16). I take up the proposal of these scholars to expand how “refugee” is defined for *Making Familiar*, and consider displaced persons, stateless persons, and economic migrants forced to flee and unable to return to Syria, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group or political opinion,” (UN General Assembly, 1951, 153) as defacto refugees. People forced to flee and/or who are unable to return are compelled by the same reasons and share in the refugee experience. These experiences have similarities but can also be vastly different. A broadened definition allows for a deeper

understanding of forced migration to develop, legitimizing the experiences of those with other status' as refugee experiences.

Upon arrival into Canada, those who entered through refugee status gain the status of permanent residents. Given this and the stigma of refugee as a term in Canadian society and within Arab communities, I refer to youth in this study as newcomers rather than refugees. This is to promote a welcoming discourse for Syrian as well as all other newcomers in Canada regardless of their prior status. Changing the way refugees are spoken about moves away from essentialist assumptions of refugees. This is further spoken about in the section on my theoretical framework.

2.0 Literature review and theoretical framework

The following literature review looks at systemic barriers refugee youth face within education in Canada, demonstrating the context Syrian refugee youth have entered. Much of this scholarship both holds a deficit-focused view of and is conducted on refugee/newcomer youth, indicating the need for future research to have a greater focus on youths' strengths and for researcher-participant collaboration. However recent community-based participatory research with refugee youth in Toronto (Guruge et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2014; Shakya et al., 2010) has begun to emphasize youth voice and roles in the research process.

2.1 Literature on immigrant/refugee youth

Binary structures are a ubiquitous element of identity claim creation in educational research and Western discourse (Clarke/Keefe, 2010, 20) in which one construct is privileged over the other (Ramazanglu & Holland, 2002). In educational research, students are characterized into binaries. Adversity is strongly associated with being "at-risk", success with academic and social aptitude (Clarke/Keefe, 2010, 20). These are conceptualized as diametrically opposed. This is seen in student development theory in general, but this same binary thinking is seen in the literature on immigrant and refugee youth.

There is a large body of work on immigrant youth and a small but growing amount on refugee youth (Guruge et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2014; Stewart, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; Kumsa, 2006; McBrien, 2005; Phan, 2003; Kilbride & Anisef, 2001). With the exception of some studies (Guruge et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2014; Shakya et al., 2010; Kumsa, 2006), the existing literature is useful in understanding trends in acculturation and in highlighting the needs of refugee youth, but at times falls into the reductive categorizations of these youth that stigmatizes them. This tendency is not always explicit nor found consistently through each source, but surfaces in the framing of certain issues and the shoring up of victim/threat binaries. This is further evidenced by the tendency to lump immigrant children with refugee children as a unified group in research (see Kilbride & Anisef, 2001), a tendency that ignores the special needs of refugees. Much of the literature also does not emphasize "the gifts...youth bring to their new country" (Kumsa, 2006, 2333).

This literature on refugees frequently reflects liberal narratives of good citizens. Racialized bodies are associated with crime and labeled “at-risk” for drug and alcohol addiction, gang activity, and “delinquency”; viewed as a “risk to society” (see Barata, 2000: 5 as cited in Kilbride & Anisef, 2001: 21). Such narratives imposed on people of colour hide systemic issues that push them down such paths. These labels are stigmatizing and reinforce stereotypes without addressing why racialized people are overrepresented in the prison system, why they are profiled more by police, why gang activity is more common among certain ethnic groups, why People of Colour face discriminatory treatment when looking for jobs or dining at a restaurant, etc. Making the assumption that a Person of Colour is predisposed to criminal activity or is at-risk of getting into trouble automatically casts People of Colour as different from the white majority in Canada, and does not afford the same privilege the majority enjoys.

To return back to the example of Somali-Canadians, why is there such high incidence of gun violence among young, second-generation Somali men? Are Somali men inherently predisposed to violence because of their culture and ethnicity? It is a complex issue that stems in part from a significant lack of economic opportunity, poverty, social isolation, community design, and lack of access to capacity-building programs targeted for Somali youth, all which intersect heavily with discrimination (Martin et al., 2010; McMurthy & Curling, 2008). Young Somali men are represented in the media as violent and delinquent, messages that are reinforced in their private lives, in professional settings, when trying to access services, etc. What do you do if you cannot find a job and do not feel you belong? Turning to crime are coping/survival strategies, yet this is not acknowledged and sometimes even demonized in the literature. The most basic human instinct is to survive, so we all find ways to do so in the circumstances we are in.

As the school is such a critical site for growth and learning for newcomer youth, much of the literature focuses on retention of refugee youth in school. Marginalized immigrant youth are at two to three times of higher risk of dropping out of school than their non-immigrant peers (Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization, 2016). According to researchers, quitting school is not an individual act that occurs in a vacuum, but is a consequence of a long and slow build-up of different but connected issues in various ecological spheres (Anisef, 1998) of which discrimination is most common. Perceived discrimination is the largest factor negatively affecting adaptation for immigrant/refugee youth (McBrien, 2005; Berry et al, 2006, 327).

Structural and attitudinal racism are consistently identified in the literature as major barriers to adaptation for immigrant and refugee youth (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015, Welch-Mitchell & Wheeler, 2015; Stewart, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; Berry et al, 2006; Kumsa, 2006; McBrien, 2005; Phan, 2003; Kilbride & Anisef, 2001). In her literature review of the educational needs and barriers of refugee students in the United States, McBrien (2005) notes that if a student fails in a school where there is a “welcoming discourse” present but where exclusionary practices are also enacted, that failure will be perceived as an individual, not a structural, deficit (McBrien, 2005: 349-350). As McBrien mentions, such exclusionary practices include “lack of late transportation that would allow immigrant and refugee children to participate in after-school activities, school assemblies dominated by White students, segregated lunchroom practices facilitated by lunchroom monitors, and disciplinary practices guided by cultural stereotypes” (McBrien, 2005: 349). There can be a façade of inclusion at a school but there may be subtle ways in how it operates that excludes refugees. To overcome discrimination, refugee youth need support both personally and at the structural level (McBrien, 2005, 355).

The average Syrian refugee child has experienced significant disruption to his/her education (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). This means that in addition to the expected cultural barriers and difficulties of immigrant youth, these children will be at a further disadvantage and require additional support. More significantly, these children are coming into Canada with greater likelihood for requiring psychological services (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015; Welch-Mitchell & Wheeler, 2015). Additional stressors in settling in Canada could lead to greater psychological harm. A study in Denmark on the well-being of children found that repetitive stressors, regardless of the intensity of the initial traumatic event, increased the likelihood of developing PTSD than a single event (Montgomery, 2011).

In light of this, Syrian refugee youth are entering an education system in Canada that some scholars have argued is not meeting the social and psychological needs of refugee students (Stewart, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; Phan, 2003). These scholars find that refugees face numerous systemic barriers to education and participation in Canadian society as equals: information, financial, and language barriers; non-recognition of credentials from developing countries; discrimination; and lack of access to refugee-specific services (UNHCR, 2013). Pre-migration factors of youth wellbeing, such as physical and mental health, education levels,

knowledge of the official language, and fractured family relationships, intersect with post migration systemic barriers to affect youth adaptation, but context of reception is more of an important determinant (Shakya et al., 2014).

Refugees who have settled in Canada since the 1990s have mostly come from Africa and the Middle East. These groups have faced greater difficulty in adapting compared to prior refugee groups, in part due to greater cultural, ethnic, and religious differences (Kanu, 2008), and so require greater support to adapt.

2.11 Intersecting factors affecting refugee youth adaptation in Canada

The literature on refugee youth asserts resiliency as a key determinant in adapting in post-migration contexts (Shakya et al., 2014; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; Phan, 2003). Resiliency is a “necessarily and appropriately broad” term that describes resistance to risk (Rutter, 1999, 120). The most recent wave of resiliency literature understands resilience as transformative, and not a personality trait (Schoon, 2012). Michael Ungar, a well-known researcher of resiliency, argues for an understanding of resilience that is culturally embedded, and defines it as follows:

“In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways.” (Ungar, 2008, 225)

This definition moves away from a static understanding of resilience, which places the focus all on the individual, to recognize structural level factors in society in affecting resilience. It also acknowledges that different groups of people may respond to risk differently. An individual’s patterns of interpersonal relationships is likely a strong factor in developing resiliency, but so are personal and social resources (Kanu, 2008). Having the capacity to make major life decisions for oneself, particularly during times of significant transition like adolescence, can support the development of resiliency in individuals (Schoon, 2012; Rutter, 1999). Referred to as “turning points” in resiliency literature (Schoon, 2012; Rutter, 1999), events that present opportunities for people to take on new social roles in new contexts can prompt a point of significant

developmental change. While they can occur at any stage of life, turning points usually take place during adolescence or young adulthood. For refugee youth coming into Canada, this major period of change, of transitioning into adulthood and settling in a new context, can serve as a turning point.

In a study by Sampson & Gifford (2009) that looked at the relationship between place-making, well-being, and settlement for one hundred and twenty newly settled youth in Melbourne, Australia, it was found that youth sought out places that they felt were healing. The study asked youth to draw maps of their neighbourhood and identify places they like and do not like, places that youth found to be safe and unsafe, and to photograph places in their neighbourhood. The authors write that youth create therapeutic landscapes, “physical and built environments, social conditions and human perception combine to produce an atmosphere which is conducive to healing (Gesler, 1999, 96), in order to adapt. Participants in their study formed meaningful connections to “places of opportunity, places of restoration, places of sociality and places of safety” (Sampson & Gifford, 2009, 129). The authors conclude that youth attributed healing characteristics to these places, suggesting that place is important to making newly settled youth feel at home in the resettlement context.

Studies have found that high educational and career aspirations can serve as proactive responses to prior and current hardship (Davy et al., 2014; Shakya et al., 2010; Phan, 2003).

A study by Shakya et al. (2010) looking into the educational goals of Afghan, Karen, and Sudanese refugee youth in Toronto found that youth held high education aspirations in an effort to overcome pre-migration disruptions. The researchers used a community-based approach to researching with eight youth, who received three months of training and had active roles in the research by writing, collecting data, and analyzing data. The youth in this project emphasized how education had become a greater priority upon settling in Canada, which they contrasted against the lack of opportunity and lack of access to education in pre-migration contexts. As participants regarded education in Canada to be of high quality, some had high expectations of well-paying jobs afterward.

In Phan’s (2003) study of academic resiliency in Vietnamese-Canadian refugee youth in Vancouver, it was also found that youth used high education and career aspirations to overcome

poverty and racism. Phan (2003) interviewed eleven Vietnamese refugee youth between the ages 17 and 18, six girls and 5 boys, over two and a half years. Some of the participants had arrived in Canada when they were infants, some before their tenth birthday, with the others having arrived between the ages of 13 to 15 years old. The youth lived in low income neighbourhoods in Vancouver and lacked access to resources, but had parents that prioritized education. For these youth, school was seen as a way to achieve their goals. Phan's participants faced racism from teachers who gave preferential treatment to white students. However the youth used it to motivate them to work harder in school to reach their career aspirations, believing that, "if I'm good, then they will hire me" (Phan, 2003, 263). Phan writes that the girls in their study volunteer in the Vietnamese community, and that they are optimistic in the belief that hard work will allow them to succeed.

In a participatory arts-based study in Toronto done in collaboration between Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services, Ryerson University, and York University (Guruge et al. 2015; Shakya et al., 2014), the same team of scholars and practitioners involved in the Shakya et al. (2010) study cited earlier, again worked with youth from Sudanese, Karen, and Afghan communities in Toronto to learn about the shift in youths' roles and responsibilities upon setting in Canada. The team asked the youth to draw about their responsibilities pre and post-migration, writing that supplementing focus group discussion of the project topics with youths' drawings enhanced their understanding of youths' roles. They found that participant responsibilities had both changed and increased upon settling in Canada. Many continued responsibilities they held in pre-migration contexts, such as household duties, but in Canada have more homework and volunteer as well. Youth navigate information and services for their families, contribute income through paid work, and take on mentoring roles as well as provide emotional support for family members. Youth also interpret and translate for their parents, sometimes accompanying parents to appointments to do so, as older adults learn English at a slower pace. In post migration contexts, newcomer youths' rapid learning of the host country language contributes both to an increased workload and to a change in family dynamics (Guruge et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2014; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; Zhou, 2001). In their home countries, youths' parents, or more often their fathers, were the breadwinners of the family. Upon settling in Canada, the families go on social assistance, and due to a lack of English language skills, cannot find employment. Suddenly they must depend on their children to take care of

daily errands and help with making sense of bills. This does not only add to youths' workloads but can unsettle the power balance in families. The authors term these youth as "resettlement champions" for their families.

To contextualize this for my study, in a 2007 Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) report on the Privately-Sponsored Refugee (PSR) program, it was found that it takes Government-Assistant Refugees (GARs) substantially longer to find employment than PSRs (IRCC, 2007). PSRs generally have higher levels of English language proficiency than GARs and receive individualized support from their sponsor groups, which could help in finding employment (Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). In order to find employment, knowledge of English is required unless work can be found in the informal economy. Lack of English language skills is compounded by the long wait times for ESL classes.

Navigating the Canadian education system is an unfamiliar endeavour for refugee students. Given this, these youth encounter many information barriers such as absent guidance on post-secondary pathways or who to even approach to ask for guidance (Shakya et al., 2010, 71). In general, many newcomer youth do not know what services are available at their school, and so do not take advantage of them (Stewart, 2012, 183; Roderick et al., 2006: 37).

Most of the reviewed studies on education and refugees found refugee youth to be up against financial barriers (Shakya et al. 2014; Stewart, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2005, Kilbride & Anisef, 2001). Studies from Winnipeg found a correlation between academic difficulty for refugee students and maintaining paid work (Stewart, 2012; Kanu, 2008). In addition to not knowing what paths to take in high schools in order to qualify for post-secondary education, high cost of education was reported as a major barrier to attending college or university (Shakya et al., 2010, 72).

Limited knowledge of English prevents refugee youth from socializing with English-speaking peers (Stewart, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2005, Kilbride & Anisef, 2001). However, separate English language instruction for newcomer students has been found to negatively impact school culture (Stewart, 2012, 179). In a literature review of educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States, McBrien (2005) found rapid English acquisition typical in common English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to negatively

impact adaptation. Rapid acculturation runs the risk of cutting the grieving process short for children, “disrupt(ing) a person’s concept of self” (McBrien, 2005, 340). Furthermore, the literature on minority immigrant youth education concedes that ESL programs generally do not have the capacity to aid in alleviating alienation for these students (Kilbride & Anisef, 2001, 22).

Finally, discrimination is addressed in all literature on refugee youth. In Shakya et al.’s (2010) study, refugee youth reported placement in grades below their capabilities and were often put in inaccurate academic streams (Shakya et al., 2010, 73). The youth participating in this study told how they had lost years due to inaccurate academic placement (Shakya et al., 2010, 71).

In her study of refugee teens in inner-city Winnipeg high schools, Kanu (2008) found that many teachers were not adjusting their curricula, assessment, and interaction when their classrooms became increasingly diverse (Kanu, 2008, 926). Newcomers may not be familiar with Western methods of assessment or interaction, and this can result in the teacher perceiving the student to be below their real capability or label him/her “at-risk”. Kanu (2008) found that adaptation for African refugee youth in Winnipeg was negatively affected by poor reception of host communities, changing family dynamics, and difficulties at school. The study had carried out one-on-one interviews, focus groups, as well as participant observation in the classrooms of forty diverse African refugee youth in inner city schools in Winnipeg, as well as two principals, eight teachers, four parents, and four community leaders.

In Stewart’s (2012) study of refugee youth in Winnipeg schools, conflicts between ethnic groups increased when ethnically diverse students were socially excluded from dominant groups (Stewart, 2012, 186). Stewart writes that conflicts between the refugees and Indigenous youth were playing out over resources in low income communities. In this study, it was also found that the school and community were working separately from each other, to the detriment of refugee students. A lack of coordinated systems is reported in other studies as well (Roderick et al., 2006: iv). To mitigate isolation for refugee youth, all ecological spheres must work together.

Indicators for successful refugee resettlement should thus not focus on the amount of financial assistance given to refugees, but rather on the extent to which policies are grounded in social justice and equity (Shakya et al., 2010, 74). In the settlement sector, a focus on the numbers gives a false representation of the issue at hand. Allocating funds for a particular purpose does

not mean a problem is justly worked on. Focusing on financial indicators dehumanizes resettlement efforts and does not show how newcomers are adapting. For newcomer youth programming, these indicators do not show if their needs are being met or if conditions for youth to thrive are put in place. The tendency to focus on monitoring measures also negatively affects the quality of social services designed for newcomers. It diverts the time, effort, and capacities of the development sector from serving those who use its services to meeting quotas, lessening the quality of support. Shifting the focus onto the lives of the people programs and policies affect would humanize the settlement sector and better show how people are doing.

Beyond the issues that refugees, and refugee youth in particular, face, this study focuses on the importance of agency and voice. Drawing on Sen's human capability model, this study situates the experiences and issues of refugee youth within a broader body of international development and social science scholarship. In so doing, this study seeks to expose the essentialist language and to offer an alternative to the prevailing, simplistic and reductionist discourse of the refugee as a victim.

2.2 Research questions

This study seeks to answer the question: When Syrian refugee youth are given the space to share their experiences of adaptation in Toronto, Canada, what priorities are identified? The findings from this study will answer the broader scholarly question: What is the significance of including youth perspectives in documenting experiences of refugees as a strategy that puts their voices and agency at the centre of the policy and programming process?

2.3 Capabilities Approach & concept of reterritorialization

Drawing on critical feminist perspectives, spatial perspectives in refugee studies as well as children and youth geographies, and the Capabilities Approach (CA) for my theoretical framework, my project considers Syrian newcomer youth as active agents with the capacity to make decisions and identify priorities for their well-being.

Traditionally, children have been regarded as dependent on their caregivers. In migration literature, children and youth are often treated as luggage, written about in relation to the thoughts of adults (Dobson, 2009). Paternalistic beliefs and attitudes towards children, "as

immature learners have led to a failure to value or witness the behaviours they exhibit that testify to their active participation in shaping their own and others lives around them” (Lansdown, 2005, 12). Within the past few decades however, mainstream culture has begun emphasizing children’s agency (James et al., 1998; Hallett and Prout, 2003 as cited in Comim et al., 2011) leading to the promotion of children and youth’s active participation and self-expression (Comim et al., 2011, 11). This shift reconceptualised children from passive dependents into social actors, a perception supported by research (Punch, 2000) that demonstrates children play an active role in their families and communities.

The literature on spatial perspectives within refugee studies as well as children and youths’ geographies can help to understand the processes through which refugee youth form connections to place. Those forced to move from their homes, and who are fortunate enough to permanently settle elsewhere, are in an in-between space of grieving the loss of their homes and needing to establish roots in a new place (Sampson & Gifford, 2009). This makes place integral to the refugee experience and important when considering how to facilitate adaptation for newcomer youth.

Since the 1990s, there has been a theoretical shift away from essentialized notions of identity and place to deterritorialized understandings that allow for subjects to create connections to new places (Malkki, 1992). Breaking away from essentialist ideas of identity being naturally tied to place works against the idea that those forced to flee their home countries only belong to that country. In a static and essentialist understanding of identity and place, people lose their identity and agency when they become refugees and become pathologized. The essentialization of refugees in Western culture and humanitarian discourse stems in part from an understanding that groups of people have innate qualities that are fixed in specific locations (Massey, 1994). In an understanding of space that does not fasten identity to place, people’s identities are not expunged when forced to migrate. As Sampson & Gifford (2009) state, this conceptual redefinition allows refugees to escape eternal classification as refugees in their places of resettlement, a conceptualization that always would see them as out of place, opening up the possibility of belonging in a new place for newcomers.

Those undergoing forced migration are caught up in a contradictory experience of being physically present in one location, while continuing to feel belonging to where they have been

forced to flee (Olwig, 1997). In such experiences, refugees may articulate essentialist expressions of their displacement. In guarding against essentialized notions, it is important not to disregard these expressions (Brun, 2001). For instance, in Luisa Veronis' (2007) work with Latin American immigrant communities in Toronto on belonging, she found that these communities used strategic essentialism to territorially "construct local collective identities and lay claims to belonging" through the creation of a Latin American community centre and the formation of a Latin American neighbourhood (Veronis, 2007, 470). The communities she worked with essentialized their identities purposefully to make themselves seen and heard, situating their communities within specific places. The spatial strategies that refugees create to adapt in contradictory experiences of forced migration in resettlement contexts are referred to as "reterritorialization" (Brun, 2001). These strategies must "de-naturalize the links between people, places and identities...to avoid looking at refugees and displaced people as torn loose from their culture, as being powerless and without identity" (Brun, 2001, 23) while at the same time allowing for strategic essentialization where and when people enact it. Reterritorialization, then, "involves the process of how displaced and local people expand their networks, make livelihoods and develop strategies to control their own lives" (Brun, 2001, 24).

I combine the theoretical understanding of youth as active agents in their own lives with an understanding of identity that is deterritorialized but which allows room for strategic essentialism to underpin my use of the Capabilities Approach in this study. Developed by economist and philosopher Amartya Sen in the 1980s, the Capabilities Approach is an evaluative framework from the field of human development that looks at what people are free to do. It claims that the freedom to achieve well-being must be understood in terms of people's opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value.

The basic premise of the Capabilities Approach involves the concepts of capabilities and functionings. Functionings are various "things a person may value doing or being" (Sen, 1999, 75), while capabilities are a person's opportunities to achieve functionings or "the substantive freedoms he or she enjoys to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value" (Sen, 1999, 87). The difference between the two lies in what a person has done or is doing, and the opportunities from which a person can choose. For example, selling narcotics is a functioning, while a corresponding capability could be being part of a gang. For racialized youth, choices for safe and

legal work are constrained by entrenched systems of discrimination. Their choice to participate in gang-related activities is less a choice than a method of survival.

In the Capabilities Approach, Sen considers development as the “expansion of capabilities” (Sen, 1999), in which social arrangements aim to expand people’s positive freedoms. The Capabilities Approach differs from other approaches that only consider material assets a person possesses or subjective measures of well-being. Wealth is not valuable in and of itself, its value lies in enabling people to expand their opportunities but it is only one element in considering freedoms. Sen is critical of utilitarian frameworks as people often show preferences that have adjusted to unjust conditions (Sen, 1990). As Nussbaum points out, theorizing social justice entails making “claims about fundamental entitlements that are to some extent independent of the preferences that people happen” to have (Nussbaum, 2003, 33-34). In evaluating specific contexts, the framework can show how people may be deprived of basic capabilities.

A person’s ability to convert resources into capabilities and functionings is dependent on internal as well as societal/environmental factors. Internal factors include age, physical conditions, gender, skills, talents, intelligence, etc. Societal factors include public policies, institutions, legal rules, traditions, power relations, and public goods, while environmental factors include the natural environment, public infrastructure, and climate. Personal attributes are but one aspect that affect capabilities. Societal and environmental factors significantly shape opportunities for people. For instance, children’s capabilities are shaped by the attitudes and capabilities of caregivers. If a child has educated parents that prioritize education, his/her opportunities for education will increase. A child whose parents did not have the opportunity to go to school, or who do not see the value in education, will see her opportunities for education significantly decrease.

Capabilities intersect and affect one another. New capabilities may not evolve or existing capabilities may be constrained if a functioning or capability is missing (Ballet et al., 2011). For instance, if a youth or child is experiencing recurrent discrimination at school, this affects the quality of their education, their ability to form friendships at school, and negatively impacts their mental and sometimes physical health.

Capabilities will have a different degree of relevance to a child or youth rather than an adult and should be seen within a dynamic framework (Jerome Ballet et al., 2011). This perspective sees capabilities as changing over time to become qualitatively different. As childhood and youth are times of great developmental change, the freedoms children and youth value will change as they grow older. It is therefore important to seek the perspectives of children and youth on what capabilities they value, rather than imposing or assuming what is important.

While Martha Nussbaum (2003) has put forward a partial theory of social justice through her contributions to the Capabilities Approach, I follow Sen's original conceptualization (1999) for this study even though it is more "attuned to quantitative empirical applications and measurement" (Robeyns 2005, p. 104), which my project is not. I do so because Sen insists on the development of capabilities from context, while Nussbaum argues for a definite list of central capabilities (2003), an insistence criticized by other scholars as utopian and susceptible to Eurocentric universalism (Charusheela, 2009). Sen's conceptualization is therefore more appropriate within a development context. Nussbaum also believes in a "benevolent government" (Robeyns, 2005, 25) that must expand people's capabilities. While governments are critical, they are not the only actors that need to be considered when looking at the freedoms people have.

Research needs to identify what youth value and the conditions that help them make decisions on what they value. In line with this view, my project sought to expand youth's capabilities and opportunities in what they are interested in, such as photography, self-expression, sharing their experiences, connecting with other youth, in addition to learning about their experiences of settling in Toronto. For reasons of legitimacy and agency, it is critical to involve the people affected in the selection of capabilities (Robeyns, 2003, 76). For these reasons, I did not have a prescriptive list of capabilities that I thought the youth should value. They were identified by the youth with whom I was working with for the research. There are several capabilities that were explicitly identified as priorities by youth in their photos, while the others were identified out of thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts, notes taken during the transcript consultations, and field notes taken during the research activities with the youth. This framework is anti-essentialist as I am asking youth to tell me who they are, rather than make assumptions about their identities and experiences. While some of the capabilities I identify align with those of

other CA scholars like Robeyns (2003) as these are core capabilities that are likely to appear in any context, my list of capabilities is contextualized for this study only. I do not include capabilities that would have been ideal to have but for which there is no data I also label and define the capabilities to align with the data.

The use of the Capabilities Approach in this study allows us to see how Syrian newcomer youth are doing in Toronto, taking into consideration, “both the fulfillment of rights as well as other non-right considerations that together form social goals (Ballet et al., 2011, 38). By using the framework, I am able to identify what is important to the youth without imposing my assumptions of what they may value. The concept of “reterritorialization” is used to look at how youth enact these capabilities in relation to place.

3.0 Methodology

This chapter details the methodology and methods used for the project. I used a youth participatory action research (YPAR) methodology that incorporated arts-based methods, focus group discussion (FGD), participant observation, as well as transcript consultations. I introduce the Arab Community Centre of Toronto (ACCT) as my collaborator and Charles Street Video (CSV) as my arts partner. I give an overview of the project design, give a description of how I carried out a number of research processes, state and address the limitations of this study, address risk and ethical considerations, present the timeline of the project, as well as give a description of the end of project exhibition.

3.1 Rationale for youth participatory action research

As *Making Familiar* worked with, rather than conducted research on, Syrian newcomer youth, I used a youth participatory action research (YPAR) methodology within an intersectional feminist framework for the research. Incorporating intersectionality into analysis attends to how multiple factors affect one another to produce people's circumstances. In this study, it shows how cultural expectations of gender affect how youth are adapting to life in Toronto.

Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach to research that seeks to understand social issues through community participation and collaboration with a focus on action. Participants are seen as possessing unique knowledge that comes from their lived experience that others outside the group cannot know. PAR emphasizes action and collaboration in researching issues, and strives for the co-production of knowledge between researcher and community. Thus, rather than viewing the participant as a subject to be studied as in positivist research, the approach treats the participant as co-researcher and both participant and researcher as co-learners (Cammarota & Fine, 2008), striving for greater equity. In PAR, participants are given greater autonomy than in conventional research in shaping and directing the research. The methods used within a PAR project must be appropriately contextualized and relevant to participants. Therefore there is no blueprint for PAR projects, as each project is tailored to its research context and target demographic.

PAR emerged from the development field but is now widely used across disciplines with marginalized and oppressed groups to “develop practical knowledge for social change through

collaborative partnerships” (Kim, 2016, 39). It is particularly popular in education. Facilitating unlearning (Park & Williams, 1999), new learning (Prins, 2010; Lind, 2008), critical consciousness (Sarri & Sarri, 1992), and mobilizing people for action, participatory research is a “self-conscious and deliberate activity to generate knowledge” (Park & Williams, 1999, 92). Epistemologically, it produces reflective, relational, and representational knowledge which together serve as a useful conceptual framework for evaluating the success of a community project (Park & Williams, 1999, 93).

As my project is committed to feminist praxis, my approach to the research was reflexive of power relations and the exercise of power in the research (Ramazanglu & Holland, 2002, 118). I am a white, middle-class, Canadian female graduate student born to immigrant parents. I cannot rid myself of these markers but by being reflexive of how they affected my perceptions of participants, my research worked towards greater transparency and accountability to the youth with whom I worked. I also recognized my centrality as a researcher (Gillies & Alldred, 2002). My commitment to harnessing a feminist lens required the interrogation of personal biases, clarification of the project’s main intent, and consideration of its afterlife (Gillies & Alldred, 2002, 42). Fundamental to the research was my commitment to the lives of the youth I worked with (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005, 90).

PAR was advantageous for *Making Familiar* for many reasons. First, it is useful in connecting needs assessments with community participation (Wang & Burris, 1997, 372). It recognizes that members of certain communities have insights outsiders do not. It recognizes participants, and in the context of this project Syrian newcomer youth, as knowledge producers and agents of change (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). PAR furthermore can avoid qualitative gaps that conventional methods of data collection cannot. It gives nuance to data, triggering memory (Hurworth, 2003, 3) as it is a research process that encourages participants to reflect on their experiences to a greater extent than positivist research. It can reduce researcher bias more effectively than positivist paradigms (Cammarota & Fine, 2008), and it can strive to mitigate factors that have historically led to feelings of disempowerment.

For my project, participants shaped the research process according to their priorities. Here, my goal was to facilitate greater ownership of the project for participants. My project worked towards the greatest equity possible within the project’s confines and desires of the participants,

so an ideal of complete equity was not realistic or attainable. For example, they were not part of the analysis or writing of the thesis nor did they transcribe the focus group recordings. Their interest in the project was in taking photographs, exploring downtown Toronto, in being part of an exhibition, etc. I did seek their opinions of where we should go sightseeing after research activities were done however. Therefore, “encouraging participation but not forcing it” (van der Meulen, 2011, 1298) was more fruitful.

My research borrowed from the Interactive Contextual Model of Community-University Collaborations developed by Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2005), which considers how context impacts the collaborative relationship and thus aligns with the PAR philosophy to guide the research process. Contextual factors require the researcher to be adaptive and responsive to the community’s needs and realities. This model comprises three stages of building and maintaining partnerships, which are “the gaining entry into the community phase, the developing and sustaining the collaboration phase, and the recognizing outcomes and benefits phase” (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005, 85). The model identifies open communication, respect and celebration of diversity, a culture of learning, respect for the culture of the setting, the development of an action agenda, as well as trust and mutual respect as the core elements in successful partnerships. These elements are context-specific and “reciprocally interrelated and interactive” as each impacts the others (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2005, 86).

3.2 Project structure

Making Familiar was designed so that youth took photographs over two weeks of what is important to them and their feelings of belonging in spaces they encounter in their daily lives. They were given point and shoot cameras to take home for this assignment. Once a week, we would meet for a workshop and then a focus group discussion (FGD) about the photos they had taken that week. After research activities for each day were completed, in the mid or late afternoon, we would go sightseeing in downtown Toronto. At the end of the project, an exhibition of the youths’ photographs was held for the public.

The data collection process of *Making Familiar* took place over 2 months, July to August. The photography and focus group aspect took place over two weeks, from July 14 - July 28, 2017. I met with youth three times over these two weeks, on every Friday where a workshop and/or

FGD would take place. Each research day, we had lunch catered by the ACCT New Canadians Kitchen. The food was Middle Eastern cuisine and familiar to the youth.

There were two FGDs held, one at the end of the first week of the research and one at the end of the second week. They took on the loose structure of an art critique where the youth chose several of their favourite photographs from the past week and then we went around giving our thoughts and feelings about them. Photos were either shown on a laptop, or on a monitor on the opposing wall from the table we sat at. After some discussion about each image, the youth were invited to speak about what they had been trying to achieve in the photo. I first asked each youth what they felt when looking at a photograph. This was to gain an understanding of their initial reaction to an image without thinking too much. I emphasized that there was no right or wrong answer. After I asked what they thought, the photographer was trying to get us as viewers to feel, and what they were trying to represent. This process developed organically. The youth had no prior experience critiquing images, and I wanted to create an unthreatening environment for discussion. The photos were meant to prompt discussion of their experiences of adapting to life in Toronto.

There were no restrictions for what youth could photograph but I asked that they not photograph people. The focus was to be things and spaces in their everyday lives. If there happened to be people in the background of photos in public spaces, with their faces averted, this was okay.

Transcript consultations were held with youth near the time of the exhibition. I met one of the participants in the Etobicoke office, while the three others were consulted at the Scarborough office.

3.3 Collaborating organizations

I collaborated with the ACCT and partnered with CSV for *Making Familiar*, two Toronto organizations that added significant value to the project.

3.3.1 The Arab Community Centre of Toronto (ACCT)

The ACCT is a non-profit, non-political, and non-religious community and settlement organization serving the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) since 1973. The organization's main office is located in Etobicoke at a major bus stop at Burnhamthorpe and the West Mall. The

organization opened a second office in Scarborough in October 2016, and also operates a satellite office in Etobicoke that provides services in Ukrainian and Lithuanian. The ACCT's main clients are newcomers of Arab origin, however their services are open to all newcomers and they often see clients from a variety of backgrounds.

The ACCT provides settlement support services for newcomers such as assistance with applying for social services, assistance with specialized settlement issues, and information sessions and orientations on a variety of topics like family reunification and rights and responsibilities of newcomers to Canada. They also offer individual counselling, operate programs for children, youth, women, and seniors, as well as many special projects such as the ACCT New Canadians Kitchen. These services may be accessed through 14 languages: English, Arabic, French, Dutch, Punjabi, Ukrainian, Russian, Urdu, Hindi, Amharic, Armenian, Assyrian, Dari, and Lithuanian.

Frontline workers comprise the majority of staff. Many are general support counsellors who help clients with various settlement issues; but the organization also has counsellors specialized for youth and child clients, seniors, clients with disabilities¹, as well as community engagement and trauma. Culturally-sensitive psychological services are offered by a psychologist at the ACCT, who sees clients both in the office and at their homes. The organization also has many dedicated volunteers.

It is important to the ACCT to be representative of the people they serve, and so the majority of staff emigrated or came to Canada through refugee status from Arab countries. This enables the ACCT to better relate and understand their clients' concerns and experiences and helps to make clients comfortable in seeking services. While the ACCT has a website, is active on social media, and has many ongoing partnerships and collaborations, its main way of reaching clients is through word of mouth.

Since Canada's Syrian Refugee Resettlement Effort, the ACCT has provided services to almost half of Syrian newcomers settled in the GTA. As of January 2017, 6843 Syrian refugees settled in the GTA (Government of Canada, 2017) and the ACCT had seen 3283 of these newcomers (Arab Community Centre of Toronto, 2017). Two-thirds of their clients during this time were

¹ Since opening the Scarborough office, the ACCT has seen such a significant spike in clients with disabilities that they hired a Disabilities Support Counsellor.

Syrian newcomers. The ACCT was critical in providing information to organizations across Canada on best practices during the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Effort.

3.3.2 Charles Street Video (CSV)

CSV is an artist-run non-profit production organization in downtown Toronto that has been supporting media artists since 1981. Located on Richmond Street West between Spadina and Bathurst, the organization provides affordable access to media equipment and editing facilities, ongoing specialized workshops and sessions, as well as artist residencies. They contribute to the development of emerging artists through scholarships and foster the exhibition of media arts. CSV also offers special programs to support young emerging artists and grassroots groups in creating art. For these programs CSV combines their expertise in arts education with knowledge in media equipment to create innovative community-based programming. One of these programs is the Maker Space Project, a program that supports youth media projects. CSV has a history of supporting social justice arts projects. As my project aligned with the kind of work they support I was able to facilitate the project through this program.

3.4 Design overview

This section discusses my rationale for using focus groups as well as arts-based methods in the participatory research. It includes a description of the project design, the materials that comprised youths' research kits, the settings we shifted between for the project, how I collected data, as well as how I analyzed the data.

3.4.1 Methods

Making Familiar used a mixed methods approach, combining focus group discussions (FGDs) with arts-based inquiry, technical learning, and participant observation. Drawing on Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999; Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001), it used participatory photography as the main method of data collection, the photographs from which two focus group discussions centred on. Participatory photography is the use of cameras by members of particular groups to capture aspects of their lived experience (Byrne et al., 2016). Participants usually receive some training on camera use prior to taking photographs and photographs are discussed with the researcher. In my project, photo composition and editing was introduced to

the youth through technical workshops at CSV. Participant observation was ongoing during our weekly meetings as we shifted between research settings.

PAR often uses FGDs for needs assessment, program development, and program evaluation (Taylor et al., 2004, 77). For this project, FGDs were the optimal form for interviewing Syrian newcomer youth as their only experience with the one-on-one interview would likely have been during their claimant process. Group interviews allow the power dynamic between researcher and participants to be disbursed, forcing the researcher to relinquish greater control of the process (Shope, 2006, 168), and encourage youth to gain confidence from each other to contribute to discussion. They allow participants to consider different viewpoints, and help to guard the researcher against essentialized notions of those participating (Shope, 2006, 168).

While FGDs generate useful data, there are limits to what one can express in words regardless of what other barriers exist between the researcher and participants. During the focus group discussions, a Youth Settlement Counsellor was present to translate what youth said to me in Arabic. Despite this, language was a barrier as original meaning is lost in translation. However, even between two native speakers, explaining how you feel about complex processes of belonging is difficult. By incorporating arts-based methods of data collection, I was better able to capture how youth were feeling in Toronto.

In PAR, methods of the research must “match the agendas and preferred ways of knowing of the participants” (Taylor et al, 2004, 75). In YPAR, they must be conducive to youth interpretation (Kim, 2016, 50). For this reason, arts-based methods can be of interest to youth, and were in this project, and have been shown to be effective ways of gathering data in other YPAR projects (Conrad, 2015; Conrad, 2004; Veroff, 2002). They have also been shown to be effective ways of researching with newcomer youth to overcome language barriers (Boyden& Ennew, 1997). Arts-based methods can include digital storytelling, theatre, dance, painting, drawing, journaling, participatory photography, participatory video, Photovoice, etc. In any of these, the artwork itself is an emotive method (Foster, 2008, 361) of data gathering (Clover, 2011, 17; Veroff, 2002, 1279) as artistic processes can encourage emotional responses from participants. Working collectively with participants on a project is more desirable than individually as empowerment, trust, and collective identity develop better (Clover, 2011, 22). Collectively generating representational knowledge visually furthermore has the potential to challenge binary

assumptions of the refugee as victim/threat as diverse perspectives are included instead of just the researcher's. Feminist approaches to arts-based inquiry "seek to identify and disrupt inequitable knowledge/power patterns" (Clover, 2011, 14). Given this, my project borrows the philosophy behind Photovoice, a PAR method through which participants identify, represent, and enhance their community through a photographic process in which they are active at each stage (Wang, 1999). This philosophy holds that images teach and can influence policy, that the involved community must participate in creating and defining the images that shape policy, that those with decision-making power must be involved as an audience, and that individual and community action must be emphasized by the methods used (Wang, 1999, 186-187). The public's perception of Syrian newcomers is influenced by the media, and so using photographs to work against stereotypes can likewise be a powerful tool. Having Syrian newcomer youth take the photographs is critical as it is their perspectives that are being sought. Having decision-makers attend the public exhibit at the project's conclusion was needed so that the project had a social impact.

The particular method chosen for the project was determined from the ACCT's experience working with youth. Their youth clients had positive experiences exploring photography in the past, and so I designed a participatory photography project. Participatory photography is a PAR methodology that gives cameras to a group of people, and invites them to photograph an aspect of their realities to instigate social change. Youth self-selected to be in the study and so photography aligned with their interests.

For *Making Familiar*, each youth received a Sony point-and-shoot camera in order to take photographs of spaces in their everyday lives according to a weekly theme (see Table 1 Project Timeline). We met once a week for a total of three meetings to participate in technical workshops at CSV, the first focusing on camera theory and composition with the second teaching youth basic Photoshop editing skills they could apply to the photographs they took, and a focus group discussion on their photographs. During the last meeting youth edited photographs by themselves at CSV.

Facilitated by a CSV volunteer, the camera theory and composition workshop introduced terminology for parts of a camera, demonstrated how cameras worked, and taught various approaches to image composition to elicit feelings in the viewer and suggest the kind of narrative

being told. The facilitator used examples from well-known photographs and films to demonstrate these methods. At the end of the workshop, the youth experimented with taking photographs.

Facilitated by a CSV staff member, the Photoshop workshop demonstrated basic photograph editing skills on Photoshop such as adjusting levels, cropping for optimal effect, colour correction, how to correctly save images edited in the program (one as JPEG and one as PSD), etc.

The workshops introduced the basic skills to take and edit a photograph in order to tell a story to the youth. This helped me to find meaning more easily from their photographs as a researcher and the public as viewers, but also gave the youth skills they could continue to use outside of the project.

The photographs were data in and of themselves, discussed directly during the focus groups, but they also acted as prompts for further discussion of youth's experiences in Toronto during the FGDs. There were two goals during discussion of the photographs: to encourage critical thinking in youth about images and to learn about their experiences in Toronto. The former was to complement the technical skills they learned through the workshops so that participation in the project was of greater benefit to them.

The project method/methodology draws from Photovoice, but I label the project with the general term "participatory photography" rather than Photovoice because it purposefully abstains from core Photovoice principles. Photovoice requires participants to, "critically discuss the roots of the situation, and develop strategies for improving the situation" (Wang, 1999, 190). These conversations are political, and often involve unpacking how participants experience discrimination. *Making Familiar* is not a project that sought to inform newly arrived youth about how they may be viewed by some people in Canada and how they may be discriminated against now or in the future. If the topic arose, a conversation would have taken place in a space where I, a member of the majority in Canada who condemns discriminatory attitudes, and a Youth Settlement Counsellor trusted by the youth, were present and so could address the issue. *Making Familiar* is a project that was strengths-based and designed to be a positive, uplifting experience for the youth. We discussed the priorities they identified as important to them, which involved

conversations on how they could achieve them, but we did not unpack the root causes of anything negative they shared.

3.4.2 Youth research materials

Each youth received a research kit consisting of a 20.1 Megapixels Sony point-and-shoot camera, a memory card, a USB memory stick, as well as a pen, and notepad. At the end of the project, the youth were informed they could keep all of the materials. I did not tell them this information during the orientation in case it coerced them to participate. I felt it was important for youth to keep the materials as I did not want to facilitate an experience that they hopefully would enjoy and then take away some of the tools that enabled it to take place.

3.4.3 Research settings

Making Familiar took place in several spaces across the GTA. I would meet the youth and the Youth Settlement Counsellor, Rola, who accompanied me and the youth for research activities, at the ACCT Scarborough office at the start of the day and take the TTC downtown to CSV, where the camera composition and Photoshop workshops took place. The focus groups took place immediately after the workshops at a meeting room in Gamma Space, which was a kilometre away from CSV. Gamma Space is a co-working space for independent game designers and web developers, shared by Dames Making Games (DMG), a video game arts organization that gives space to marginalized creators to make, play, and critique video games. The ACCT arranged for our group to visit the CN Tower, Ripley's Aquarium, as well as Chinatown and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) at the end of each respective research day. We walked to these sites from Gamma Space. I took the TTC back to Scarborough with the youth at the end of each day.

3.4.4 Collection of data

Participatory photography: One of the major forms of data for the project were the photographs the youth took. This includes the images they selected to discuss during the focus groups, as well as all other photos they took for the project but did not discuss.

Focus group discussion transcripts: The two focus groups were audiotaped with the youths' permission. I transcribed the FGDs in the days following the discussions.

Ethnographic field notes: I jotted brief notes during the workshops, focus groups, and on the TTC on my observations of the youth. I did not take field notes during the excursions, but did continue participant observation in a general sense to note differences between the various settings. I took notes following the exhibition as well. After each research day, I filled in these notes with greater detail.

Reflexivity journal: Following each day of interaction with the youth, I wrote about my impressions of the youth and challenged any assumptions I made.

3.4.5 Data analysis

Major initial themes were identified immediately following each research day from my field notes. Each form of data was initially analyzed separately through coding. The reflexivity journal allowed me to remain aware of how my own thoughts challenged or supported dominant assumptions of Syrian newcomer youth and how I could better engage with youth to be supportive.

The transcripts were coded according to capabilities the youth identified in the focus groups and then by capabilities youth revealed through discussion of issues prompted by the photographs. These codes were compared to my observations of the youth in the various research spaces through which we moved. These settings included our initial meeting spot and transcript consultations at the ACCT, workshops at CSV, focus groups at Gamma Space, the various Toronto attractions we visited, as well as the time we spent on the TTC buses, subways, and streetcars, and the walks we took between CSV and Gamma Space, and between Gamma Space and the Toronto attractions.

3.5 Research processes

This section gives a description of various research processes. It details how I entered into a collaboration with the ACCT and CSV, how these collaborations were developed and maintained, my recruitment process, the pseudonym-selection process, and finally, the transcript consultation process.

3.5.1 Collaboration process

In line with Suarez-Balcazer et al.'s (2005) Interactive Contextual Model of Community-University Collaborations, *Making Familiar* followed the phases of a) gaining entry into the community, b) building and maintaining the collaboration, c) recognizing benefits and outcomes.

3.5.1.1 Gaining entry to the community

I met with the ACCT's Executive Director, Huda Bukhari, in March 2017 to propose my project and entered into a collaboration with the ACCT at this time. The majority of the ACCT activities and programs for youth take place in July and August, when school is out for elementary and secondary school students for the summer. Huda scheduled my project to take place during these months as youth would have more free time during summer vacation and it would align with the ACCT's schedule.

I began volunteering for the ACCT in grant writing and did so for the following three months. During March Break, I shadowed ACCT Youth Settlement Counsellors at their annual March Break camp for children and youth. In the Spring of 2017, the ACCT held sampling nights for the ACCT New Canadians Kitchen, a wonderful catering initiative for and by low-literacy newcomer women on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). The project works with the women to develop business skills so that they can eventually start their own catering businesses but in the meantime provides opportunities for the women to cook meals. I travelled to Toronto for these events to support the ACCT and to begin understanding the organization's work.

3.5.1.2 Building and maintaining collaboration

From June to August 2017 I worked as a Youth Programming Assistant at the ACCT while I conducted the research activities for this project. My responsibilities in this role were unrelated to my project. I wrote grant proposals and applications for the ACCT and developed projects with a youth leader of a grassroots Somali youth group, the East Mall Steering Committee (EMSC), from a Toronto Community Housing community located 2 km from the ACCT. While my work as a Youth Programming Assistant was unrelated to the activities I facilitated and conducted for my project, working at the ACCT enabled me to have a deeper understanding of

the work the organization does, its organizational culture, as well as its values and deep commitment to the people it supports. My time at the ACCT also strengthened the organization's trust in me as an ally and researcher for social justice. As Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2004) note, work for the collaborating organization by the researcher brings legitimacy to the research and researcher (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2004, 117).

The project was originally designed so that youth express their priorities and perceptions of belonging through any medium they choose for the study, be it painting, drawing, song, video, etc. However, the ACCT found their youth clients to be interested in video and photography and have had positive experiences working with cameras in other projects. Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2004) write that university researchers should seek the input of the organization on successful methods so as to better ground the approach of the research to the realities of the context. With this ACCT informed insight into the desires of the youth, I tailored the project to make it a participatory photography project.

3.5.1.3 Recognizing benefits and outcomes

In June 2017, I reached out to CSV to see if I could borrow cameras if I purchased a membership. I mentioned my project and was told they likely would be interested in sponsoring it. I applied to their Maker Space Project, which is an ongoing program that invites artists and collectives to partner with CSV in projects that promote “dialogue and experimentation about media art” (“csv maker space project”, <https://www.charlesstreetvideo.com>).

The support CSV provided to the project made the project more worthwhile to the youth. I partnered with an artist-run centre (ARC) as ARCs have the knowledge and capacity to support a project like *Making Familiar*. The project furthermore strongly aligned with CSV's mandate to encourage participation from diverse groups of people in media arts. CSV provided their space, equipment, and facilitators for workshops. They also hosted the end-of-project exhibition, covered the catering costs for the opening, and covered the costs of framing the photographs. CSV also booked a private meeting room in Gamma Space for the FGDs. CSV wanted to open opportunities up for the youth beyond this project, and so they offered a year-long CSV membership to encourage further engagement with media art. The membership gives them free and unlimited access to all CSV workshops.

As the project was to take place downtown and would take over an hour to travel to, the ACCT wished to make the most of downtown for the youth. The ACCT organized sightseeing for the youth after research activities were done for the day. While sightseeing is not part of my research, the time I spent with youth after the research activities was important to building trust with the youth.

The ACCT assigned a Youth Settlement Counsellor, Rola, a Syrian newcomer herself, to provide mental health and social support to the youth in my project should the need arise, and to translate where needed. The ACCT also provided TTC tokens for travel related to the project.

The project was a benefit to the ACCT as it provided an innovative learning experience to some of its youth clients, connected the youth to continuing opportunities, maximized organizational capacity for youth programs, and provided research into program design for youth based on youths' interests and capabilities.

3.5.2 Recruitment process

I was looking for 4-6 adolescent Syrian newcomer youth close in age to participate in the project, with an equal number of boys and girls. Youth joined the project through the help of the ACCT. In June 2017, a recruitment poster was displayed at the ACCT offices and an ACCT Settlement Counsellor announced the project to youth attending the ACCT Homework Club at the ACCT Scarborough office. Interested youth from the Homework Club were given a recruitment poster about the study.

Youth self-selected for this study. Four interested youth, two brother sister pairs ages 16 to 18 years old, came to an orientation session I held for the project on June 28, 2017. I explained the project and invited them to think about it and e-mail me if they would like to join. They told me that they had come to the session because they wanted to join the project. Each youth was given an English and Arabic consent which they signed and dated. Each signed and dated a third consent which I kept for my records. Each youth also received a letter of information in English and Arabic to give to their parents. The oldest boy dropped out of the project as he found a job by the time the study started.

During this time, a community member responded to the recruitment poster at the Etobicoke ACCT office. He told me that his 15 year old son is interested in photography and that he would be interested in participating. The community member signed an English and Arabic consent form which he kept, and another consent which I kept for my records. I repeated the process with his son when I met him at a later date.

3.5.3 Pseudonym-selection process

After youth signed on for the study, I asked them to choose a pseudonym for themselves. Barring any vulgarity, they had complete freedom in choosing a name. I asked them not to tell anyone, including each other and their friends and family. After research activities on the final day, we sat on the patio of a nearby Starbucks near CSV. One participant had left with his father as he had a concert to go to. Each youth took turns telling me what name they had chosen, while the other two huddled giggling out of earshot. The participant who left told me his pseudonym during the transcript consultation in the ACCT

3.5.4 Transcript consultation process

The transcript consultation at each ACCT office was informal.

When I met with one of the participants at the Etobicoke office, we spent part of the meeting listening to his favourite songs from rapper Tyler the Creator. We then reviewed his contributions from the focus groups. I had questions about words or phrases I had difficulty discerning from the audio recording. He removed information where he desired and requested some information to be anonymized. He spoke at length about his pre-migration experiences of discrimination. At the end of the consultation, he told me his pseudonym.

When I met with the other youth together at the Scarborough office, they were finishing up a session that discussed issues which affect them. We reviewed their contributions from the focus groups and they were given the opportunity to remove information from the record. They also elaborated on some of their experiences which they did not get the opportunity to discuss during the focus groups.

3.6 Positionality of the researcher

I am a young, white, female Canadian graduate student. My parents emigrated to Canada in the late 1980s from Communist Poland. I have an arts and mental health background. I was introduced to the idea of action research with youth while I was a research intern at a disaster mitigation organization in India before I started my Master's degree, which is when I saw the powerful potential of the methodology in researching social issues and encouraging project ownership. While I do not share the same culture, religion, ethnicity, or experience as a refugee as the Syrian newcomer youth in my study, having been brought up by newcomer parents who left oppressive conditions in Poland, whose grandparents lived through the Holocaust and who had family members survive concentration camps and some family that died in those spaces, enabled me to have some point of similarity, though removed by generations, to the youth. I say this because trauma from war does not disappear when somebody passes. It affects us, and will affect our children, and our children's children. This is one of the reasons why multifaceted programs supporting the wellbeing of newcomer youth from war-affected countries is important, and why I wanted to do this project. I did share with the youth that my parents were newcomers once and that while I was born in Canada my first language was Polish. I also shared that my undergraduate degree is in Fine Arts. Since I am part of the white majority in Canada, and do not have experience of being a visible minority, I had to be continually aware of how this privilege affected how I facilitated the project and analyzed the data. Since I was leading the project and the youth were not part of data analysis, I had to interrogate why I was reading the data in the way I was and challenge myself if I felt I made a biased interpretation. While the youth took the photographs and shared their perspectives, in the end I am the one that analyzed their contributions and a lot of responsibility comes with how I represent them.

3.7 Limitations

This study is limited by several factors. These are the number of participants, the duration of the project, language barriers, and my position as a researcher doing cross-cultural research.

Making Familiar is a case study of 4 Syrian newcomer youth living in the GTA who regularly participate in ACCT activities, and so it is not representative of all Syrian newcomer youth in Toronto.

Typical PAR projects take place over many months or even years. Data collection for my project took place over two months, with photographs taken by youth only taking place over two weeks, and so it is much shorter than typical PAR projects. While I feel I connected with the youth and was able to gain their trust, a longer project would have allowed me to further develop this relationship, which may have resulted in more in-depth data.

As I do not speak Arabic, there was a language barrier between myself and the youth, three of whom are native Arabic speakers and who have a very limited understanding of English. This prevented more complex conversations from taking place and likely resulted in meaning lost in translation.

As I am not from an Arab background and a member of the majority in Canadian society, and therefore an “outsider” to the youths’ communities, this likely prevented youth from sharing certain information with me.

3.8 Addressing limitations

The project only involved four youth as participants as the study yielded very detailed qualitative data. Had more youth participated, there would have been too much data for a Master’s thesis, which would have resulted in less detail. The small number of participants allowed me to develop better connections with each youth than a larger number. My resources for the project also allowed for only a few participants.

The duration of the project was determined by the depth of data I collected, youths’ interest level, the length of time youth have for summer vacations, timeline of the ACCT, and resources available for the project. The ACCT recommended that the project take place during the youth’s summer vacations, and so the project was designed to fit the time constraint. I decided against a greater number of workshops and focus groups to allow me to focus on collecting more detailed data, and to keep youths’ interest level high and time commitment low. I also had finite resources available for the project which did not allow for a longer project.

While there were negative effects of me being a non-Arab and non-Arabic speaking researcher, this also had positive impacts on my relationship with the participants. As the youth saw that I was genuinely interested in what they had to tell me and that I was/am committed to their well-

being, my outsider status became an opportunity for them to teach me things about Arab culture. The youth enjoyed teaching me Arabic words and popular sayings like *yallahabibi*, meaning “come here baby”. They delighted in my knowledge of several common Arabic words and my inability to pronounce the hard “h” sounds. As I am in my mid-twenties, the relatively small age gap allowed me to share similar interests with the youth. These factors made me seem like less of an authority figure, and allowed me to build a rapport with the youth.

3.9 Addressing risk & ethical considerations

Making Familiar received approval from the University of Ottawa Social Science Ethics Review Board in May 2017.

The study was designed to offer no monetary compensation as this could have coerced youth to participate. The benefits listed on the recruitment poster stated the project was a leadership opportunity for youth through which they could learn about art processes, develop skills, engage with other likeminded Syrian newcomer youth, and have the opportunity to have their art shown in an exhibition for the public. Tangible benefits from the project, CSV memberships and visits to downtown Toronto attractions, were not announced to youth by ACCT staff during recruitment so as to not impact youths’ choice to participate. I did not design the project to include these benefits. They emerged out of CSV and ACCT’s desire to make the project more worthwhile to the youth. In preparatory meetings for the workshops, CSV raised the ethical issue of providing access to an opportunity for a limited length of time to the youth and then taking it away. In order to have an impact beyond the duration of the project, CSV offered free year-long memberships to the youth. With the same consideration, I let the youth know they could keep the point-and-shoot cameras and other research materials in their research kits at the end of the project.

The decision to provide point-and-shoot cameras to the youth instead of lending higher quality DSLR cameras was based on my worry that such cameras would draw unwanted attention to youth during the project, possibly become a safety risk, and/or pose a risk of youth breaking the device and then feeling bad about themselves. A 2010 Photovoice study in the rural villages of Colima and Rosario de Mora in El Salvador (Prins, 2010) increased participants risk as cameras aroused the community’s suspicions of surveillance. Participants were confronted by angry

community members and criticized. In Toronto, people would likely not scrutinize point-and-shoot cameras in the hands of newcomer Arab youth in the same way a DSLR might.

In some participatory photography projects, participants may not know why they were asked to join the project (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). When I facilitated an orientation session for the project, I was upfront with youth about my motivations for only involving Syrian newcomer youth and the purpose of the study.

Youth 16 years of age and older signed their own consent forms and took parent information about the project home with them. One youth who was 15 years old signed the consent and so did his father. The ACCT called all the youths' parents to confirm parents approved of their children participating. I provided a project schedule in Arabic to the youth after the first day of research activities so that their parents' knew where we were and when.

To protect youth's anonymity, everybody involved in the project signed a confidentiality form. For this, I worked closely with ACCT and CSV staff. All staff members that were present at CSV during the workshops signed a consent form acknowledging that they would not share confidential information identifying the youth should they hear it. No photographs identifying the youth at the exhibition were taken.

In the spirit of PAR, I invited each youth to select their pseudonym. Total autonomy in this choice allowed the aliases to be youths' fullest expressions of themselves. I have removed identifying data in the thesis where it appears, and in places requested by the youth.

To allow for youth control in the information they shared with me, I held a transcript consultation at the ACCT Etobicoke office and one in the Scarborough office to give youth the chance to remove information from the record, change their contributions, and add anything they wished to add. This was carried out with a Settlement Counsellor present who acted as a translator. This was done in lieu of only supplying a transcript of their contributions as most of the youth do not read English and so need the support of a translator. Not meeting in-person would have likely resulted in no changes to the original transcripts, as the task of reviewing an English transcript would have been too difficult on their own.

To better support the youth and to translate for them, a Syrian ACCT Youth Settlement Counsellor was present during the project and during the transcript consultation.

To introduce familiarity into the research environment for the youth, I arranged for the focus groups to be catered by newcomer Arab women from the ACCT New Canadians Kitchen. I worked with two ACCT staff members in charge of the project to make appropriate food selections. Each focus group we had tabbouleh, yalanji, and other Middle Eastern treats familiar to the youth.

Finally, to align with the PAR philosophy, the findings of the project were shared with the ACCT before submission to the university.

3.10 Project timeline

Table 1 Project dates and activities

Date	Activity
June 2017	An ACCT Settlement Counsellor announced the study to youth at meetings of the ACCT Homework Club at the ACCT Scarborough office.
July 28, 2017	The project was explained to youth in an orientation session and consent forms were signed.
July 14, 2017	The youth participated in a camera workshop at CSV where they learned how to use different cameras and the basics of photo composition. Each youth received a research kit and the next week's photography assignment was explained. After research activities we visited the CN Tower
July 21, 2017	The youth participated in a basic Photoshop workshop at CSV, during which they edited several of their favourite photographs from the past week. After the workshop, youth participated in a discussion of their photographs. The theme for the following week's photos was discussed. Afterwards, we visited Ripley's Aquarium.
July 28, 2017	The youth edited their favourite photos from the previous week, and again participated in a discussion of those photographs. They then participated in a video editing

	workshop with an emerging Syrian artist. This activity was not part of the research. After the workshop the youth told me their pseudonyms. For our final sightseeing activity, we walked through Chinatown and visited the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM).
August 16, 2017	The transcript consultation with Kung Fu Kenny took place in the ACCT Etobicoke office. It was an opportunity for Kenny to remove data from the record and to add anything else he did not get a chance to say during the focus groups.
August 17, 2017	The opening night of the exhibition of youth’s photographs took place in the evening at CSV. The exhibition was open to the public until August 25, 2017. The event was advertised on CSV and ACCT social media the week before. Exhibition postcards inviting the public to the show were shared with GTA settlement and arts organizations.
August 23, 2017	The transcript consultation with Alex, Aisha, and Angelo took place in the ACCT Scarborough office. Like for Kenny, it was an opportunity for the youth to remove data from the record and to add any information they did not get a chance to say during the group discussions
August 29, 2017	I gave each youth a sealed paper copy of their contributions from the transcripts, their revisions from the transcript consultation, along with their framed photographs from the CSV exhibition.

3.11 Exhibition overview

At the start of the project, I asked youth if they would like to have their final photographs from the project displayed in a public exhibition. They liked the idea. The exhibition took place in August, several weeks after the youth took their photos. I titled the exhibition “Making Familiar” as youth are in the process of coming to know Toronto while negotiating who they are, not only as Syrian newcomers, but also as teenagers.

The opening night of the exhibition saw around 50 guests over 3 hours. Social Planning Toronto (SPT), Trinity Square Video (TSV), as well as other development and arts organizations attended. To keep presentation simple and work within space restrictions, two photographs were displayed by each youth, one from each week of research, for a total of 8 photographs. For the show, I titled the photographs with youth quotes. There was a Facebook event made a few days before the opening created by CSV and the ACCT. The exhibition was open to the public at CSV for a week after the opening. The response from the public was positive. Several viewers were able to guess the gender of the photographer. The girls’ photographs are colourful, bright, and present more “feminine” imagery than the boys images. Viewers read their photos as positive. One of the boys had dark, ambiguous images, while another boy’s photos were brooding and sad.

Three of the youth were present at the exhibition. They had brought several of their Syrian friends. I did not point them out to others, but when I spoke about the project towards the end of the evening, what I said had to be translated so it was apparent who the youth were. I was later told by a viewer the youth in my study are not refugees. They said the youth are Westernized and do not represent typical Syrian refugees. S/he continued that by studying youth like mine I am producing skewed information that gives inaccurate data to policymakers. I told them that Syrian refugees are all kinds of people, like everyone else. Their comments are one of the reasons I wanted to do this project. The individual had never met a Syrian newcomer before and they only know what they hear about Syrian newcomers in the media. An MP also arrived at the show as we were wrapping things up. I had invited him. He did not want to know about the project. My colleague told me the first thing he said was, “Where are the refugees?” He had arrived to take a promo shot with the youth. I told him no, the youth cannot be photographed as they are research participants. The MP insisted. The ACCT staff present told him no, we do not have permission. He left shortly thereafter.

4.0 Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the study. The first section gives a description of the youth participants. The second section presents the photographs youth selected to discuss during the focus groups as well as their and the group's discussion of the images. The third section discusses themes that emerged from the focus groups, participant observation, and transcript consultations.

4.1 Youth participant profiles

Four Syrian newcomer youth, two boys and two girls ages 15 to 17 years old living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), participated in *Making Familiar*. The youth know each other from participating in ACCT activities. Aisha, Angelo, and Alex met each other at a Toronto reception house after arriving in Canada. Alex and Aisha are good friends.

Alex is a 16 year old girl from Damascus, Syria who now lives in Scarborough, Ontario with her mother, father, eight year old Autistic brother, and 17 year old brother Angelo who also participated in this project. She came to Canada as a Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) 5 months before participating in this study. She lived in Brumanna, Lebanon for six years before coming to Canada. Alex is a native Arabic speaker. She wears the hijab. Alex finds her pseudonym to be a strong representation of her personality.

Angelo is a 17 year old boy from Damascus, Syria now living in Scarborough. Like his sister Alex, he arrived in Canada as a GAR 5 months before participating in this study. Angelo is a native Arabic speaker. Angelo chose his pseudonym as it is the name of his favourite actor.

Aisha is a 16 year old Kurdish girl from Syria. She arrived in Canada as a GAR 5 months before participating in this study. She lives with her mother, father, younger sister, and older brother in Scarborough. She lived in Turkey with her family for three years before coming to Canada. Aisha is a native Arabic speaker. Aisha does not wear a hijab. Aisha considers her pseudonym "beautiful", and preferred not to choose an English name.

Kung Fu Kenny is a 15 year old Syrian boy born and raised in a Gulf Country². He did not arrive in Canada with refugee status, but shares in the refugee experience. His family was living in a country in the Gulf near Syria as there were better opportunities for his parents to find work. Facing discrimination in the country, the family desired to move back to Syria, but the Syrian Civil War broke out and flights were cut off. They were able to move to Canada instead.

Kung Fu Kenny lives with his mother, father, and older sister in Mississauga. At the time he joined this study Kenny had lived in Canada for 4 years. Kenny is a native English speaker but speaks Arabic fluently. His pseudonym, Kung Fu Kenny, is the alias of rap artist Kendrick Lamar.

² Kung Fu Kenny wishes to refrain from naming the Gulf country he grew up in to protect his identity.

4.2 Youth photographs

The following discussion of the youth’s photographs is divided by week and by youth. A description of the photographs and accompanying discussion with youth is presented in a narrative format.

4.2.1 Week 1: “What is important to you?”

During the first week of the photography project, youth were asked to take photographs of spaces in their lives according to the question “what is important to you?” As Aisha had to accompany her mother to a doctor’s appointment during the first FGD, she was not present. This allowed us to spend more time on each of the youths’ photographs, so Alex, Angelo, and Kung Fu Kenny were invited select 2-3 photos for discussion.

4.2.1.1 Alex



Figure 1 *Construction site outside apartment building. Scarborough.*

Alex's first photo shows small, orange construction vehicles parked on an ashy concrete lot outside of an apartment building. To the left of the vehicles is a temporary metal fence designating another construction zone in the background, with mounds of dirt and a vehicle stationed to deal with the piles. The scene is visible through the pattern of an orange chain link fence which stretches over the image. While it was a grey day when Alex took this photo, she heightened the contrast to intensify the colours.

The superimposed fence makes the image more interesting, but also affects how it is read. We are looking through a barrier with specific signifiers onto a construction scene of a residential complex. This barrier was remarked on by the other youth.

Kung Fu Kenny feels the function of the fence is to add patterns to the image, while Angelo comments it is there, "Because she cannot enter."

I ask them how they feel looking at it.

"We are like in a prison," Angelo tells me.

I ask what story Alex is trying to tell us.

"The bulldozers have something to do with constructing yourself. And the fence has something to do with being trapped," Kenny observes. Rola translates Kenny's comments to the siblings.

Alex then shares what she was trying to achieve with the photo.

"The construction itself, the machines... the, what do you call it..." Rola translates for Alex.

"The fence," Kung Fu Kenny offers.

"The fence itself," Rola continues translating for Alex. "I felt I was focusing on what's inside."

"Why are you taking a photo of a construction site?" I ask Alex.

"The first view that I can capture in this photo is the fence itself. And then you go focus, and focus, then you know that the focus is on the machines," Rola explained for Alex.

Alex tried to apply the concepts we learned in the camera workshop. She is explaining here that she tried to use the lines in the image to bring the viewer's eye inward, like Raphael's *School of*

Athens. She is working with several different plains here, but does not capture a single focal point. Our eyes follow the curve of the apartment's balconies and the lines of the vehicles and concrete lot. There is a much softer line suggested by the metal fence, but it fades into the background. The effect is that we see the construction vehicles as the subjects.

I ask again what interests her about a construction site.

"I want to be an engineer. And this is for me the basics," Rola translates for Alex.

Alex does not want to be an engineer working from an office building, but one on the ground working in scenes like this. Angelo tells me that in normal life, whenever Alex sees construction sites, she becomes excited and wants to take a picture.

"...did anyone inspire you to become an engineer?" I ask Alex. Rola translates.

"No," Alex smiles.

"No?" I ask. Angelo comments to his sister in Arabic, Alex giggles. She says a sentence to Rola in Arabic.

"I want to rebuild our house in Syria," Rola translates for her.

I am caught off-guard by the response.

"Oh that's so nice," I tell Alex.

"Because our home, our apartment in Syria... now we don't have anything," Angelo explains. The siblings are from Damascus.

"I know," I tell Angelo.

"You're gonna cry?" Rola teases.

"Well...yeah," I say. Everyone laughs.

"We have a Kleenex," Angelo tells me as he picks up napkins from lunch, "don't worry!" The group laughs again.



Figure 2 *Woman construction worker having lunch with male co-worker at a construction site. Scarborough.*

The photograph shows two construction workers engaged in mealtime preparation at a folding table under an outdoor canopy at a construction site. They are on a lawn outside of apartment complexes. It is a sunny day. The foremost figure is a young woman in profile with short brown hair, a construction helmet, and black tinted glasses. There is another construction worker sitting behind, but s/he is obscured by the female worker so there is little information about this person. Both wear orange and yellow safety vests. There is a lot of visual data in the image. This is a candid photograph, taken in a way to have the viewer explore what is taking place. There are black tool boxes on the ground and clear plastic bags strewn about. The lower levels of apartment complexes fill part of the background. Two stop signs lean against crates in the mid-ground. It is suggested these are signs the workers use to direct traffic. Yellow caution tape loosely separates the lunching workers and crates from the residential area behind.

The photo is a snapshot in time. While Alex says she asked the workers if she could take the picture, they are not posing for the photo.

The central worker in the photo is in unisex clothing and only after discussion among the other youth and Rola did it become clear that she was a woman. The other worker is a man. Beside the genders of the figures, all the other youth can agree on is that they are having lunch. Kung Fu Kenny thinks that the workers are building a street with a stop sign.

Alex makes a point of demonstrating that she tried to follow the lesson from the camera workshop the week before. She motions with her hand at the image that she was following the rule of thirds the workshop facilitator taught us, and that she wanted the eye of the viewer to circle around the image. Alex made the subject of the photo to be slightly off-centre, with the yellow tape, angles of the table, and angle of the crates all serving as leading lines. I can already see that I underestimated Alex, and the others, both aesthetically and in communicating ideas through photos.

I applaud Alex for the composition of the photo.

Angelo comments, “But me, I take pictures of everything. I didn’t... same as Alex.”

“But try,” I tell him, “this week try.”

I ask Alex what story she is trying to tell.

Rola translates for Alex, “What I liked when I saw this was a female and a male. Together they are having a rest. They were both tired. And even though they are tired, she stood up.”

“Okay,” I say.

“Because we want to take picture,” Angelo explains.

“Oh she stood up for you?” I ask.

“Because we are asking we can take picture,” Angelo says.

“Yes,” Angelo and Alex say together.

“Every picture we are asking,” Angelo continues.

“Okay, very nice,” I tell them.

It becomes apparent that Angelo and Alex kept each other company during this week’s assignment.

Rola continues translating for Alex, “I didn’t care what was going on around it. That we have plastic bags, that we have bottles, that we have spontaneous thrown things. I feel this is another expressive photo.”

I ask Alex why this is important for her to depict in a photograph.

Rola translates for Alex, “That they are working together.”

“But why is that important? To you,” I emphasize.

Rola translates for Alex, “Because both of them were working the same thing.”

“Okay, okay, okay. Cool. Right on,” I tell her.

“You like that?” Rola asks me.

“Of course I like it. I’m a big feminist,” I say.

“Us too,” Angelo tells me.

Alex later elaborates this does not happen in Syria, that these types of scenes are not possible in Syria. Men and women do not work jobs together, let alone enjoy a break together as colleagues.

Alex has noticed that there is greater gender equality in Canada and she likes this, a lot. Her pictures are showing not only what is important to her, but what she wants for herself. Having the option of working the same job as a man, in a field that is traditionally male dominated, is exciting for her.



Figure 3 *Receding pylons in parking lot outside apartment complex. Scarborough.*

Given that Alex was photographing construction sites this week, the youth saw similar themes in this photo. I ask the youth what they see in this photo.

Rola translates for Angelo, “That it’s prohibited to enter this area.”

Kung Fu Kenny tries to discern a deeper story. He comments that, “One pylon is different from the other.”

I ask, “But why is Alex photographing this?” Rola translates for the others.

“We might all be different, but we all serve the same purpose,” he responds. This makes me laugh. I then ask Angelo why Alex decided to take the photo from low to the ground.

Angelo observes that it shows the street needs to be repaired.

“But why not take it from higher up?” I ask.

Rola translates for Angelo, “Maybe it’s better that way.”

Alex then explains her intent. Rola translates:

“I took it as a visual, straight vision. And I didn’t want to show neither car, neither the street. I wanted to show these orange stops.... And that on the street there are problems and there will be work on the street.”

“Okay. And how does this photo work with the subject of the week? Because they were taking photos of what is important to them,” I address Rola. “So the other photos make sense. Like equality, that is important. Then the other photo, she wants to be an engineer, so that’s important to her.”

Rola translates for Alex, “The order.... That you see that there is something organized, and then you have trees, and you have a building. The car—it’s full of them and they put them.”

In this photograph, Alex was mostly interested in composing a beautiful picture. She saw this line of small orange pylons lining one area of a dirt parking lot, and she was struck by the symmetry. Alex explains in Arabic that it was a spontaneous photo. Rola, translating for Alex, explains, “I didn’t have to stop for one hour to take it. Or for seconds. I was walking and saw it, and was like, click!”

To make the orange of the pylons pop even more, Alex increased the contrast so that they glowed against the teal of the truck.

“Like this is the first and then last,” Angelo adds, gesturing to the retreating pylons to show he understands how Alex was composing the photo to lead the viewer’s eye into the image.

Other Photographs

Alex took about 50 photographs the first week of the project. All of her images had to do with construction sites in Scarborough. To my amusement, Alex took my rule for not photographing people’s faces as license to ask people to be in her photos with their faces averted. She would pose beside construction workers who had their backs to the camera.

4.2.1.2 Angelo



Figure 4 *ARTHUR with textbooks. Scarborough.*

A science skeleton model sits posed on a metal table with its hand on top of a pile of school textbooks. A sticker with “ARTHUR” written vertically is stuck onto its sternum. An assortment of beakers is arranged beside it. The photograph is taken from above, and cabinets with the label “Safety First” are in the background. A sliver of a laboratory stove is visible. The photo is a little blurry. It is a staged photo, taken inside a high school classroom. The photo does not take composition rules into account. Angelo is focused on getting what is important to him across in the image.

Rola translates for Alex that Angelo, “didn’t take it as a natural. He decorated it.”

Kenny comments, “Too much knowledge can kill you. He got too curious,”

“Yeah curiosity killed the cat,” I respond.

“Curiosity kills what?” Rola asks.

“Cat. It’s a saying. Curiosity kills the cat,” I explain. Rola translates for the youth. Angelo laughs. “But curiosity is good,” I finish.

“Not good if you’re in a mafia place,” Kenny adds.

“No,” I agree.

“When you start asking too many questions—“oh what’s in that bag?” He says.

I ask Angelo what he was trying to say in the photo.

“I want to be a doctor,” he announces.

His choice of the skeleton, science objects, and lab setting are intended to suggest the path of learning towards becoming a doctor.

Rola translates on Angelo’s behalf , “So I have to work, and then I die.” This prompts laughter from the group. “It’s a science,” he concludes.

When asked why he desires this occupation, Angelo says that he has always wanted to be a general physician because many of his family members are doctors, and because he wishes to help people. I ask if it is his parents desire for him to be a doctor that made him want this career, but he stresses that no, this is what he himself wants.

School is incredibly important to Angelo, and he always pushes himself to learn more. He speaks with enthusiasm about this. Rola translates for him:

“I want to know everything, not only the medicine. I want to have many knowledges and careers.”

Angelo's appetite for learning was shown early in the project to me. Directing after I had introduced the project to the youth on the day of the project orientation, Angelo had begun speaking emphatically to me about his struggles to learn English. In broken English, he had relayed how difficult it is for him. At the time, he had only been in Canada five months, he explained. He said that English was so hard to grasp, but that he had to learn, because he needed to understand. Angelo's enthusiasm for learning set the tone for the project.



Figure 5 *Reflection of apartment on dark water. Scarborough.*

Dark rippled water fills the photograph. There is an expanse of calmness down which the reflection of a distorted apartment swims. We see the suggestion of this building above the reflection in the background. A concrete fence with shadowed vines lines most of the water's perimeter. There are dark stencils of trees. It is sunset, and the water is dark blue and yellow. We feel submerged looking at it. Heavy. The apartment on the water's surface is uncanny.

This image was taken the same week as the science photo, but it is markedly different.

The group has immediate reactions to the way Angelo chose to capture the image. Alex said she feels quiet. She finds the picture beautiful and enjoys looking at such pictures on Google.

Kenny feels tranquil. The focal point of the image for him is the reflection of the building. It creates a mirror image.

The image prompts the youth to look longer and figure out what it is they are studying.

Angelo had paid a great deal of attention to how he composed this photograph. Rola translates for Angelo:

“I want to reflect the building because it looks very beautiful. The house and the green things...”

He speaks of the beauty of the scene, and his affinity for bodies of water. This photograph was taken outside of his apartment. The water is a fountain. The image succeeds because we are curious to understand what it is, and to learn why he chose to photograph it the way he did.

Alex comments that the image is working with the idea of reality and imagination. We were able to better understand Angelo’s inclinations here the following week, when a theme to his images surfaced.

Other Photographs

Angelo took many photographs this week. Photographs that Angelo did not discuss show scenes of a doctor’s office, a pharmacy, his sister on a doctor’s scale, himself bench-pressing what looks to be a heavy weight, his friend bench-pressing, as well as various outdoor scenes.

4.2.1.3 Aisha

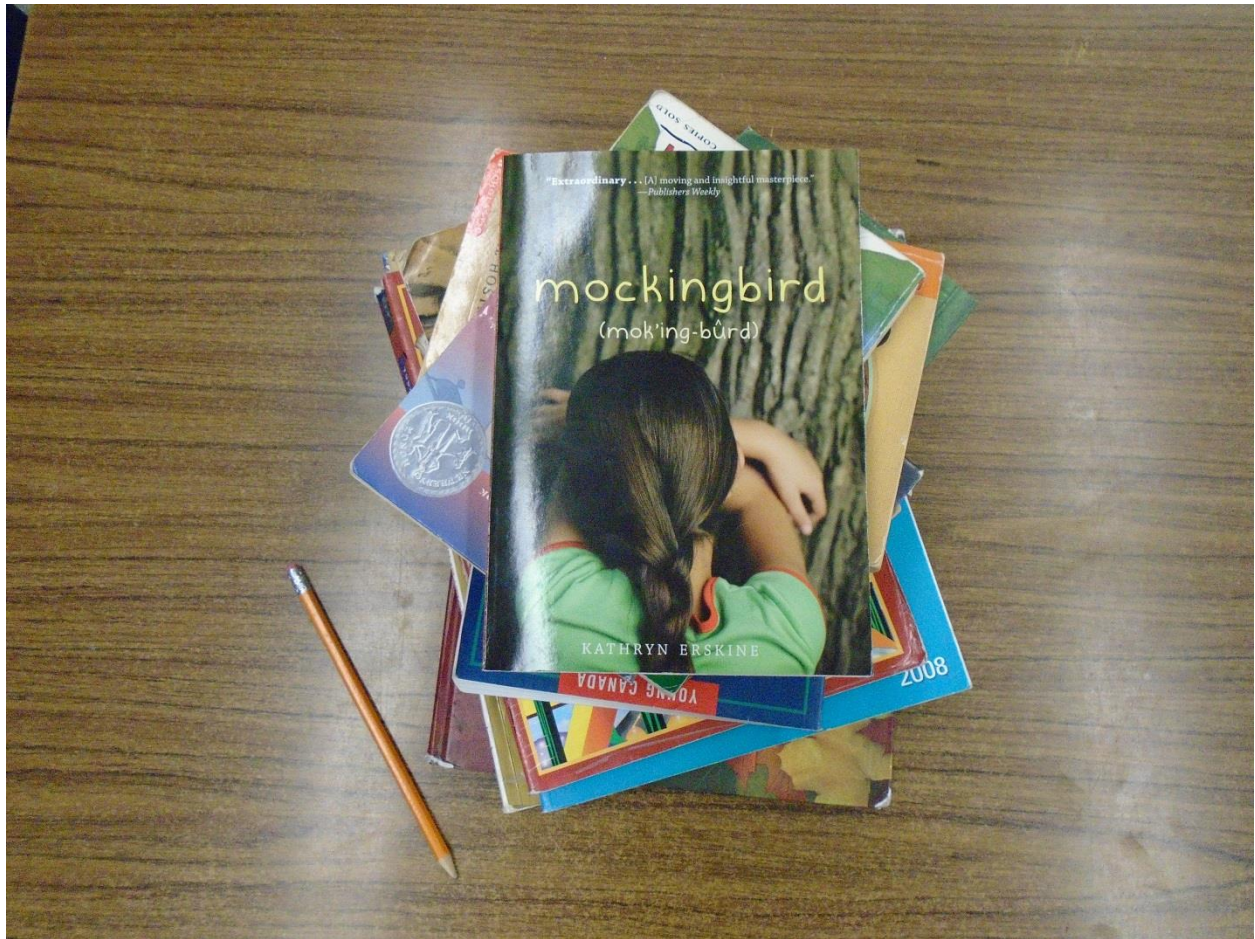


Figure 6 *Novels in a pile on a school desk, Scarborough.*

A pile of arranged books is set on top of a faux wood school desk. A sharpened pencil is placed alongside the pile. Only the topmost book, *mockingbird*, is visible to us, but the other books appear to be typical Scholastic books for young readers. The placement of *mockingbird* seems intentional. Its cover shows a young girl with braided brown hair resting her face on her arms on the trunk of a mature tree. Aisha's placement of the book makes the photograph seem as if a girl is resting her head on top of the books beneath.

The subject matter is clear to the others. Themes of school, studying, reading, and learning are apparent to the youth. There is some fixation on Aisha's choice of book at the top.

After several rounds of me asking the youth how they feel about each other's photos, they began asking me how I feel. Angelo was asking me the most often. He asks how it makes me feel and I tell him happy, because I used to read books like this as a teen.

Like in Angelo's photograph, Aisha confirms that school is most important to her. I ask her if she shares in the same feelings the photo evoked for me, she shakes her head.

"No I don't like reading," she replies.

"But then why show us these books?" I ask her.

"Because I love school," she responds. Aisha loves studying. It does not matter that there are parts of learning she dislikes, she loves the process of learning, and studying to do well.

She shares that she wants to become a lawyer.

This discussion of school prompts a conversation with the other youth about the school system in Toronto. The youth find that teachers here are "careless". The teachers in Syria were too strict but here they are not strict at all, they explain.

Aisha unfortunately was unable to attend the second day of workshops, where we went over how to improve the composition of photographs, and so she spoke about this photo during the second focus group.

Other Photographs

Aisha had taken about two dozen photographs for this week's theme. All the images show themes of school and learning.

4.2.1.4 Kung Fu Kenny



Figure 7 *Blurred aerial view of a cityscape at night time. Mississauga.*

Taken from the vantage point of a building many stories high, the photo of a city with many lights seems accidental. The image is blurry, the photographer's hands moving when it was captured. The soft blurs produce a glowing effect that livens the dark buildings. Me and Rola both have the initial reaction that this photo is of Paris, even though we know Kung Fu Kenny lives in Mississauga.

I ask Rola why she feels this.

"...because Paris is the City of Lights," she explains.

"I'm gonna go to Paris and take a photo," Kenny jokes.

The youth wonder why the photo was blurry. Angelo jokes that perhaps the photo was taken hastily.

I ask the youth how the image makes them feel.

“Scared,” Angelo admits, indicating the height from which the photo was taken.

“I wanna fly,” Rola translates for Alex. The photo makes her excited.

In this photograph, Kenny is interested in experimental process and effects. It was late at night, and he went onto the balcony of his apartment to take a picture of the city at night.

Kenny explains, “...you know when you’re sometimes watching movies and they do a drone shot and speed it up? When it’s in a city and all the cars are just driving by? That’s sort of the idea I was going for. Except like, I can’t make an animation because it’s just a photo. So then I wanted it to be blurry, but then it was kind of scary because I thought I was going to drop the camera.”

“You were on the balcony?” Rola asks him.

“Cause this was the balcony [gestures over an imaginary barrier], and I had to wedge myself like that and look from the glass like that, and then I had to take the photo,” Rola translates for the others. “That’s why it came off a bit curved. ‘Cause my hands were shaking, I thought I was going to drop it.”

Kenny continues explaining that he likes the blur, because he admires time lapse photography that shows moving objects with lights over time. While such images need the surroundings to be stationary during capture, he likes how the photo still shows movement.

During the Photoshop workshop at CSV, Kenny had drawn a UFO and other objects on the image. Unfortunately Kenny did not save his file correctly and lost his work. However he still spoke to his process during the focus group, during which he stated that: “I wanted to draw it. I wanted to make it seem like there were (inaudible) around it. Sometimes in those super random movies you know how like a dolphin just jumps off a building, it’s like a cartoon dolphin...” This approach to the picture shows that he desires to be seen as someone who watches indie

films that incorporate unique and creative elements, and suggests he wants to be seen as creative as well.

“What’s important to you in this photo?” I ask him.

“The lights and the colour. All the colours are contrasting together with the night time. It makes it interesting,” he tells me.

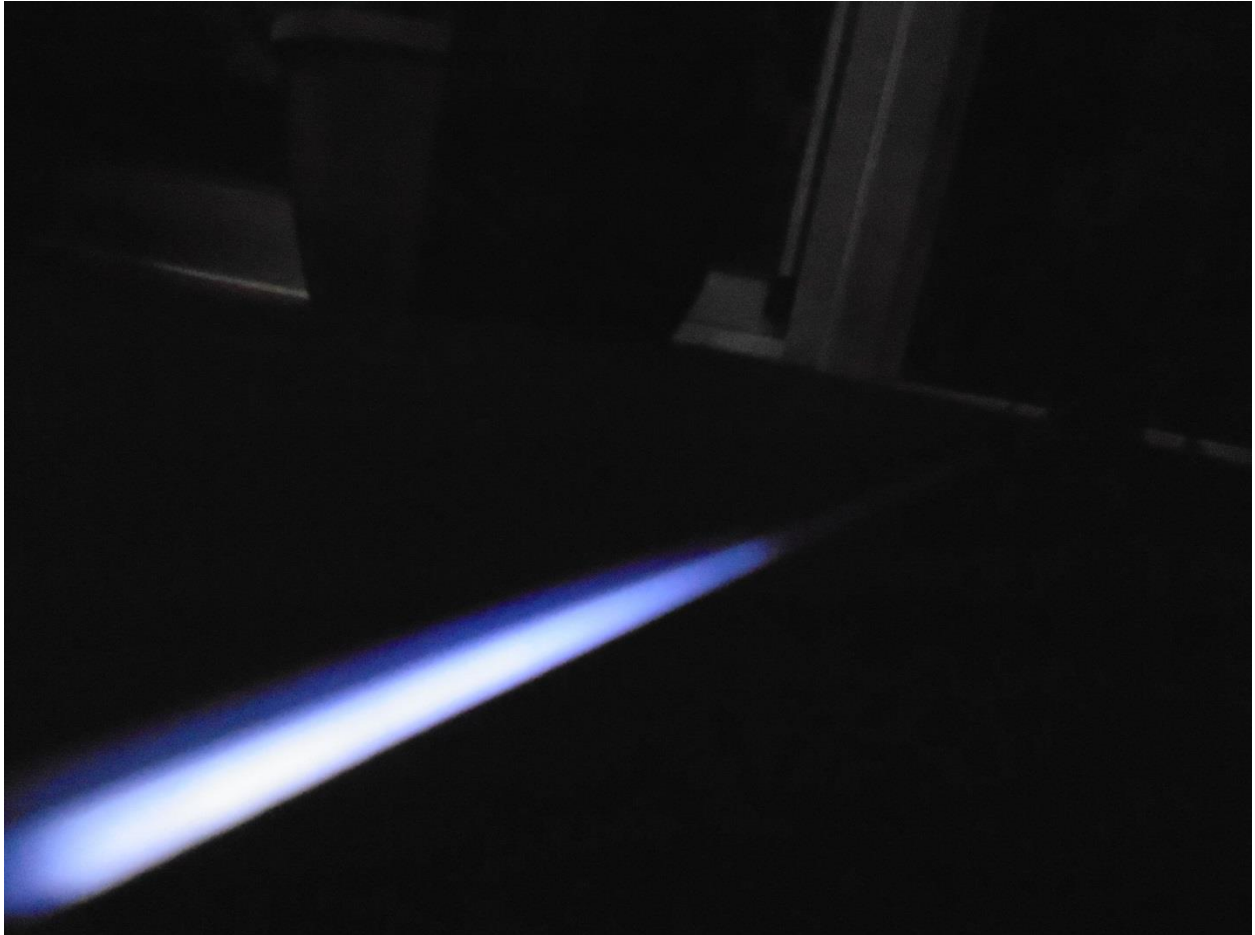


Figure 8 *Blue light in dark space, Mississauga.*

The thin beam of blue light shines from an unknown source in a black space. There is the suggestion of white frames in the background belonging either to windows, cabinets, or maybe a door. The rest of the space is black.

I ask the youth what they think of the photo given the week's theme. The youth feel there is mystery in the photo; Kenny has stripped the image of many clues. Since the light is sharp, there are ideas that it is a laser, and that perhaps the image has to do with science fiction.

Kung Fu Kenny reveals that the blue is the light from his PlayStation 4 (PS4). He likes how the light looks as if it was shooting out of the darkness.

Reflecting on his photo, Kenny comments, "It just stretches onto it. If I could make it better, I would make it so the light goes in straight."

With no restrictions on subject matter, Kenny photographed what is meaningful to him: gaming. This is something he has been doing as a hobby for years.

His favourite games are Overwatch, Grand Theft Auto (GTA), Call of Duty (COD), Black Ops 3, Far Cry Primal, games he admits he is not old enough to be playing. At this point in the conversation, Rola jumps in with a suggestion:

"Vice City?"

"No, Vice City is like 2002," Kenny retorts.

"So old now!" Angelo jokes, laughing at Rola.

While he lived in a country in the Gulf³, his family visited Syria during summer vacations. During those months, we would game in internet cafes with his cousins, where they would play GTA and Vice City, famous at the time in Syria.

Rola jumps into the conversation again.

"This is the only one we have in Syria," she explains.

"No! There's San Andreas, there's everything," Kenny counters.

Rola then asks him if he prefers to game here, or in Syria.

³ Kung Fu Kenny requested that the country name be removed to protect his identity.

“In Syria it’s more fun,” Kenny responds, “because you have your cousins around, they teach you hacks, you can fly cars and stuff. Here it’s more fun if you play with your friends online and kill each other.”

Kenny explains that he was six when he got a PSP, but started gaming on the computer when he was eight. It started with Vice City with his cousins, but he did not get many turns since he was the youngest and they would kick him off.

Other Photographs

Kung Fu Kenny had taken a few photos that he did not discuss. One was of a Vans shoebox.

4.2.2 Week 2: “Where do you belong?”

The theme of the second week focused on space and belonging. Directed by the question “where do you belong?” the youth were asked to photograph spaces in their lives in Toronto to which they felt a belonging. As Aisha was present during the second FGD, the youth were asked to choose 1-2 photos with the expectation we would only get to discuss one during the FGD. Her photos for this theme are discussed in this section.

4.2.2.1 Alex



Figure 9 *Close up of stone and grass. Scarborough.*

Taken from ground-level, Alex photographed stones to fill the foreground, with grass rising tall behind. Industrial complexes are blurred in the background. The sky is bright grey. The camera

focused on the grass, so the stones in the foreground and the rest of the scene in the back are blurred.

Kung Fu Kenny interprets the image as struggle:

“...to get to the good part in life you have to go through some hardships.” He sees the rocks as representing hardship, and the grass behind as growth.

Angelo notices a small flower peeking from behind one of the blades. Building on Kenny’s observation, he says it symbolizes new life.

Angelo suggests the image has to do with perspective. He tells me “everyone is short.”

Alex remarks, “I let you feel the short people.” She erupts into laughter.

Alex is shorter than average, and it affects her health and self-esteem. Impacting her everyday life, she is very aware of it. So significant is this aspect of being for Alex that it looms over other factors of connecting for her. She is altering experience of size to the viewer in this photo.

Alex turned the assignment around on me. Rather than representing where and how she feels belonging, she wanted me, and others, to feel how she feels.

Other Photographs

The photos Alex did not discuss during the focus group show other natural imagery.

4.2.2.2 Angelo



Figure 10 *Crashing wave on the beach. Scarborough.*

Angelo improved his photographs significantly from the prior week. During the second week he took hundreds of photos at one of the beaches in Scarborough. He felt this was his strongest one.

Angelo photographed a burnt piece of wood to cover much of the foreground. Stuck in wet sand, dark threatening waves rush towards it. The tip of a weathered pier post, with flaking orange paint, sinks heavily into the sand as well, nearly submerged in the shallow water. While the sky is blue, the day seems stormy.

Describing his process, Angelo explains that, “When I put here the camera, I put it on the sand and the waves are coming, so I wanted to—it was taking like seconds! So I put it—I pressed and

I have to take off the camera so it doesn't go by the waves." To get to the beach, he had to take a bus all the way to the last stop.

The group has strong emotional responses to this image. Kung Fu Kenny feels anxiety looking at it:

"...the water is gonna overlap the wood, and then the wood isn't going to exist anymore. It's gonna take the wood with it when it like, moves back."

Aisha feels anger: "The waves are pulling me away."

And Alex tells us she feels as if she is going to drown. She is afraid. Elaborating further, "Maybe our fear inside, because we heard about the many people who were drowned and trying to escape from Syria. So maybe for that reason, we're feeling sad."

When the others are finished sharing their thoughts, Angelo explains, "I feel sad because of our past in Syria. I used to feel belonging to the sea in Syria. Whenever I go anywhere, any new country, I go directly to the sea."

When Angelo first arrived in Canada, he went with Aisha's older brother, who was originally in this project but had to drop out, to the beach. He feels strong connections to water. From Damascus, he and Alex only lived a two hour drive from the Mediterranean Sea in Syria.

During the transcript consultation in Scarborough, Angelo offered additional insights on his photograph of the burned wood and oncoming wave. He explained that the image deals with life and death. The burned wood is not protected and the sea will terminate it. He has a deep love of Syria. It was once full of green woods, full of life. But now he is very sad. He feels everything is coming to an end. He does not want to go back to Syria.

While we did not discuss it during the workshop, Angelo is working with pathetic fallacy, the attribution of human qualities to nature or inanimate objects, here. Explaining his intentions, Angelo remarks, "I felt that, the person who is watching this photo will be drowned too by the waves." The burned wood also holds meaning for Angelo. He chose it because it is burned, scratched, and weathered. He wants us to feel sad. With an angry wave about to sink it, we feel sympathy for the hurt piece of wood.

Other Photographs

Angelo took hundreds of photos during the second week. He has many other photos of the lake, as well as seagulls on the shore, and several pictures of a fishing line.

4.2.2.3 Aisha

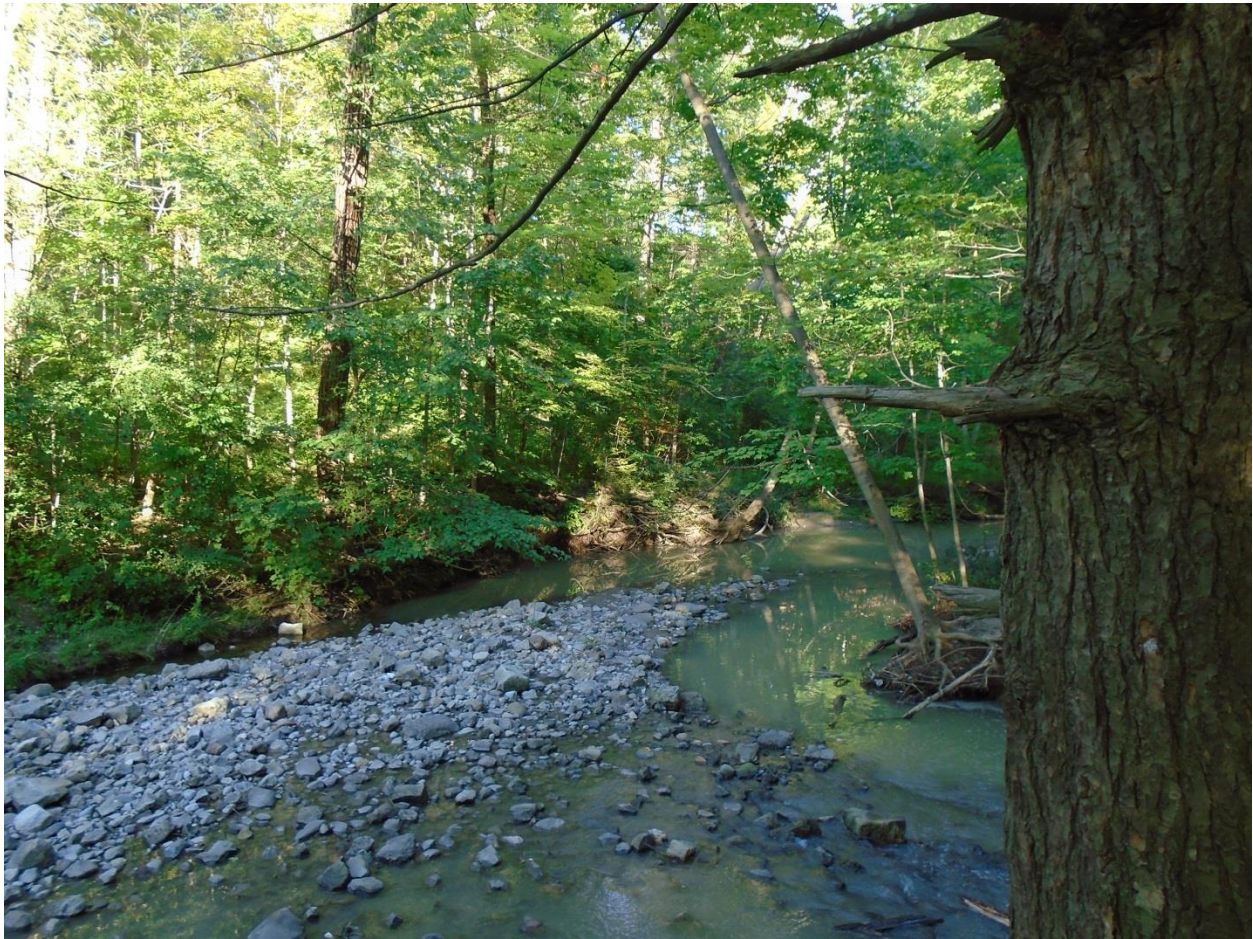


Figure 11 *Rocks in water with trees. Scarborough.*

Me and Rola have very different reactions to Aisha’s photograph compared with the youth. The youth have positive responses to it. The river, stones, and green space all work together to make Alex feel relaxed. She fixates on the stones in the water.

Kung Fu Kenny feels at peace looking at it, “because it looks so quiet and like that there’s no one there to bother you, like when you try and go to sleep.” The other youth laugh. Kenny continues that Aisha photographed the space because it has nice scenery.

Aisha's explanation aligns with the youth's responses.

Explaining her process, Aisha describes that, "I found myself walking and there was a river. I felt the peace of mind." Rola comments that she does not feel peace of mind, and I agree.

Rola feels apprehension: "I felt that—I don't know what's hiding, and I felt stuck over the stones, I don't know what's going to happen. It's muddy." But there is also fear for her: "I'm afraid, because I don't know what's going to be behind. Yeah because maybe I'll be having falls if I go there. I don't know what's going to be behind."

But Aisha insists, "I felt this picture is so clean, clean your body inside."

Rola asks how I feel. I tell the group I am frustrated because of the rocks. Aisha retorts, "I feel you can bury your frustration in this place." Her response makes me laugh.

I thought the image frustrated me during the discussion because there are rocks strewn in the water. Returning to the photo later, I find that I am agitated because there is no focal point, and so I am looking all over the image and cannot settle on one thing.

The photo was taken at a public park. Aisha enjoys going to parks, but says she does not spend a lot of time outdoors. While she does not frequent this park, she visits others more often and this scene makes her feel the same as the ones she does visit. She photographed it because she feels comfort in nature.

"I feel peace of mind," Aisha explains.

Other Photographs

The other photographs Aisha took for the second week were pictures of trees and close-ups of flowers.

4.2.2.4 Kung Fu Kenny



Figure 12 *Fountain in downtown Toronto with Toronto Blue Jays banners, “Canada 150” sign, and red flowers. Toronto.*

Kung Fu Kenny took this photo when we had just left Ripley’s Aquarium on the second research day. We were wandering outside in the early evening when he and Angelo ran to this fountain to take photographs. This was at the end of July, and signs for Canada’s 150th birthday were still displayed on buildings.

Angelo describes mess and chaos when looking at the image. He explains that the photo is not quiet.

After some deliberation, Rola and Alex both agree.

“It’s noisy!” They exclaim together.

“It’s not noisy!” Kenny retorts.

Aisha agrees with Rola and Alex, “I feel the noise of the city.”

Angelo continues that Kenny is focusing on the water, not the flowers, and he wants to show the water and the “150”.

Aisha comments that perhaps Kenny is showing he belongs in Canada.

“One hundred fifty,” Angelo says, in agreement.

Aisha continues, “Canada and the days. It’s obvious. And the years.” However she comments that, “Maybe he was supposed to take another photo in another place to show the belonging but he wanted to show here.”

I then turn to Kung Fu Kenny. Angelo, knowing now what I am going to ask Kenny, says in unison with me, “Why you take this photo!” We laugh.

“So I took this photo because it shows a transition. Like, from the plants, to the concrete, to the water,” Kenny says.

Angelo interrupts Kenny to say something in Arabic.

Rola translates for Angelo, “The water doesn’t look like water. It looks icy, or glossy.”

Annoyed, Kenny explains, “That’s ‘cause it’s frozen. The picture is frozen, it’s not moving.”

“Look, I know, I know…” Angelo remarks.

Kenny resumes: “Each group belongs to each group that is similar. For instance, the flowers belong to the flowers, the concrete belongs to the concrete, and the water belongs to the water.”

I ask him what this shows about his sense of belonging.

“The city, I think.” Aisha offers.

“Um, yeah it’s the city,” Kenny confirms.

He elaborates that “the whole vibe of the city is better than rural areas”. In a country in the Gulf, he was living in a city, but it lacked the opportunities Toronto has.

“There’s way more stuff here,” Kenny tells me.

Other Photographs

Kung Fu Kenny’s other images for the second week feature a Toronto skyline of apartments with the tip of the CN Tower appearing behind the buildings, and jellyfish from Ripley’s Aquarium.

4.3 Focus group discussions, participant observation, and transcription consultations

Data from the focus groups, transcript consultations, and participant observation that did not appear in the discussion of youths’ photographs is discussed thematically in the following section.

4.3.1 High education and career aspirations

Most of the youth are striving for highly regarded, advanced careers. Alex wants to be an engineer, Angelo a doctor, and Aisha a lawyer. The youngest of the group, Kung Fu Kenny is not sure what he could be yet, but he wants a job that others find intriguing. All youth wish to attend university.

Education is highly prized in Syrian culture. Unsurprisingly, it is a high priority for all the youth. They have a strong desire to excel in school.

Alex and Angelo repeatedly displayed an appetite for learning throughout the project, both in school and for what they could learn in the project. They did not attend school for the 6 years they were in Lebanon and are engaging wholeheartedly in school now. Rola translates for Alex, “For six years we didn’t go to a school. And then when we came here we are the first... A’s, A’s, A’s in school....”

“She’s so good in the Math,” Angelo tells me of his sister.

“Really?” I say.

“It’s 90%.” He continues.

“90%” Alex smiles.

“90%! Woo!” I exclaim.

“I’m 80%!” Angelo adds.

They were pushed forward one grade after three months of attending school in Canada.

While Aisha was not present during the discussion when the siblings discussed this, she spoke proudly of her love of school during the second group discussion, and suggests she does well in her classes.

Alex, Angelo, and Aisha seize whatever learning opportunity presents itself to them. They attend the ACCT Homework Club, and Alex and Angelo were attending summer school before they were expelled for missing a week when they attended the ACCT summer camp. They did not know they would be dropped from the program if they attended the camp. Alex and Angelo have also begun volunteering at a local food bank. Alex has set herself a goal of achieving 1000 volunteer hours by the end of high school.

The youth show pride in their achievements and when they answered questions or accomplished tasks well during the workshops and focus groups. During the workshops they would jot down notes and offer thoughtful answers.

During the first focus group, Alex shared that she was once able to tell a teacher something s/he did not know. Resourceful, Alex uses Google frequently to expand her general knowledge. Having researched the story out of interest beforehand, she was able to tell her class and teacher the story behind why engineers wear rings on their pinkies.

Kung Fu Kenny does not enjoy school, but realizes how important it is to a higher quality of life. It is therefore also a priority to him.

4.3.2 Pre-migration experiences of discrimination

While this project did not set out to learn of youth’s experiences prior to coming to Canada, these experiences have had a significant impact on them, and so often surfaced in conversations. This

information is important as it helps to better understand their experiences of adaptation in Toronto. All youth experienced discrimination in pre-migration contexts.

4.3.2.1 Bullying based on religion and ethnicity in a country in the Gulf

Kung Fu Kenny was born and raised outside Syria in a nearby Gulf Country. He appears to have the greatest awareness of social injustices of the participant group due to what he experienced in a country in the Gulf.

Kung Fu Kenny speaks very negatively of where he was raised. He gave many accounts of being mistreated based on ethnicity and religion. He is quite aware of discriminatory practices in a country in the Gulf for a boy of 15.

“People native to A country in the Gulf see non-Nationals as garbage,” Kenny tells me. “Non-Nationals can’t go to public school unless their parents work in the system. There is corruption... non-Nationals get in more trouble than Nationals.” In a country in the Gulf, only children born to native parents are granted citizenship. If you are born to non-National parents, you are not a citizen. Born to Syrian parents, Kung Fu Kenny was a non-National. He was never afforded the same opportunities as his National peers, and consequently treated differently based on this status.

He first became aware of discrimination during a French class when he was a young child. He recalls how the French teacher singled him out in front of his classmates and demanded, “what kind of Muslim I was. I was confused. I thought there was only one kind.” The teacher likely discerned this from Kenny’s name. From that point he actively showed his distaste for Kenny. The teacher’s attitude was not limited to minority Muslim children, but to Christians as well. This was a teacher who beat his students to discipline them.

Kenny told his father about the incident, which angered his father. His father then sat him down and began educating him on discrimination and corruption.

Discrimination and bullying were commonplace to Kung Fu Kenny in school in a country in the Gulf. He once got in a fight with an Egyptian student because the other student was bullying another child. The fight ended with both brought to the principal’s office. Kenny said that the principal is Egyptian and took the student’s side without a fair assessment of the situation. He let

the other boy off with no repercussions while he made Kenny clean his office. Kenny said that the principal was friends with the other boy's father. Kenny got into a lot of fights during this time.

The bullying was not limited to the adult educators at Kenny's school; it was rampant amongst the children as well. Some Christians in a country in the Gulf have small black crucifixes marked on their inner wrists. Kenny told me that other kids would twist the hands of Christian children to see what kind of Christian they were, and then blot out the crosses with black sharpie.

"How could they know how to act like this?" Kenny asks me the rhetorical question. "They get it from their parents."

4.3.2.2 Discrimination barring youth from school in Lebanon and Turkey

Alex and Angelo cited cost as a primary reason for not attending school in Lebanon. Aisha also stated this was the reason she did not attend school in Turkey. Rola supported this statement, "All Syrians have to pay independent for it, even if it's public schools. When you are Syrian you have to pay."

"Why is that," I ask.

"Because in Lebanon they are not the nicest," one of the participants tells me.

"All my friends in Lebanon don't go to school," Angelo explains, then continues in Arabic.

"All my friends in Lebanon are working. They cannot study," Rola translates for him. Alex adds something in Arabic.

"Even at school inside, they don't mix Syrians with Lebanese," Rola translates for the siblings.

"They're racist," a participant states.

"Okay, so for that reason they don't mix?" I say.

"Not all areas," Rola tells me.

"Syria helped Lebanon a lot," a participant continues.

“What?” Rola asks him.

“When there were rebels in Lebanon, Syria took in refugees right?” Kenny asks Rola.

“Yeah. Syria is very open arms. Not because it is our country, but because it opens its arms to all people,” Rola explains.

4.3.3 Discrimination and ethnic tensions in Toronto

Contrary to research into the experiences of refugee youth in Canada, the youth in my study stated they have not experienced discrimination in Canada.

Aisha stated that in Canada, if you are respectful to another person they will show you the same respect. “But if you are disrespectful,” the counsellor translates for Aisha, “others will be too. The issue starts with how you treat others.” Aisha continued that, “The moment I entered Canada I felt totally safe, very welcomed, and everybody seemed ready to help. There was no racism.”

Kenny stated that he has not been mistreated in Toronto based on his ethnicity and/or religion. However he does witness bullying. He stated that he will observe these situations as they unfold, and try to gather as much information as possible. He does not want to become embroiled in other people’s problems hastily, as fights are not always what they first appear. It may look like someone smaller is being treated unjustly, but perhaps they were in the wrong and Kenny could be forcing himself into a situation he has no business being in. If he knows the conditions for the altercation, he may intervene at that point.

Kenny described the most recent situation where he made the decision to intervene. He had attended the same ACCT summer camp as Alex and Angelo, where he witnessed a boy around his age bully a much smaller and younger child. He stepped in right away as there was a clear difference in size and power.

Kung Fu Kenny has an emerging awareness of social issues. This is evident from his accounts of being discriminated against and witnessing others be discriminated in a country in the Gulf which are detailed above, but also in the way he tried to find meaning in the other youth’s photographs.

In Alex's photo of the receding pylons, he observed that the pylons were all different. I asked him why Alex was photographing the scene, to which he responded, "We all might be different, but we all serve the same purpose." While he was somewhat sarcastic, his response shows that he can deconstruct images to find social meaning, an observation that other youth never had when studying each other's images.

Alex stated she has not experienced racism. However, Alex's experience at the Toronto reception house suggests that she was mistreated based on her gender, age, and potentially religion and ethnicity. On one occasion, a staff member at the reception house gave Alex cleaning supplies, walked out of the room, and locked it. She was expected to clean. Alex is small, shy, and wears the hijab, markers that may have prompted the reception house staff member to think she would not resist orders to clean the kitchen. Neither Angelo, a boy, nor Aisha, a girl who does not wear the hijab, were forced to clean by staff at the reception house.

Aisha also had a negative experience at the reception house which may have been based in discrimination. When it came time for her family to see the apartment in Scarborough they would be living in, reception house staff handed them a piece of paper with the address and told them to go on their own. Aisha explained how unfair this was. Her family did not know any English and did not know how to navigate the city. Aisha mentioned also that the food at the reception house was frequently 3-4 days old, and many families would have to buy food outside the centre.

Both girls shared these experiences with me after I asked in an informal, female-only environment.

Alex and Angelo both also stated that they have not experienced racism in Canada, however Angelo may be aware of ethnic tensions in his neighbourhood. He suggested this not in response to my question regarding discrimination, but to my question, "Have you made friends in Toronto?"

He stated that he has made friends of diverse backgrounds, but his closest friends are Arab, which include Syrian newcomer youth. To impress upon me how they watch out for him, he said they advise him to stay vigilant when he is outside and to not deal with everybody he meets in the Danforth, a highly diverse area of Scarborough, where he lives.

“They tell me some people cause trouble,” the counsellor translates for him. “I can immediately spot the difference between who is good and who is bad.” Other Syrian newcomer youth have reported to the ACCT that there are ethnic tensions between Syrians and other minorities.

4.3.3 Gender norms and expectations

This section discusses youth performances of gender which I observed throughout the project, which I find to be considerably gendered. This is important information to take into account when designing programs for newcomer youth.

4.3.4.1 Gender performativity

The youth did not speak directly about how their gender affects their daily life, but they revealed it through what they said, their photographs, and their behaviour.

Both Angelo and Kung Fu Kenny were more boisterous during the focus groups than Alex and Aisha. They would interrupt the conversation with unrelated comments and fiddle with objects that would make noise during the discussion. Kenny would often state he does not know what another youth’s picture is about. I did not mind nor did I find it disrespectful, but the difference was noticeable compared with the girls’ behaviour during the focus groups.

Aisha and Alex displayed more “polite” behaviour. They did not make interruptions, mostly spoke when it was “their turn,” and listened respectfully. Alex became more comfortable during the second focus group however, during which she would sometimes giggle and would say she does not know what a picture is about right away. She may have begun to imitate the boys’ behaviour.

The boys felt greater freedom to act less restrained, as masculine norms allow, but the girls likely saw such behaviour as unfeminine and disrespectful for themselves.

This dichotomy surfaced in what youth chose to share with me as well. While everyone was respectful in what they said, the girls gave less nuanced answers and stressed the fact that they are very thankful to be in Canada and are thriving. Both girls said they expect nothing more than what they have in Canada. I replied that I am not asking about expectations, but about desires. To

this Alex said she would always appreciate any help offered to her brother. Aisha, however, maintained that she does not desire for anything.

The boys felt comfortable to tell me negative experiences and admit what they would like in order to improve their quality of life. Angelo held no reservations in telling me he would love to have access to a tutor that can help him with schoolwork. He said that a gap of 6 years in education is significant and that his eagerness is not enough on its own for him to succeed. Kung Fu Kenny also noted that he has challenges with homework.

During a conversation about youth autonomy in the second focus group, these differences arose again. Alex and Angelo's back and forth here offer a good comparison as they are siblings and the differences are easily apparent. Although Alex is a year younger, Angelo suggests that she acts more maturely than her brother.

Alex speaks to Rola in Arabic:

"She tells me the time she is elder than him," Rola tells me.

"They say, you can go outside, but not you, because you are small," Angelo laughs.

"Oh," I say. "Do your parents let you go to places without Angelo? Can you go?" I ask Alex.

"Yes," Alex says.

"No," Angelo asserts, punching a fist into the palm of his hand.

"Don't do that," I tease Angelo. "She can go alone?" I ask Rola. "You can go alone?" I ask Alex.

"Yes," Alex repeats.

"You just don't want to," I confirm. "He goes a lot, and you don't want to.'

"Yeah," Angelo says.

"My parents go outside, I prefer to stay inside," Rola translates for Alex.

"I see," I say.

“My mother says “let’s go out with my brother”, I say “I don’t want to,” Rola translates for Alex. Alex adds an afterthought in Arabic.

“Or I go to Aisha,” Rola translates.

This exchange shows typical sibling rivalry between Alex and Angelo. It also shows gendered expectations of the siblings. Alex feels she acts older than her brother, meaning more appropriately and responsibly, as is expected of her.

Angelo has a momentary display of hegemonic masculinity, the fist punching into his palm in response to Alex’s assertion of independence, and the disagreement the siblings have about her freedom to do as she pleases. I am directing questions at Alex here though, and Angelo drops the subject.

Masculine expectations on Angelo impact his sense of responsibility to the girls. I would return with the youth on the TTC to Scarborough in the evening after research activities. As going to the ACCT office was out of the way for the youth, we would go to the nearest subway station and then part ways from there. I am not familiar with the TTC in Scarborough, and before I could Google which bus to take to the office, Angelo would direct me to the appropriate bus. He and Alex would then accompany Aisha home to make sure she could get there safe. Angelo said it is his responsibility, as he is the oldest and a boy.

4.3.4.2 Part-time work

Gender expectations are seen in the boys’ desire to find part-time work. The girls’ made no mention of desiring a part-time job.

Kung Fu Kenny does not have any work experience, which he says makes it difficult for him to find a job. I suggested that he explore volunteering that involves his interests. He says that he is already volunteering and will have around 200 hours by the time he graduates if he continues at the pace he is going.

Kenny knows that his age and lack of experience are an issue, but is wary of being taken advantage of. He tells of a friend who worked under the table, and never received the money he was owed.

During the first focus group, Angelo started chatting about the job Aisha's brother has now. He lays parquet flooring with his uncle.

"It pays cash by the way," Rola states.

"It pays well," I comment.

"But it's his uncle, so he can trust his uncle," Kenny states.

Kenny desires the arrangement Aisha's brother appears to have. Rola is implying that the boy works under the table. Since it is for a family member, Aisha's brother is much less likely to be taken advantage of.

During the first focus group, Angelo also expressed his eagerness for a job. Angelo is acutely aware of his impending adulthood. He states that when he turns 18, "I will minimize talking and maximize listening." He is turning 18 the following month. He made a comment that Starbucks has a new initiative to hire Syrian newcomers, and that he would be applying. By the time of the Scarborough transcript consultation several weeks later, Angelo had a part-time job painting and laying ceramic tiles. He showed me pictures of the work he has done that looked very professional.

By the time of the exhibition, Kenny also found a job: he was invited to work at a project he participated in the year before.⁴

4.3.4.3.1 Familial obligations

Gendered norms and expectations intersect with familial obligations for the youth. The division of household responsibilities for the youth is gendered. Like the Sudanese, Karen, and Afghan refugee youth in the study by Guruge et al. (2015) and Shakya et al. (2014) that looked at how youths' roles and responsibilities had changed upon setting in Canada, the recently settled youth in my study also took on additional roles in the resettlement context.

On July 21, 2017, the first day of research activities, Aisha asked how long the activities would take as she was expected to accompany her mother to the doctor. I reminded her that we were going downtown and that it would take all day. Aisha stepped out of the office to call her mother.

⁴ I am not disclosing where Kenny works to protect confidentiality.

She said she would not be going with her mother and would come with us. During the morning of the group's second meeting, on July 28, 2017, Aisha did not show up. We were not able to get in touch with her, and we were worried as she had come into the office earlier that week to show Rola the photographs she had taken for the project. The following week, we learned that she did not join us as she had to accompany her mother to another doctor's appointment. Aisha's brother was unable to participate in the project and so I cannot say if the same would be expected of him. However, being the oldest sister in the family, she was likely obligated to participate in caretaking responsibilities.

Such a comparison is easily discerned with Alex and Angelo. During the same conversation as Alex and Angelo's disagreement regarding Alex's autonomy, Angelo shared that he is mostly in his house to sleep, but is outside as often as he can.

"He is homeless!" Rola joked, laughing loudly.

While Angelo has a genuine desire for exploration, he feels confined by familial obligations.

"I feel very... sit at home. I want to go outside because my brother, he is so... noisy..." Angelo says, then continues in Arabic.

"Annoying," Rola translates for him.

"Annoying. I like sit at home, when my family goes outside," he finishes.

The burden of care for his brother ends up falling more heavily on Alex.

Alex helps their mother with household chores and particularly with care for their brother, but she echoes her brother's sentiments about the burden of care for their brother as heavy. In Lebanon, Alex was expected to help their mother a lot more with their brother's care than she does now. Alex cites this as one reason for not being able to attend school in Lebanon. In Canada, the government provides a social worker to come for a few hours every week to help their mother, and this has helped both their mother and consequently Alex as she has more time to her own pursuits now.

This is not to imply that Angelo flees responsibility from his family.

Angelo worked as a hairstylist for 3 years in Lebanon to support his family, a contribution crucial to their survival in Lebanon. One of the major motivators for this was that his brother needs medication, which is very expensive in Lebanon. The medication costs USD \$700 and lasts only one month, Angelo told me.

His father had been working in some form of printing in Lebanon, but the money he made went towards covering the rent of their apartment, which only had a bedroom and living room. The year before the family left Lebanon for Canada, his father fell ill and Angelo became the sole breadwinner.

In Lebanon, Angelo had initially worked as a barber. However he quickly noticed that women tipped more than men, so he became a hairstylist for women. He can expertly cut and colour women's hair. I notice at this time that he puts a lot of effort into doing his own hair. Angelo worked long hours, leaving the house at 6 am and returning at 1 am, but enjoyed the job. His older Lebanese co-workers took him under their wing and acted as mentors to him.

Angelo's aversion to remaining in the home however does show how expectations for Angelo and Alex are different based on their gender, and how it limits autonomy for them. Angelo had to work, and Alex had to take care of their brother.

4.3.4.4 Marriage

Before the transcript consultation with the newly settled youth, there had been a workshop at the Scarborough ACCT office for youth that touched on marriage. It had come out that two other girls present at the session, aged 15 and 16, were already engaged. The issue was brought up during my chat with the youth.

Angelo was flippant about marriage:

"I have no thought of marriage right now," his dismissive Arabic is translated for me. "I need a house, a car, and career first."

I direct my attention to Alex. Before I speak, the counsellor says, "It is different for her, she will be chosen." Alex does not react to this statement. She says that right now it is too early to think about getting married, she does not want to be married before university.

While the siblings both prioritize some of their personal aspirations, their expectations of what they must prioritize before marriage is different. Alex wants to at least start attending university, while Angelo needs the big material milestones of a car, a house, and a well-paying job. In Syrian culture, a man will choose Alex as his wife, and he will be expected to provide a car and a house through a well-paying job. Since Angelo is male, he is expected to provide this for the girl he will eventually choose to marry.

I was not able to ask Aisha's opinion about marriage as her mother arrived to pick her up from the ACCT before I broached the topic.

4.3.5 Dis/ability

Ability was touched on by Alex, Angelo, and Kung Fu Kenny briefly through physical exercise, while disability and illness were themes that surfaced through Alex and Angelo's contributions to the focus groups, transcript consultation, and Alex's work for the project.

Right before the Scarborough transcript consultation, Alex had challenged me to an arm wrestle.

"No I'm going to lose," I told her honestly.

"No please, I would very much like you to try," she implored. Angelo watched us, amused.

We positioned our right elbows on the table and clasped hands. Angelo counted down from three.

"Go!" He exclaimed.

I put all of my strength against Alex hand, but her hand pushed mine down within moments. Before 15 seconds was up, I had lost.

Alex is physically strong. She loves exercising and engaging in a variety of sports. She does weights at home, where she also practices Zumba. She is bothered by her height however, aware that she is much shorter than average. She is conscious of it in daily life, and said it affects her health negatively. This was the only time health of the youth themselves was addressed directly by the youth.

Ability was only referenced directly in the boys' contributions regarding physical activities they enjoy. Kung Fu Kenny joined the cross country team last year. Angelo remarked that he enjoys exercise. Indeed, Angelo is energetic and always seems to be moving.

Disability was spoken about directly by Alex and Angelo in reference to their 8 year old brother, who has a 'severe' form of Autism. They describe their brother as "noisy" and incapable of speech. He requires a great deal of attention, and is difficult to care for, a responsibility that primarily falls on the siblings' mother, but is shared with Alex.

Alex and Angelo love their brother fiercely. Alex flipped through photos on her phone, and stopped at one of her younger brother beaming at something out of the camera's sight.

"This is my brother," she proudly told me.

Angelo also showed me a video on his phone of him and their brother at the pool. Angelo is playing with him near the water and right before the video finishes, he kisses his brother protectively on the forehead.

During the first focus group, the siblings mentioned that their brother never learned to speak. During the transcript consultation, Angelo commented that their brother, for the first time in his life, has learned a few words since moving to Toronto, and in English too.

Since settling in Canada, the family is provided with a support worker by the government for the youngest child. The support worker cares for the boy a few hours each week. The family also receives the boy's medication for free. Relief of this financial burden along with the support of the caretaker, has had a positive impact on Alex and Angelo's family.

Another health stressor of Alex and Angelo's family is the declining health of their father. Angelo mentioned that he became the family's sole breadwinner when their father became ill a year before leaving Lebanon. During this project, their father developed serious health complications during the time of the exhibition.

4.3.6 Adventure-seeking and escape

The youth seek out adventure. This is not quality of being a Syrian newcomer alone, but very much a healthy aspect of adolescent behaviour. However, the youth in this study showed a

tendency to use adventure-seeking as a coping mechanism related to escaping prior and current hardship. I observed this during our outings in downtown Toronto after research activities were done for the day and during the focus groups. As I did not want to make an assumption about adventure-seeking, I asked about this directly at the transcript consultation.

Angelo and Alex both expressed that adventure is a release for them, which they desire in Canada as they have greater freedom to enjoy adolescence. Angelo stated he wants “to feel free.” He was not a teenager in Lebanon but now he can be. The youth lacked opportunities in Lebanon, and now seek excitement.

Alex and Aisha are exhilarated at the prospects or ideas of physical risk related to heights. This was first seen in both girls during our visit to the CN Tower. We were in the lower pod, when I spotted an elevator that leads to the upper pod. Not realizing we had to pay for this service, I asked the youth if they wanted to go higher. The girls were ecstatic with the prospect. Alex was particularly bubbly as she thought we were going to walk around the top of the tower strapped to a harness, an idea that also excited Aisha. I realized during this time we had to pay to access the elevator, and apologized to them that we actually would not be able to go. Before I could explain why, Alex nodded knowingly, “Oh,” she said, “eighteen plus.” Alex thought we could not go because they were underage.

Alex’s excitement concerning heights was seen again in her response to Kung Fu Kenny’s aerial photograph of Mississauga at night time.

Angelo also seems to seek excitement. In the outdoor viewing area of the CN Tower, Angelo had jumped over the bannister onto the metal cage that protects visitors from the perilous drop. He insisted on a picture beside a sign that indicated people are not allowed on the cage. When we were sightseeing downtown, Angelo ran energetically around photographing and filming anything that caught his eye without attention to potential repercussions. His scattered photographing irritated the girls. At one point there was a film crew filming a skateboarder doing tricks, and Angelo walked right into the scene to get a better shot. The videographer asked him to leave.

For Kenny, adventure is mainly sought through gaming. The pull to gaming for Kung Fu Kenny is multifaceted. There is the undeniable social element. He cherishes the times he gamed with his

cousins in Syria, but online gaming allows for interaction with others from the comfort of your room, and the anonymity to shed expectations of how you should act. You can be physically anchored in Mississauga, but share the same virtual space as someone from Syria and others from anywhere else in the world. The other aspect is the fantasy.

“You can experience lives that are impossible,” Kenny told me during the transcription consultation. “I can be a dragon tamer for a second, join the military. But in real life, there are no dragons and I’m not joining the military,” he explained.

However, the adolescent penchant for adventure was seen in Kenny when he explained his process of taking the night time photo of the Mississauga cityscape. He wedged his hands over the balcony and almost dropped the camera in order to capture an interesting photo.

4.3.7 Unemployment in newcomer parents

Aisha, Alex, and Angelo’s parents have not found work in Canada. Their difficulty in finding employment is affected by their lack of English language skills. This aligns with the 2007 IRCC report on the PSR program that found it takes GARs, the program through which their families entered Canada, a lot longer to find work compared to PSRs. GARs typically have lower levels of English language proficiency and do not have the level of individualized support as PSRs do from their private sponsors. The youths’ parents’ lack of employment means the families depend on social assistance, which will prevent families from allocating money for youths’ leisure pursuits.

Kung Fu Kenny’s parents are employed full-time as educators. They both speak English fluently, which was critical for them in finding employment. Since his parents are working Kenny’s family is in a better financial position than the newly settled youths’.

5.0 Discussion of findings

The following analysis of the photographs, focus group transcripts, transcript consultation notes, and field notes in this discussion draws on the Capabilities Approach, critical feminist perspectives, as well as spatial perspectives in refugee studies and children and youth geographies. I use an intersectional analysis within these discussions that considers gender, ethnicity, ability, religion, prior refugee status, and time spent in Canada. Sexual orientation was not addressed in this project. I look at the gendered dynamics within the group for implications for youth programs and future research. I list the capabilities that youth value, consider what value youth place on these capabilities, why they value them, and how they are using these capabilities.

5.0.1 Capabilities that youth value

The capabilities that youth in this study value were both explicitly identified by youth and identified out of analysis of the data. These capabilities are as follows:

- Education and Learning: being able to access and learn from educational opportunities which includes opportunities outside of school
- Self-Expression & Self-Representation: being able to represent oneself as one pleases and express thoughts, feelings, and emotions through the arts
- Mental Well-Being: being able to sustain mental health, which includes the ability to cope with stress
- Physical Well-Being: being able to sustain physical well-being, which includes the ability to pursue activities that promote physical health and access to quality healthcare
- Career and Paid Part-Time Work: being able to pursue paid work opportunities without restriction
- Relationships: being able to form and sustain social relationships in multiple spheres of life
- Respect: being able to be treated with dignity and not be subject to discrimination
- Decision-Making Power: being able to exercise autonomy in making decisions for oneself
- Mobility: being able to move without constraints

- Time-Autonomy: being able to exercise autonomy in determining how time is spent
- Space and Place: being able to feel a sense of belonging to a safe place

5.1 Education and learning

Education is identified by youth as a high priority. The newly settled youth love school and have high motivations for learning. Kung Fu Kenny does not enjoy school, but as his parents are educators he is expected to do well and so school is a priority for him. School success is highly valued in Syrian society and youth have families that prioritize education.

Youths' appetite for knowledge and skill development is not confined to school, as they view volunteering and extracurricular activities as pathways for learning. It also extends to English language learning. They have developed competencies for excelling in school, and know how to study diligently for effective learning gains. They apply this capability in other learning environments.

Like youth in the reviewed studies (Davy et al., 2014; Shakya et al., 2010; Phan, 2003), the youth in this project use high educational aspirations to overcome educational disruptions and lack of opportunity they experienced pre-migration.

5.1.1 Education through school

Influenced by Syrian culture and their family's wishes for them to excel in school, all youth see education as the primary path to doing well in Canada, and so place a high value on it.

The youth perceive a difference of teaching style in Canadian classrooms compared to Syrian classrooms. They feel that in Syria teachers were too strict, but in Canada they are "careless." The youth feel Canadian teachers do not care about their students' academic progress.

Consistent with the literature reviewed for this research, the youth that came into Canada as government-assisted refugees (GARs) experienced significant disruption to their education (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). Alex and Angelo missed 6 years of school in Lebanon and Aisha missed 3 years. Kung Fu Kenny did not experience disruption to his education.

Because of these educational gaps, the newly settled youth have been placed in academic grades a few years below the grades they have been in. While Alex and Angelo were moved up a grade

after three months of school, ambition, as Angelo put it, will not be enough for them. Along with the language barrier, they have needs that will require individualized support to continue progressing. While they are able to access educational opportunities through the ACCT, the Homework Club does not cater to the academic needs of older teens. Kung Fu Kenny does not face the same educational barriers as the newly settled youth, but noted that he experiences challenges with homework.

5.1.2 Gendered dimensions of participation in educational settings

Exceling in school cultivates respect from their families and communities, which is particularly important for girls as they have fewer options for gaining and maintaining respect than boys. This was reinforced in the focus groups through Alex and Aisha insistence on doing well in Canada, Alex's pride in consistently achieving "A's, A's, A's" in Canada despite significant gaps in her schooling, the girls' pride in being congratulated by me when they gave thoughtful responses during the project, and their tendency to exhibit "model student" behaviour during the project workshops and focus groups. Angelo also exhibited pride in his good marks, but mentioned that his marks were not as high as his sister's and he did not seem to mind. While he was also proud of demonstrating his engagement with his photographs, he did not seem as preoccupied with this as Alex. Both Angelo and Kung Fu Kenny, as mentioned in the previous chapters, had a markedly different disposition from the girls during the focus groups. While Kung Fu Kenny was not as active during the focus groups as the other youth, Angelo had a tendency to try to get my attention during discussions. The girls did not bring extra attention to themselves. While this is a case study of a few youth, this dynamic among the youth supports other research that finds that boys monopolize teachers' time in classroom settings (Warrington & Younger, 2000, 495). These attitudes suggest that education for the girls, and the way they must conduct themselves in a learning environment, is a higher stakes pursuit for girls than for the boys.

5.1.3 English language learning

Their desire for education as a capability to do well in Canada includes learning English. The newly settled youths' level of English competency is understandably low as learning a new language takes a long time, but their desire to learn it is high and was enacted repeatedly through

the project. They utilize their capability for learning in pursuing English language learning where they can.

The first words Angelo said to me when he joined the project were that, “English is so hard, but I want to learn because I want to understand.” Not being able to communicate in daily life through the common language negatively impacts quality of life. Learning English will naturally expand the youth’s opportunities in Canada for work, education, and friendship. The youth tried to communicate in English with me where they could, asking for clarification when they encountered words they had not known before. While they are finding their speech to be slowly improving, they are worried about having to learn English reading and writing when they start school again in the Fall. Aisha stated that her ESL class does not promote English language learning as the instructor often defaults to Arabic. When an ESL instructor frequently communicates in Arabic to his or her students, students are not learning English as efficiently as they could as they speak in Arabic to feel more comfortable.

5.1.4 Learning through volunteering and extracurricular activities

Youth see that opportunities to acquire skills do not only exist within the school setting. The newly settled youth volunteer at a local food bank, and Kung Fu Kenny has volunteered in the past. They see volunteering as a way of engaging in the civic life of their communities, to acquire skills, and to build their CVs. By volunteering, they understand they will build new relationships with people, begin to feel they are a part of a larger community, and gain Canadian work experience. One of their motivations to participate in *Making Familiar* was to learn.

5.1.5 Youth-learning in the project

The youth had never participated in a participatory photography project before this study. They take photographs on their phones in their leisure time, but were new to critical thinking in photography.

Through the project, youth learned technical knowledge of how to use a camera and basic editing on Photoshop. They learned how to compose a photo in order to convey their feelings, suggest a narrative, to be visually interesting, and to prompt the viewer to ask questions. They also learned how to read photographs and how to talk about them. As we broke down each photograph of the

youth to see how it functioned, youth learned how ambiguity in an image encourages curiosity in the viewer. They strove to incorporate mystery in their photographs.

They were engaged in improving their images. In some of the photos, there was a marked difference between photographs from the first to the second week. Angelo, for instance, moved from creating posed scenes in his photographs to taking candid pictures, taking into consideration how his aesthetic choices affect the viewer. Alex complicated her photographs to have viewers experience a dimension of her embodied experience of daily life. Aisha manipulated objects within the photographic frame to create multiple meanings. And Kung Fu Kenny further experimented in his approach to picture-taking to create enigmatic images.

5.1.5.1 Positive support from adult mentors encourages youth engagement

The youth responded with increased engagement to positive reinforcement from educators/authority-figures. As I was facilitating the project, I took on part of this role. I was positive, engaged, and took care to show what they shared with me was valued.

I was excited by the engaged responses youth gave to the images they took for the project. This encouraged further engagement from the youth. For instance, I congratulated Alex for her thoughtful treatment of her photographs during the first discussion, which Angelo noticed. He acknowledged how his sister incorporated what she learned in the workshop, but that he had not. I encouraged him to try in the photos for the following week. His photographs the next week showed a much deeper engagement. He continued thinking about his photographs after the exhibition, engagement that was seen during the transcript consultation, when he further elaborated on the meaning in his photograph of the angry wave on a Scarborough beach.

5.2 Self-expression and self-representation

While the project was designed for youth self-expression, youths' self-selection to be in the study demonstrates they value self-expression and self-representation as capabilities and utilized it through thoughtful engagement in their photographs. No one directly identified self-expression and self-representation during the focus groups, but their importance to the youth was repeatedly revealed in the focus groups when youth spoke about their photographs. These images were taken and edited in a way that show youths' personalities.

Kung Fu Kenny seemed to prioritize creative self-expression to a greater extent than the newly settled youth. Unsurprisingly, the girls' desires for and ways of self-representation differed from the boys'.

Kung Fu Kenny strove for all of his photographs to be visually stimulating. His experimentation with approaches to photography suggests that he wants the viewer to be curious, to consider his technique unique and creative, and to think of him as unique and creative. Kenny's articulation of artistic process show his attitude towards self-expression and, by extension, self-representation. During the Photoshop workshop at CSV, Kenny spent his time making drawings on his blurry photograph of Mississauga at night (Fig. 7). When he explained his process, he talked about how he wanted the photo to look like films that randomly interject cartoons into live action scenes, and why he wanted the picture to be unfocused:

"...you know when you're sometimes watching movies and they do a drone shot and speed it up? When it's in a city and all the cars are just driving by? That's sort of the idea I was going for." He is emphatic in his description. The importance of the image to him is the way it looks and his process in creating it.

In the photograph of the PS4 light (Fig. 8), Kenny revisited showcasing an interesting visual effect: "It just stretches onto it," he said of the blue beam. "If I could make it better, I would make it so the light goes in straight," he mused. The picture alludes to one of his favourite hobbies, gaming, through which Kenny is able to express and create new identities for himself as he can, "experience lives that are impossible."

While he does not directly identify self-expression as a priority, Kenny enacts this capability on a daily basis through gaming and the way he chooses to present himself as a boy who is creative, into alternative culture, and has a sense of social justice; who games, wears Vans, loves rap, likes photography, etc. The prioritization materialized in the project through his engaged articulations of his artistic process. As a newcomer teenage boy trying to construct an identity for himself, these alternative modes of self-expression and self-representation set him apart from a sole ethnic identity, because he is likely rebelling against the cultural expectations of his parents, but also from a mainstream Canadian one. Kenny is trying to find himself on his own terms.

The newly settled youth also had creative approaches to taking photographs, but were less experimental than Kenny. One reason for this discrepancy could be that Kenny has had more opportunities to explore his interest in photography than the others. However, the subject matter of Kenny's photographs is mostly his own capability for self-expression and interest in popular culture, whereas the subject matter of the other youths' photographs included self-expression but was variable.

Both Alex and Angelo were engaged in the artistic processes of their work. When Alex spoke about the photograph she captured through a construction fence (Fig. 1), she was demonstrating that she followed what she learned in the workshop and that she put thought into composing her image. When describing her photograph of the receding pylons (Fig. 3), Alex was again enthusiastic. Alex's attitude suggests that she enjoyed assuming an artist's identity for the project. However she maintained a "serious" focus in her subject matter of only photographing sites that are related to her career aspirations in the "What is important to you?" week of the project. She does not seem to have an artist's identity outside of the project, however she does put a lot of care into her personal style of dress. She also expressed interest in participating in future arts activities through the ACCT. This, combined with her engagement in the project, demonstrate that self-expression is an important capability to Alex which she enacts in ways and spaces that are socially sanctioned.

Angelo's photographs are emotive and demonstrate investment in the project. He took hundreds of photos each week. He has a great interest in photography and, like his sister and Kung Fu Kenny, found it important to communicate his artistic process. He was excited to describe his process of taking the photograph on the Scarborough beach, and demonstrated that he is willing to put himself in situations of small risk to get an exciting and unique photograph.

Angelo enacts his capability for self-expression in his life through his own photography he captures on his cell phone, his social media activity, and part-time work that requires an artist's eye and skill. In Lebanon, he found success as a hairstylist and in Toronto he is now renovating houses. The bathroom of which he showed me pictures looked professionally done, and he was proud of his work. Angelo seeks out opportunities that allow for self-expression while promoting self-sufficiency.

Curiously, Aisha did not have such photographs as the other youth. Her photographs were taken to communicate clear things about herself. She did not seem to have a great interest in artistic self-expression and her photographs are not nuanced: she took a photograph of books because she loves school and she photographed a park because she finds it peaceful. She was not injecting deeper meaning or emotion into her images. This is perhaps because she was not as interested in artistically engaging with the photographic process and/or she was not comfortable revealing information about herself. The subject matter of her photographs and most of the responses she contributed during the focus groups were generic and show what is expected of newcomer Arab girls: to excel in school and to have respectable interests. This suggests that Aisha desires to be represented as serious about her school while adhering to cultural expectations of femininity.

In summary, the youth's photographs deal with personal development and identity. Through the discussions that their photographs prompted, other themes arose that show how youth value peer and familial support, but in the photographs they felt free to focus on their own feelings, desires, and perspectives. This shows that the youth saw the participatory photography process as an opportunity for positive self-expression.

5.3 Mental well-being

Mental health is addressed by youth as seeking adventure, escape, and wanting "to feel free" but they also seek support from trusted mentors. Youth seem to desire experience seeking, "a desire for new experiences, a change in life-style and stimulation of the mind and senses" (Ball et al., 1984, 257), and possibly adventure-seeking, "a desire to engage in sports or physically dangerous, risky pursuit," (Ball et al., 1984, 257). This is typical adolescent behaviour, but the youth use it as a coping mechanism to current and mostly prior hardship.

The youth who have been in Canada for 5 months seek adventure through exploring what Toronto has to offer, while Kung Fu Kenny mostly seeks adventure in gaming. In video games Kenny can escape into alternate realities, which seems to be easier and more accessible to him than doing so in the offline world. The difference in youth's sense of belonging to Toronto is seen in the newly settled youth's photographs of nature, and Kenny's photograph of downtown Toronto during Canada's 150th birthday celebration (Fig. 12). Kenny's image shows he has

developed a greater sense of belonging to Toronto than the newly settled youth, in whose photos there are no Toronto-specific signifiers. Compared to pre-migration, opportunities for adventure have increased significantly for all youth in Toronto. They are able to be teenagers for the first time.

The youth showed their attitude towards excitement-seeking in the project through their artistic process. Alex, Angelo, and Kung Fu Kenny are excited by spontaneity and the idea of risk, healthy expressions of finding excitement on their own. For Kenny, it was wedging himself over the balcony to take a night time photograph of Mississauga. For Angelo, it was the risk of the oncoming wave swallowing the camera. For Alex, it was photographing construction sites and capturing images instinctively and without a plan.

Adventure-seeking for the youth is gendered. Alex is limited by cultural expectations of what is appropriate for young women. While she insists she is free to do as she pleases, she stays home most of the time while Angelo is constantly out of the house. She works stress off through Zumba and lifting weights she does at home, but Angelo, based on his photographs of him and his friend at a public gym, ventures outside to do so. Aisha, while she did express excitement at the idea of walking along the CN Tower strapped to a harness, showed less of a propensity to seek out adventure in the way the others do. She seeks out comfort in natural spaces in Scarborough. They make her feel calm and “at peace.” In line with her presentations of maturity, she enacts her capability for well-being in ways that are socially sanctioned by her community.

Mental health is a taboo topic in Arab culture (Dardas & Simmons, 2015). The idea of one-on-one counselling is not a familiar idea to most Arab newcomers and so mental health support needs to be culturally appropriate. Group sessions can make newcomer youth feel supported by other attendees and take the pressure off themselves. The newly settled youth regularly attend group youth sessions run by the ACCT youth settlement counsellors, and so the project demonstrated the ACCT is a source of mental health support for the youth. Their trust in the ACCT and its counsellors is also evidenced by the youth coming into the ACCT before research days to show Rola the photos they had taken.

5.4 Physical well-being

Youths' desire for living in a place that promotes physical health surfaced indirectly during the focus groups when Alex and Angelo spoke about their Autistic brother. They have an understanding of physical well-being as being grounded in time and space. While they did not discuss their family's access to health services in Damascus, they explained how the burden of care fell heavily on the family in Lebanon. In Canada, they receive care from a personal support worker (PSW) and also likely receive governmental support for his medication. This alleviates the family's burden of care significantly. Angelo alluded to the difference health services in Canada have made for the family when he mentioned that their brother has begun learning English words, which is incredible as he never learned Arabic. What affects the family unit affects the two youth, and access to better family healthcare has improved youth well-being in Canada.

The experience of Alex and Angelo is a snapshot of an emerging issue in the Syrian newcomer population in Canada. The ACCT has seen so many new clients with physical and mental disabilities that they hired a full-time Disabilities Counsellor in their Scarborough office. This change in client needs reflects the vulnerability of Syrian newcomers that came in through Canada's Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative. UNCHR has specific resettlement criteria that includes "medical needs" (UNCHR, 2011) and Canada screened for highly vulnerable persons.

Personal physical health was addressed directly by Alex in her photograph of the grass (Fig. 9). As a girl that is shorter than average, she is daily impacted by her experience of embodiment. Alex cannot change her height, but she can control her physical fitness and so she lifts weights daily and practices Zumba. She is proud of her strength, which she gleefully demonstrated when she beat me in an arm-wrestling match during the transcript consultation. Exercise expands Alex's capability for mental wellbeing, time-autonomy, decision-making, and self-expression, although not the kind of self-expression that youth were able to explore in this project. It enables her to have greater control over how she lives her life.

Angelo and Kung Fu Kenny only mentioned exercise in passing. Angelo likes to work-out with friends, and Kenny joined the cross-country team at his high school in Grade 9. As Aisha enjoys spending time in public parks, it can be inferred that she also enjoys taking walks. She did not

speak much about her daily routines and personal interests however, so it is difficult to interpret the importance of physical activity for Aisha. However both girls are physically active in spaces regarded as safe by their families and communities: for Alex it is in the privacy of her home, and for Aisha, in the socially sanctioned space of public parks where walking may not be perceived as exercise.

The youth spoke to the importance of exercise when chatting about what they would like to see more of at the ACCT. During the time of this study, the ACCT did not have sports or physical activities as part of their regular programming. The youth expressed they would like to have access to such programming. Their desire for sports programs and the siblings' discussion of improved access to health services for their family in Canada shows that youth value physical health as a capability for themselves and their families.

Given the differences in youth preference for where they like to exercise, schools and organizations should consider creating girls-only sports and exercise groups in addition to co-ed groups.

5.5 Career & part-time work

High career aspirations are evident from the youth's photographs and as well as our discussions. It is a priority for all youth, most of whom desire professional careers in male-dominated fields. While Alex and Aisha desire occupations dominated by men, their career choices are limited to professional jobs. As with the youths' high educational aspirations, youth use high career aspirations to overcome lack of opportunity experienced during pre-migration and localize this in the Canadian context.

There is a gendered difference in attitude towards part-time, paid work among youth that is influenced by cultural values. Both Angelo and Kung Fu Kenny are anxious about wanting to be making money while Alex and Aisha expressed no interest. As mentioned previously, during the focus groups neither boy had been working part-time, but by the time of the exhibition both had found a job. This demonstrates the pressures put on Arab boys to become self-sufficient, and the expectations that girls focus only on academic and other culturally appropriate pursuits.

This difference between the girls and boys is representative of gendered norms of Syria and the Middle East in general. Women in Syria are encouraged to only take professional jobs if they must work, and prohibited from working various service jobs (Nazir & Tomppert, 2005). Working menial jobs can be seen as putting girls and women in dangerous environments, and so such work is not sought out by women. In the Middle East, women earn more than men, but this is because only a minority of women work, and most who do only work in high-paying occupations. However, all men work and they work in all kinds of jobs, not just in professional occupations. In 1990, 20.67% of women were part of the labour force in Syria, down to 14.42% in 2017 because of the war (The World Bank, 2017).

In Arab culture, Lila Abu-Lughod writes that men are both the carriers of honour and autonomy (Abu-Lughod, 1986, 118). Men must be both the decision-makers and protectors of women. Protection means providing physical safety, safeguarding women's honour, and enacting the traditional male role of being the provider. Such an understanding of Arab masculinity hinges on the concepts of honour and shame, concepts upheld by women. Women are considered as representatives of both the community and family, whose appearances, behaviours, and gestures must be surveilled. While shame is mostly carried by women, women are able to access honour through modesty. In line with this, Angelo and Kung Fu Kenny are culturally expected to take on paying work as it will bring respect to them and their families, whereas Alex and Aisha are expected not to work before starting careers, as this responsibility belongs to men. For Syrian girls, work outside the home could be seen as dangerous and improper.

Paid work facilitates the creation of two capabilities: the capability for autonomy and the capability for respect. Angelo learned this from working as a hairstylist in Lebanon. The additional income he brought in was crucial to his family's survival, as his father's wage covered only the apartment's rent and Angelo's contribution paid for his brother's medication. After this father became ill in the family's final year in Lebanon, Angelo was the sole breadwinner.

Working for pay enabled Angelo to feel he was providing a substantial contribution to his family's well-being, to make friends at work, to gain the respect of both his coworkers and family, to have experiences outside the domestic sphere, and to realize that he is capable of self-sufficiency. The responsibility of providing the only income for a year in Lebanon further

demonstrated to Angelo that he has the capability of achieving things for himself and others while of fulfilling cultural expectations of masculinity.

Thus as a young Syrian man, Angelo understands the value of paid work, and sought it out within months of arriving in Canada. He sees Canada and Toronto as places of opportunity for a better life, and sees paid work as one of the ways he can work towards it. Home renovation is a male-dominated field. The opportunity to work in this job enables Angelo further autonomy, builds his social capital among family, peers, and Canadian society, and affirms his masculinity. Aisha's brother likely took the job laying flooring for similar motivations. He too likely sees himself as needing to provide for himself and for his family. While Kung Fu Kenny did not have prior experience working for pay like Angelo, as a male Syrian youth he also understands the social and personal value of earning an income, sees its potential for expanding his capability for autonomy and respect, and so was also eager and actively seeking a job during the study.

Alex and Aisha also desire autonomy and respect, but do not seek it out through paid work. In order to be respected by their families and communities, they cannot take on part-time work. However, Aisha's desire to be a lawyer and Alex's desire to be an engineer do break with traditional expectations for Arab women to remain within the home. Alex further breaks with expectations for women in the workforce as she desires to work in the hyper-masculine environment of construction. She has awareness of gender equality, and there is value in working alongside men in such an environment for Alex. She was visibly excited at the prospect of this in Toronto.

5.6 Relationships

A common theme all photographs share is the focus on youth identity and absence of family, friend, community support. This is a positive finding as it demonstrates youths' comfort level in exploring themselves through the project. It does not mean that youth do not value their family and friends. Youth revealed the importance of these relationships throughout our discussions.

All youth live in two-parent households with other siblings. None of the youth have extended family in Toronto except for Aisha who has an uncle. The youth place a high value on their relationships with their family, for maintaining friendships, as well as other relationships.

The youth have close relationships with their families, and see their parents, particularly their fathers, as role-models. Youth feel the greatest sense of obligation to their families over other relationships. In the siblings this is seen through Alex's caretaking responsibilities for her younger brother in Lebanon and in Canada, Angelo's monetary contributions to support the family in Lebanon, their pride when showing me photographs of their younger brother as well as photographs of their father, and in their expressions of care towards each other during the project. There is sibling rivalry between Alex and Angelo, but it shows how close they are especially when they laugh together, look out for another, and show pride in the other's achievements. They took many of the photographs for the project together. Alex appears in some of Angelo's images at the doctor's office, and Angelo was with Alex when she was photographing the construction sites. In Aisha this is seen through her obligation to attend a doctor's appointment with her mother over participating in the second day of research activities. In Kung Fu Kenny it is revealed through his discussion of his father, whom he spoke about in high regard. Kenny learned from his father that he was being discriminated against in the Gulf country Kenny grew up in. His father has contributed to Kenny's emerging sense of social justice. Kenny also prioritizes education because it is important to his father. Kenny's deference to his father's opinions and values, despite having normal teenage conflict with his father, shows how much he values their relationship.

The recently settled youth have made friends from diverse backgrounds, but their closest friends are Arab newcomers who have settled within the past two years. Alex and Aisha are best friends, and spend time with each other outside of the ACCT activities in which they participate together. The literature I reviewed held that limited knowledge of English prevents refugee youth from socializing with English-speaking peers (Stewart, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2005, Kilbride & Anisef, 2001). Youth in this project better relate to and communicate with other newcomer Arabic-speaking youth, but lack of English does not bar them from making English-speaking friends. Kung Fu Kenny has a few good friends he has made since attending high school, but he is a native English speaker and so language is not a barrier for him.

In Toronto, Angelo has Syrian friends for the first time since before he left Syria. In Toronto he encounters great diversity but in Lebanon the only friends he had were his Lebanese coworkers. Kung Fu Kenny did not have friends in the Gulf country he grew up in, however he cherishes the

times he spent playing Grand Theft Auto (GTA) with his cousins in Syria. Kenny is also able to make social connections through online gaming now in Canada. The girls did not talk about their pre-migration friendships.

5.7 Space and place

Space is an unavoidable theme in the research as I asked youth to photograph meaningful spaces in their lives. I am interested in space because it is socially constructed and can be shaped and transformed. The youths' photographs demonstrate that they enact capabilities as strategies of reterritorialization in order to construct identity and develop belonging in Toronto.

Photographs during the week of "What is important to you?" were of spaces of opportunity: educational and career-related opportunity for the newly settled youth, and opportunity for self-expression and self-representation for Kung Fu Kenny.

The representation of outdoor spaces is a similarity across the photographs from the week of "Where do you belong?" This is compelling because, a) youth feel belonging to spaces outside the home and, b) there is a thematic difference in the imagery based on time spent in Toronto.

In the photographs of the recently settled youth, natural spaces in Scarborough are represented. Alex photographed grass and stones (Fig. 9), for Aisha it was a spot in the park where stones cover a stream (Fig. 11), and Angelo photographed a turbulent lake shore (Fig. 10). These youth seek out healing spaces much like the way youth in Sampson & Gifford's (2009) study of place-making, well-being, and settlement in Melbourne, Australia do. In spending time in spaces they find calming, youth in my study are creating therapeutic landscapes (Gesler, 1999) in Toronto that help them feel more at home. This was emphasized by Aisha when she said that parks make her feel calm and "at peace."

Angelo's reflection on the photograph of the lake shore (Fig. 10) articulates the contradictory position that refugees and displaced persons experience in resettlement contexts: of being physically in one place but maintaining a sense of belonging to another (Olwig, 1997). Angelo feels "belonging to the sea in Syria" so strongly the first thing he does in any new place is "go directly to the sea." Many of his photographs are of water and characterized by sadness. When asked if he wants to return to Syria, Angelo said no, he has to make a new life in Canada. Alex

also articulated this contradictory position in her reflection of her photograph of the construction site behind a fence (Fig. 1), when she said that she wants to become an engineer so she can rebuild her family's house in Syria. The youth harness this position to pursue a better life in Canada by enacting the capabilities identified in this study.

In the conversation that followed Kung Fu Kenny's discussion of his PS4 light (Fig. 8), he revealed this contradictory position as well. When Rola asked him if he prefers to game in Canada or in Syria, he responded that in Syria gaming was fun because he did so with his cousins. In Canada he mostly games alone online with others. While he never lived in Syria, he has fond memories spending time with family when he visited in the summer.

Also during the week I asked youth "Where do you belong?", Kung Fu Kenny, who has lived in Mississauga for four years, took a picture of a fountain downtown with banners promoting the Toronto Blue Jays and a "Canada 150" sign in the background (Fig. 12). Another image from that week is of a Toronto skyline with high-rises and the CN Tower.

Kung Fu Kenny stated that he prefers the "vibe" of urban spaces over rural environments. He spoke about this in terms of cities having greater opportunity. In Toronto, he has many options for recreational and educational pursuits, which are opportunities that were not available to him in the Gulf country he grew up in. Part of this was a general lack of opportunities available in the country, another was the discriminatory attitudes pervasive against non-citizens that barred Kung Fu Kenny from engaging in life outside of what he could do at home. When the youth were discussing Kenny's photo during the focus group, Aisha had perceptively mused, "He belongs to Canada maybe?"

The natural spaces the newly settled youth photographed lack signifiers needed to locate them in Scarborough. The photographs (Figs. 9, 10, 11) are of water, trees, rocks, and grass, natural spaces that youth had made connections to in other places in the world before coming to Canada. The girls chose to include rocks in their photographs (Fig. 9 and 11), which are cultural symbols of strength in Syria. Both of these photographs are bright, colourful, and intended to elicit positive emotions. Thus, the newly settled youth feel belonging to spaces in Toronto, not places. This is likely because they are new to Toronto, and have not created bonds to specific locations yet.

In Kung Fu Kenny's image of the fountain (Fig. 12), he intends to show a transition from natural imagery, the red flowers, to the concrete of the city. Consciously or not, his choice to include the "Canada 150" sign speaks to a sense of belonging with Canada and Toronto specifically, not just an urban environment, because it identifies Canada and Toronto. The other youth photograph spaces that remind them of other spaces in the world. Unfortunately, Kenny chose not to include this photograph in the exhibition. It is his only positive, colourful photograph.

In other studies using the Capabilities Approach, space is conceptualized as "environment," which often discusses shelter. None of the youth were interested in discussing the apartments they live in. All photographs except Kenny's image of the PS4 light were taken outside the home.

I asked the youth about this abstention. Angelo stated he is never at home, he gains his experiences outside. But Aisha stated there is nothing for her to photograph in her apartment. Their given rationales show how cultural expectations of gender intersect with mobility, time-autonomy, and desire for self-representation to manifest in spatial processes of belonging. Angelo has always spent as much time as possible outside the domestic sphere; both in Lebanon, where he was working, and in Toronto, where he is enjoying many leisure activities. He is free to be outside the home for however long he pleases. Aisha, however, remained in the home in Turkey, and chooses to remain in the home in Toronto. Her preference to spend time at home is likely influenced by cultural expectations for Arab girls to refrain from participating in risky, unknown environments. Home is where it is always safe. However, photographing inside her family's apartment in Scarborough would have been an intrusion of her family's privacy. By choosing to photograph a generic space like the park she photographed (Fig. 11), Aisha is not inviting scrutiny of her life. She is representing herself as a girl with interests that her family and community would find appropriate. But this is only one side of a possible reading, as Aisha does find comfort in natural spaces.

Belonging is a complex feeling to verbally describe. Had this study only used focus groups for data collection, I may not have discerned a difference between the youths' sense of belonging to Toronto, especially because of our language barrier. All youth are happy to live in Toronto. It is a city of great opportunity for them. That commonality is clear from the focus groups. But it is their photographs that show different relationships to space and place. The newly settled youth

find belonging in natural spaces that reveal their contradictory position of feeling belonging to other spaces but being physically rooted in Toronto, but Kung Fu Kenny feels belonging to Toronto. It is likely too soon for the youth newly settled in Canada to have formed meaningful bonds with places in Toronto. They opted to photograph spaces that belong to other places in the world as well, and so are not Toronto-specific.

5.8 Mobility

The importance of mobility as a capability surfaced repeatedly in the project. Affected by gender, ethnicity, culture, income, and prior status as refugees, it is an issue discussed in participants' pre-migration experiences, in leisure activities they do in Toronto, and observed during the project. Settling in Toronto has expanded this capability for all youth, but it remains constrained to some extent for the girls due to gender and cultural expectations, and gaming for Kenny. The girls put less emphasis on mobility as a valued capability than the boys. The boys emphasized their desire to explore: Angelo physically explores Toronto and Kung Fu Kenny explores virtual landscapes in video games. The girls seek out opportunities that get them out of the house, like participating in ACCT activities and taking advantage of chaperoned outings, but did not express the same desire for exploration.

Related to their desire "to be free" and enjoy their adolescence, the youth seek out activities that enable learning and new experiences. All youth regularly participate in ACCT youth activities for these purposes and to socialize with other youth.

Both Aisha and Alex still spend more time at home than outside. They have household and caretaking responsibilities but spend their leisure time mostly at home. Alex emphasized her choice in this matter by saying there are times her mother will encourage her to go with the family somewhere and Alex will refuse: "My mother says, "Let's go out with my brother," I say "I don't want to. Or I go to Aisha." Nevertheless, the girls' mobility practices follow gender expectations for where young Arab women should spend their time: at home, at school, or in safe, socially respectful spaces under trusted adult, or their brother's, supervision.

Kung Fu Kenny is also mostly at home, but this is the case so that he can game. He is mobile in virtual first-person shooter (FPS) games exploring maps, engaging in combat, and completing objectives. One of Kenny's favourite games, Overwatch, is an online FPS in which players work

with a team of other players to fight against another team. Players have to work together to defend or secure locations in the game, and can select from a variety of characters depending on their play style. As the name implies, FPS is played from first-person perspective which enables players to feel as if they are experiencing gameplay themselves. COD, another FPS Kenny enjoys, is set in wartime and also a game you can play with other players. Kenny's gaming limits his real world mobility, but he does participate in ACCT activities and attends events such as concerts.

As Angelo is not expected to help with household duties, this allows him to enjoy greater mobility than his sister. The only other place he felt constrained initially was within the first few days at the reception house upon arriving in Canada, when he felt depressed. As soon as he began exploring downtown Toronto, he began feeling happy being in Toronto. Angelo's capability to be mobile developed in Lebanon when he worked all day outside of the home. It enabled him to form working relationships and friendships and contributed to his ability to be self-sufficient. In Toronto, he uses mobility mostly for leisure pursuits on his own and with friends, but also to pursue part-time work as a home renovator.

5.9 Respect

The capability for respect here means respect gained by the successful performance of cultural expectations of gender as well as not being subject to discrimination from others.

In developing other capabilities, youth learned the value of gaining respect from their families, friends, communities, and society-at-large as it builds social capital. Gaining respect from their families and others influences the youth to prioritize education. Conversely, the other capabilities valued by youth are expanded or constricted based on respect. For instance, youth mobility is constrained or expanded depending on what is considered appropriate for their gender. It would be inappropriate for Alex or Aisha to wander around Toronto without a socially sanctioned purpose and without a male relative chaperone, but it is culturally appropriate for Angelo to do so. He does not bring shame by spending his leisure time outside of the house, whereas Alex and Aisha would. Having the respect of their families and communities is important, so they follow the social rules.

Kung Fu Kenny is in a different position than the newly settled youth. He does not only experience pressure from his family to enact Arab masculinity, he has lived in Toronto for four years and is caught in-between two sets of cultural expectations. He tries to escape some of this pressure into gaming and alternative popular culture but cannot rid himself of masculine expectations shared between Arab and Canadian culture. Finding paid part-time work is a priority for Kenny as it will demonstrate his potential for self-sufficiency and ambition, desirable masculine traits for young men in Syria and in Canada. Success in school is highly valued in Syria and Canada. As there is pressure on Kenny to do well from his parents, to gain their respect, he prioritizes education. Respect is a powerful motivator for Kenny, and the other youth, to develop some capabilities while curtailing others.

Alex identified gender equality in the Canadian workforce as an improvement to living conditions compared to Syria. To be allowed participation in a male-dominated field and working environment is an exciting prospect for her, through which she perceives she will receive equal treatment and respect as men.

The capability to not be subject to discrimination is another issue. The youth understand what racism and discrimination is based on pre-migration experiences, but the capability for social justice is seen in Kung Fu Kenny. According to literature on immigrant and refugee youth, perceived discrimination is the largest factor negatively affecting adaptation (McBrien, 2005; Berry et al, 2006, 327). Unlike the reviewed studies on refugee youth in Canada, youth in my study did not report experiences of discrimination in Canada, although Alex's mistreatment at the reception house seems to have been discriminatory. The disparity may be explained by the length of time youth had lived in Canada for at the time of my study took place versus how long youth had been in Canada for in the literature I reviewed, differences in race and ethnicity, as well as context of arrival.

The reviewed studies mostly looked into the experiences of black refugee youth in Edmonton and Winnipeg who had been in Canada for several years and for whom there was no big movement in Canada to resettle. The youth in my study arrived in Toronto during Canada's Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative, during a celebratory time well-supported and popularized by most media shortly after Justin Trudeau's election as Prime Minister in 2015. Thus the initial environment Alex, Angelo, and Aisha entered Canada was vastly different from

the environment that youth in the reviewed studies were met with. The youth in the reviewed studies are also more visibly marked by their race and settled in cities with greater racial inequalities than Toronto.

Moreover, Alex, Angelo, and Aisha have not been in for Canada long, and have participated in limited aspects of life in Toronto. Given their positive experience overall however, if they do encounter discrimination in the future, they will encounter it having experienced a welcoming discourse from many Canadians and will be supported with this knowledge and other sources of support like their friends or resources like the ACCT.

It is important to highlight, however, that Alex's mistreatment at the reception house, though she does not identify it as discriminatory, was likely motivated by her gender, ethnicity, religion, and prior status as a refugee. The newly settled youth arrived in Canada during a time when the organization responsible for housing them would have been overwhelmed. However, a strain in resources and manpower is insufficient to explain Alex's experience and suggests discrimination.

The youth in my study all spoke about discrimination experienced during pre-migration. Discriminatory attitudes towards Syrians are cited by the newly settled youth as the primary reason they did not attend school in Lebanon and Turkey. Kung Fu Kenny has different pre-migration experiences, as he never lived in Syria, but he speaks about discrimination the most in-depth at school in a country in the Gulf.

As Kenny started gaming when he was six years old, there may be a correlation between gaming for him and his experience of discrimination in the Gulf country he grew up in. He would have started becoming aware of discrimination around this age, and gaming would have provided an escape from reality. Video games provide an environment where risks experienced in the real world are minimized (Gee, 2007). Players control their environment and their outcomes, and in competitive gaming, like Overwatch and COD, build social capital (Hsiao & Chiou, 2012). Games allow players to experience fantasy. Over time, given Kenny's uptake in gaming, it seems to have become an over-compensatory strategy.

Kung Fu Kenny has very supportive parents who educated him about discrimination. With their guidance, his experiences of discrimination contributed to an emerging sense of social justice and critical thinking. If he witnesses someone getting bullied, he will intervene on their behalf.

As demonstrated during the focus groups, he is also able to find social meaning in the work of others.

5.10 Decision-making power

The capability of being able to exercise autonomy in making decisions over one's own life was harder to identify out of the data than the other capabilities. The project was described as a "leadership opportunity" for youth during recruitment. As youth self-selected for the study, they may have seen this as a benefit. Decision-making power as a capability emerged when youth identified other priorities.

Alex values gender equality in the workforce in Canada. This expands her options for work in the future, as she can pursue intellectually-stimulating opportunities in male-dominated fields and environments that would not be permitted in Syria. Living in Canada has therefore increased her decision-making power in choosing a career. Of course this is not an entirely autonomous choice, as explored previously. Alex's choice of career is limited by cultural expectations of women that direct her towards choosing a professional career. Pressure from her parents to succeed in Canada will also influence Alex to choose a high-paying, highly regarded career. Parental pressure also influences the career choices of Angelo, Kung Fu Kenny, and Aisha.

Decision-making power over selecting a marital partner is circumscribed by cultural expectations of gender for the youth. The boys have the freedom to choose who to marry, whereas the girls "will be chosen" as the Settlement Counsellor during the Scarborough transcript consultation said. Living in Canada is unlikely to change this for newcomer youth.

Decision-making power over daily practices intersects with youth mobility and time-autonomy, and is again affected by cultural expectations of gender. As mentioned before, mobility for the youth is gendered in that the boys have fewer constraints for where they can go and what they can do. This is linked with have greater freedom to make decisions.

The project provided an opportunity for the youth to enact their capability for decision-making. It was an opportunity for the girls to participate in activities taking place in downtown Toronto which they may not have been able to do on their own. It created a safe but autonomous space

that encouraged the youth to explore their own ideas and interests and to develop critical thinking skills about these ideas.

5.11 Time-autonomy

Youth desire for time-autonomy intersects with other capabilities they value. Settling in Toronto has expanded this capability for youth as their pre-migration household and work responsibilities have lessened and opportunities to participate in learning and extracurricular activities have expanded. As mentioned earlier however, youth have assumed new roles in their resettlement context as is common for other refugee youth (Guruge et al., 2015; Shakya et al., 2014; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; Zhou, 2001).

Angelo no longer has to work full-time. Alex no longer has to help her mother take care of their younger brother full-time. Both, with Aisha, can attend school and pursue leisure activities.

Their enactment of time-autonomy is also gendered and seen through the leisure activities they pursue as well as household responsibilities they are expected to complete. Domestic work for the youth is affected by cultural expectations of gender. From our discussions, the boys do not seem to have household responsibilities but the girls are expected to participate in caretaking and household duties. This affects how much time youth have to pursue leisure activities. Cultural expectations also affect what leisure activities are pursued and where.

While Alex continues to have caretaking responsibilities, they are lessened since the government-provided PSW comes in weekly to assist with her Autistic brother. Being in school is also a major factor that frees up her domestic responsibilities, as Alex loves school and can dedicate a lot of time to homework after school. It is implied that Aisha has caretaking responsibilities as she opted to accompany her mother to the doctor rather than participate in the second research day of the project. I make this assumption, rather than think Aisha missed the day from a lack of interest in the project, because she came into the ACCT during the week to show Rola the photographs she had taken, demonstrating interest and pride in her work.

As already discussed, Kung Fu Kenny is an avid gamer. While gaming is a common activity pursued by all adolescents everywhere except very low-income countries, boys are socialized into gaming while girls are not. Many studies have found that boys also game far more than girls

(OECD, 2015). Alex and Aisha have no interest in games or in technology beyond basic use of their phones and the computer. They were bored during my conversation with Kung Fu Kenny about his gaming.

Refugee youth are up against considerable financial barriers (Stewart, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2005, Kilbride & Anisef, 2001). For families with low-income, the opportunity cost for leisure activities is high. The youth regularly participate in extracurricular activities free-of-cost through the ACCT, which they would not be able to otherwise. As the parents of the newly settled youth are unemployed, the families get by on support from the Canadian government. For Alex and Angelo's family, this support may be supplemented by Angelo's part-time work, but it is not known whether he has to contribute to the household income in Canada or whether he is able to save this money for his own pursuits. For Aisha's family, government support may also be supplemented with the money her older brother earns laying floors, but again it is not known what her brother does with his money.

Kung Fu Kenny's parents are employed as educators, meaning Kenny is able to enjoy hobbies at home that the other youth cannot access.

6.0 Conclusions

In this final chapter, I present a summary of the discussion from the previous chapter, discuss the value of participatory arts-based methods in the study, address how the ACCT is a capability-enhancing resource for newcomer youth, and offer implications and recommendations for programming practice.

6.1 Summary of discussion

Despite hardship during migration and resettlement in Canada, Alex, Angelo, Aisha, and Kung Fu Kenny are resilient. As youth who try to be active in their lives, they break with reductive and essentialist representations of Syrian refugees perpetuated in the media and humanitarian discourse. This challenged the preconceived notions of a viewer at the exhibition, as they expected the youth to present themselves in line with media representations of Syrian refugees, to exhibit some kind of passive or threatening essence of refugee Arabness. Those notions are so engrained the viewer rejected the legitimacy of the youth as refugees rather than considering the possibility that Syrian refugees comprise of all kinds of people.

Through the project, youth identified education and learning, career and paid part-time work, as well as adventure-seeking as priorities; the value of mental well-being, physical well-being, relationships, mobility, time-autonomy, respect, decision-making power, and belonging to space and place all emerged as capabilities through our discussions and participant observation. These capabilities intersect with one another, and are differently affected by cultural expectations of gender, ethnicity, stage of life, income, and ability. The promotion and restriction of youths' valued capabilities occurs at the individual level, intermediate level (immediate social context), and systems level (resettlement context). Youth enact these capabilities in ways of reterritorialization in Toronto to negotiate their sense of self.

Youth capability for learning and education is influenced by personal attributes as well as societal factors. Their desires to do well in school and pursue esteemed careers is driven by personal ambition and supported by their families who put a high value on educational and career success. It is also shaped by Syrian culture. The desire to do well is furthermore motivated by significant educational gaps. Youth enact their capability for learning by pursuing opportunities for growth in and outside the school setting, by engaging in their schoolwork,

continuously practicing their English, attending ACCT Homework Club sessions, exercising criticality of their ESL programs, seeking volunteer opportunities, as well as participating in ACCT activities, workshops, and sessions. The capability to learn and be educated expands if the conditions exist for youth to exercise autonomy in making decisions regarding how and where they spend their time. It is also interconnected with their capabilities to develop their mental and physical well-being, as poor health affects all aspects of life. Youth need individualized support to overcome education gaps.

Prioritizing paid part-time work is heavily gendered. Both boys are anxious about finding employment whereas the girls do not want part-time jobs. This is in accordance of cultural norms in Syria, where women are prohibited from working various service jobs (Nazir & Tomppert, 2005). The girls can only pursue professional jobs but both aspire to work in male-dominated professions.

Self-expression and mental well-being are co-dependent capabilities. Mental well-being is described by youth in terms of wanting “to feel free” and to experience adventure. These assertions are supported by youths’ excitement during new and stimulating experiences, whether in the real world or in online gaming, as well as their attitudes to their artistic processes that involved spontaneity and small, self-initiated risk. This understanding of mental well-being is affected by the degree of mobility and time-autonomy youth are able to exercise, which will be constrained to a greater extent for the girls. Youth self-expression and representation is regulated by cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity.

The Canadian healthcare system has expanded youth capabilities for physical well-being, time-autonomy, mental well-being. Alex and Angelo’s Autistic brother is beginning to learn English in Canada, after spending 8 years of his life never being able to communicate in Arabic. The family receives governmental support for the boy’s medication and through the support of a PSW who cares for the boy a few hours a week. This lessens the family’s stress and relieves Alex of some of her caretaking responsibilities which allows her to allocate more of her time for school or leisure pursuits.

While youths’ photographs focused on personal identity and development, the way in which they spoke about their close bonds with families and friends and acted towards one another

demonstrated how important social relationships are to them. Like in the reviewed studies (Stewart, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010; Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2005, Kilbride & Anisef, 2001), limited English is a barrier for youth in making friends with English-speaking peers.

The girls have less decision-making power and control over their time-autonomy and mobility than the boys. They have domestic responsibilities but their participation in activities out of the house must also be socially sanctioned, constraining what they can do, with whom, and where. In order to take part in activities, they must be chaperoned by a trusted adult or by their brothers. However, by actively engaging in learning activities, the girls are able to increase their mobility and have greater control over how they spend their time. As Alex identified gender equality in the workforce as something important to her, she shows how important decision-making is to her. She wants to have a say in what she does for a career.

Forming emotional connections to a place so as to feel rootedness and a sense of belonging is important for the adaptation process. It requires time and for the individual, intermediate, and systems level to be working together. This process should not be accelerated as rapid acculturation runs the risk of cutting the grieving process short for children, “disrupt(ing) a person’s concept of self” (McBrien, 2005, 340). The newly settled youth enjoy living in Toronto but do not feel belonging like Kung Fu Kenny, who has had years to make this connection with the city. Youth enacted this capability through engagement in the project but also demonstrate it through their enthusiastic participation in activities outside the house. While Kenny feels belonging to Toronto, he participates in activities outside the home less than the newly settled youth.

The willingness and comfort to share negative experiences and identify needed support is gendered for youth in this study. The boys were able to verbally identify support they need to improve their quality of life. The girls identified nothing for themselves but one suggested support for her brother with Autism. The boys also shared unsolicited accounts of negative experiences and hardship in a formal environment while the girls again did not. Both girls shared negative experiences at the reception house after I asked in an informal, female-only environment in each other’s company.

When the girls spoke about their negative experiences at the reception house, the boys were not present during most of this conversation, and so it is likely they felt comfortable saying it in a female-only environment. This conversation also did not happen in a formal context where I asked youth about desires, with a pen and paper in my hand, and so expectations of gendered propriety were also likely altered for the girls. This suggests that future studies of Syrian newcomer youth and newcomer youth in general could benefit from providing space only for girls that enhance an informal sharing environment, but only if youth already feel safe within the project as a whole.

Kung Fu Kenny's experience of discrimination in a Gulf country demonstrates how the impediment of one capability significantly constrains others (Ballet et al., 2011). The rampant bullying he experienced and witnessed affected his capability to form friendships, to have the respect of others, to participate in healthy expressive and self-representative practices, and to be mentally and physically healthy. It restricted how he spent his time and where and prevented him from forming an emotional connection with place. Kenny said he hated living there and is happy he no longer has to.

While the study focused on youth's experiences of settling in Toronto, the boys spoke unsolicited and at length about their pre-migration experiences. These experiences were formative for the boys, and I am a caring adult who showed genuine interest in hearing about them. This demonstrates the importance of providing a safe, confidential space for youth to talk about what is important to them in the company of others who will condemn discrimination they describe.

The newly settled youth's experiences at a Toronto reception house is troubling, and shows the need for better oversight and accountability measures to be put in place. The experiences of reception house guests should be sought out by organizations not responsible in the operations of the houses. As discrimination is the largest barrier affecting adaptation for newcomer youth (Kilbride & Anisef, 2001; McBrien, 2005; Berry et al, 2006; Kanu, 2008; Shakya et al., 2010; Stewart, 2012; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015, Welch-Mitchell & Wheeler, 2015), safeguards need to be implemented to mitigate against these attitudes at the structural level.

This thesis argued that Syrian newcomer youth enact capabilities that are important to them in strategic ways of “reterritorialization” in order to construct identity and develop belonging in Toronto. I demonstrated that youth enact their capabilities for education and learning, career and paid work, mental well-being, physical well-being, relationships, mobility, time-autonomy, respect, decision-making power, and self-expression/ self-representation in ways that facilitate connections to different spaces and places in Toronto, which contributes to their growing sense of belonging. These everyday enactments are used to overcome prior and current hardships, and are differently affected by cultural expectations of gender for youth. The sense of belonging that youth are developing is not purely due to their own self-reliance, but is supported by families, growing network of peers, school, socio-cultural resources such as the ACCT, and the generally positive and welcoming environment they have known so far in Toronto.

6.2 Value of participatory arts-based methods in the project

The use of participatory photography in the study allowed for different information to emerge. The photographs youth took prompted deeper discussions of their experiences of adaption in Toronto, presented information about their thoughts, feelings, and emotions that they did not reveal through conversation. This aligns with the literature reviewed on PAR and arts-based methods that find more in-depth data can emerge out of PAR and can trigger participants’ memory (Hurworth, 2003). Participatory photography aligned with the youths’ “preferred ways of knowing” (Taylor et al, 2004, 75) and was accessible for youth interpretation (Kim, 2016). Based on youth engagement in the project, participatory photography was an effective way of gathering data in the project as the youth found it enjoyable. This aligns with other YPAR projects (Conrad, 2015; Conrad, 2004; Veroff, 2002) that also found arts-methods to be effective at data collection.

The photographs indicated different degrees of belonging to the city in youth based on their time spent living in Toronto. The youth who have resided in Scarborough for five months feel belonging to non-specific natural spaces that remind them of other places in the world, but Kung Fu Kenny, who has lived in Mississauga for four years, feels belonging to Toronto. This difference was not discerned from discussion alone.

The images also suggest complex processes of youth identity negotiation. Angelo presents himself as a happy young man but his photographs that explore his sense of belonging are dark and melancholy. As emotive data (Foster, 2008), the images suggest he is experiencing complex emotions and thoughts during his adaptation process that he does not reveal through conversation. The project enabled Alex to communicate negative feelings about her experience of embodiment and have others consider what that feels like. Kung Fu Kenny explored issues of self-representation. And Aisha used the project to affirm her goals and aspirations. This shows the importance of providing youth, particularly girls, with alternate outlets for self-expression rather than insisting youth speak about their experiences.

Ambiguity, darkness, sadness, and melancholy characterizes many of the boys' photographs, while hope, strength, and serenity characterize the girls' photographs. Viewers at the exhibition identified the girls' photographs by "positive" signifiers in the images and the boys' photographs through their "negative" markers. Taken in tandem with my discussions with youth and their gendered participation in the project, this difference does not indicate the boys are unhappy and doing poorly while the girls are happy and doing well. Rather it suggests the girls did not want to say anything that transgressed Arab expectations of feminine decorum and represented themselves, consciously or not, as living up to these expectations. Conversely the boys felt comfortable in expressing their desires as this aligns with expectations of male agency, and likely felt comfortable exploring difficult emotions in the photographs. "Say" is the operative word here, as Alex felt comfortable in communicating a negative aspect of her daily life through her photographs. The difference in signifiers between the girls' and boys' images demonstrates how performances of gender can be revealed through creative works.

The study facilitated new learning (Prins, 2010; Lind, 2008) for youth as they learned about image composition and basic editing skills in Photoshop in order to tell a story or provoke emotional responses from the viewer. The project also promoted critical thinking in youth as they began learning how to read photographs and search for meaning.

6.3 The ACCT as a capability-enhancing resource for newcomer youth

The ACCT expands opportunities for youth to develop and enact their capabilities for education and learning, mental well-being, self-expression, respect, decision-making power, relationship-building, mobility, time-autonomy, and for facilitating belonging to place in Toronto.

The organization is a trusted source of support for youth. Youth trust in the ACCT is seen by youth coming into the ACCT unprompted to show their photographs to the ACCT Youth Settlement Counsellor. Their regular attendance at youth sessions and workshops is also indicative of their trust in the counsellors.

As the young engage in extracurricular activities through the ACCT free-of-cost, the ACCT serves as an important resource to newcomer youth and families who are usually low-income and cannot afford the cost of leisure pursuits. ACCT youth activities are educational opportunities, informational sessions, and workshops that encourage the development of most of the capabilities youth in this study value. Activities always take place in a group setting which allows youth to socialize with each other and feel supported by one another. Participation often promotes youth self-respect and critical thinking in decision-making processes, which can affect decisions concerning youth mobility and time-autonomy.

6.4 Programming implications and suggestions

While all people will put a high value on some core capabilities, what people value varies between people based on a wide range of factors. For Syrian newcomer youth in this study, these capabilities emphasized personal identity and individual development. Well-meaning adults may impose capabilities they feel youth should value, and while youth may find them important, such priorities will likely have a different emphasis later in life. Therefore it is important to design policies and programs for people to align with what they identify to be important. This will encourage engagement from program beneficiaries as programs will be relevant to their lives.

For organizations serving newcomer youth, seeking the input of youth clients when designing programs is therefore critical to increasing youth engagement and maximizing resources. Programs should aim to expand capabilities that youth value at their current stage of life. From this study, it is suggested programs that incorporate learning with opportunities for innovative

means of self-expression promote youth engagement, relationship-building, and mental well-being. Given the stigma of mental illness and the unfamiliarity of one-on-one counselling in Arab communities, and increased likelihood of mental health needs among Syrian newcomer youth (Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015; Welch-Mitchell & Wheeler, 2015), culturally appropriate mental health support must be considered. As youth address mental well-being as wanting “to feel free” and enact it through adventurous attitudes and activities, tapping into this understanding of mental health could reinvigorate youth program design. Particularly for youth who have gone through forced migration from a non-Western context, opportunities to express their thoughts, feelings, and emotions creatively in a safe environment can be cathartic. This is especially important for newcomer girls who may feel more uncomfortable talking about negative thoughts, emotions, or experiences than boys but may explore them through art. While it should not be assumed all newcomer youth want to share their stories, and indeed many may not, a greater availability of safe, same gender spaces for those who do wish to share would promote greater connections to space and place in a resettlement context. Programs should be designed to support youth decision-making so as to encourage autonomy, and take into consideration the development of transferable skills youth can use at work and in school. Furthermore, it is also recommended for organizations to explore the possibilities for sports programming and other physical activities. Such activities promote mental and physical well-being, encourage youth to be social, and are also a means of self-expression.

Traditionally, the settlement sector has not partnered with fine arts communities, but this project and others like it demonstrate the rich potential for cross-sectorial partnership. Collaborating with non-traditional partners, such as artist-run centres (ARCs), encourages innovative programming that promotes the development of many capabilities youth in this study valued. ARCs have expertise and knowledge that can introduce newcomer youth to alternate ways of expressing themselves, developing themselves intellectually, meeting new people, etc. ARCs, particularly those mandated to provide opportunities to marginalized communities, can also theorize additional ethical considerations that strengthen a project’s impact.

This project contributes a new arts-based participatory action research study with Syrian newcomer youth in Toronto to the literature on refugee youth. It furthermore makes a contribution to the literature on the Capabilities Approach on the value of using arts-based

approaches in complementing the framework to enhance data on the capabilities identified, as few CA studies working with children or youth incorporate arts-based approaches (see Kellock & Lawthom, 2011). It makes a contribution to refugee studies by using the capabilities framework to understand the ways Syrian newcomer youth reterritorialize space in a resettlement context to negotiate identity and develop belonging.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Youth photographs not discussed

Appendix B: Project schedule in Arabic for youths' parents

Appendix C: Exhibition postcard

Appendix D: Exhibition guide

Appendix A

Alex, Week 1

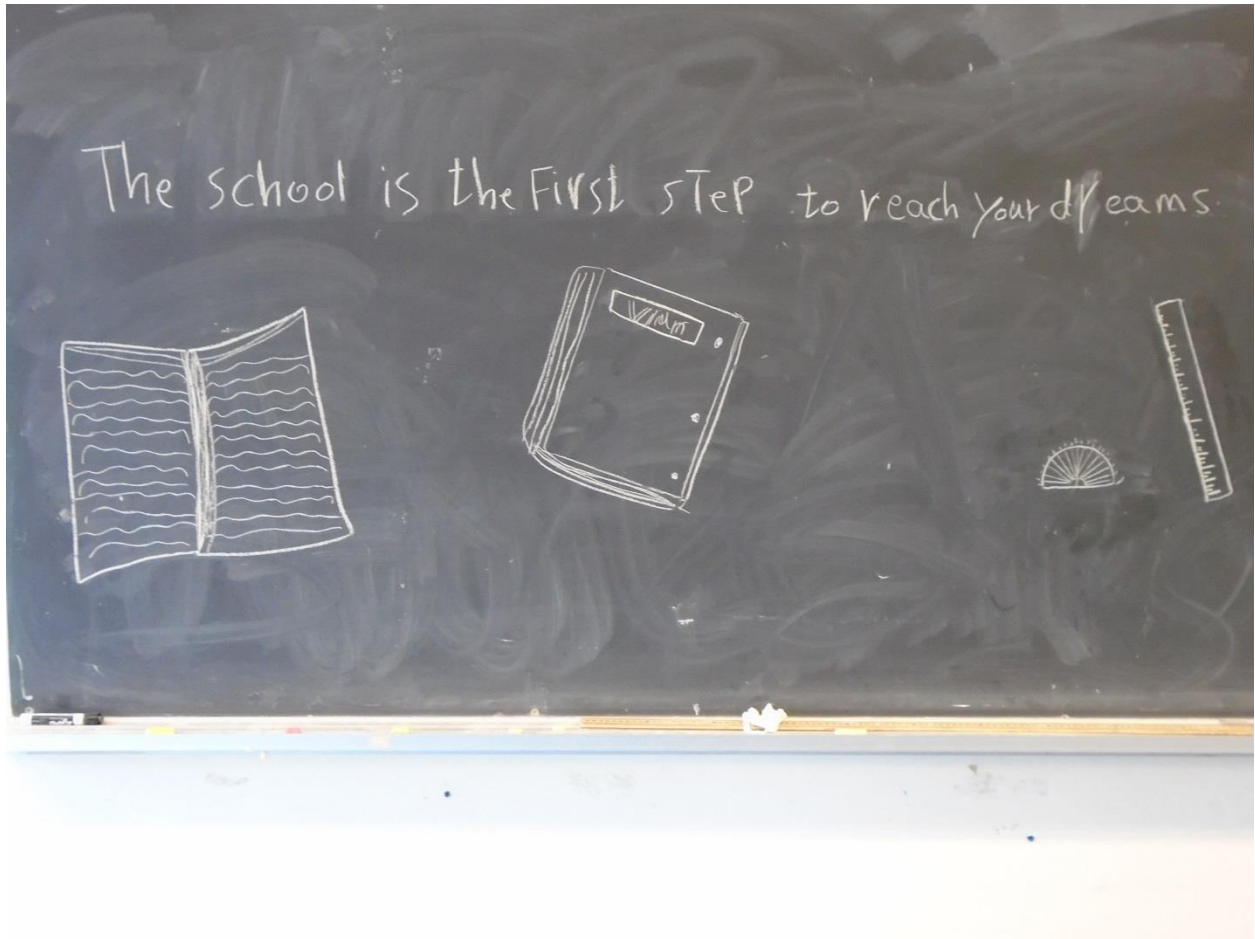


Aerial photograph of two male construction workers at a construction site, Scarborough, July 2017.



Photograph of male construction worker beside a machine, Scarborough, July 2017.

Aisha, Week 1



Photograph of a classroom blackboard with the words "The school is the First Step to reach your dreams", Scarborough, July 2017.



Photograph of an empty classroom, Scarborough, July 2017.

Angelo, Week 1



Photograph of a doctor's tools, Scarborough, July 2017.

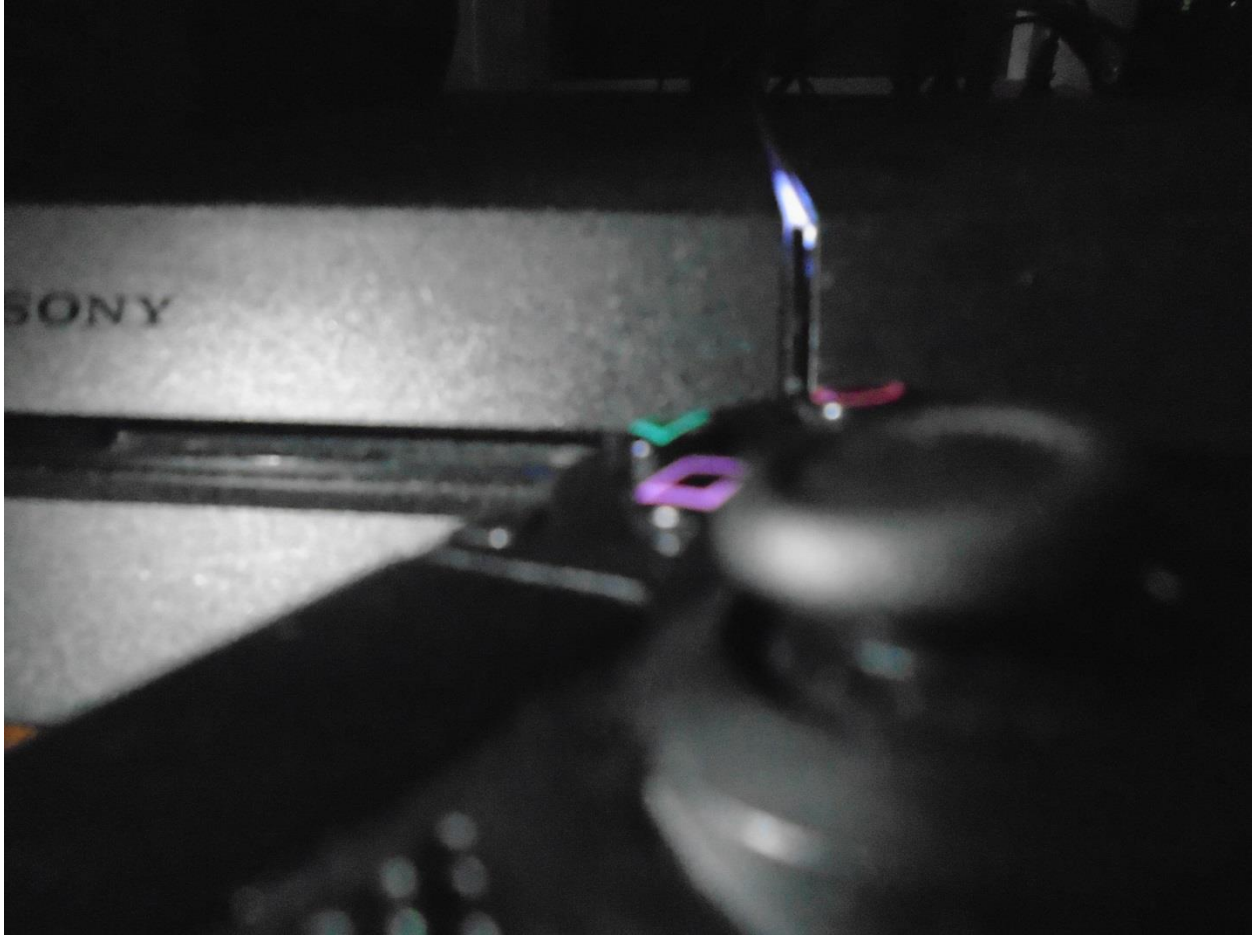


Photograph of the weights section in a public gym, Scarborough, July 2017.

Kung Fu Kenny, Week 1



Blurry photograph of a Vans shoebox, Mississauga, July 2017.



Blurry photograph of a PS4, Mississauga, July 2017.

Aisha, Week 2



Photograph in a public park, Scarborough, July 2017.



Photograph of steps in a public park, Scarborough, July 2017.

Angelo, Week 2



Photograph of a fishing rod, Scarborough, July 2017.



Photograph of wet sand and debris on a beach, Scarborough, July 2017.



Photograph of wet sand and a log worn by water on a beach, Scarborough, July 2017.



Photograph of a bench submerged by water, Scarborough, July 2017.

Kung Fu Kenny, Week 2



Photograph of jelly fish at Ripley's Aquarium, Toronto, July 2017.



Photograph of a Toronto skyline with the CN Tower, Toronto, July 2017.

Appendix B

نشاطات المشروع

الجمعة 14 يوليو:

المكان	الزمن
التجمع في مركز الجالية العربية بتورنتو، سكاربرو. الذهاب سويا بالموصلات حتى Charles Street	9 صباحا
Video downtown	
ورشة الكاميرا بـ Charles Street Video	10:30 صباحا
	1 بعد الظهر (الغداء)
زيارة الأماكن السياحية بوسط البلد	3 بعد الظهر
العودة إلى مركز الجالية العربية بتورنتو، سكاربرو	7 مساء

الجمعة 21 يوليو:

المكان	الزمن
التجمع في مركز الجالية العربية بتورنتو، سكاربرو. الذهاب سويا بالموصلات حتى Charles Street	9 صباحا
Video downtown	
ورشة مراجعة الصور بـ Charles Street Video	10:30 صباحا
مناقشة الصور بـ Gamma Space	12 ظهرا
	1 بعد الظهر (الغداء)
زيارة الأماكن السياحية بوسط البلد	2 بعد الظهر
العودة إلى مركز الجالية العربية بتورنتو، سكاربرو	7 مساء

الجمعة 28 يوليو:

المكان	الزمن
التجمع في مركز الجالية العربية بتورنتو، سكاربرو. الذهاب سويا بالموصلات حتى Charles Street	9 صباحا
Video downtown	
وقت مراجعة الصور بـ Charles Street Video	10:30 صباحا
مناقشة الصور بـ Gamma Space	12 ظهرا
	1 بعد الظهر (الغداء)
ورشة مراجعة الصور بـ Charles Street Video	2 بعد الظهر
العودة إلى مركز الجالية العربية بتورنتو، سكاربرو	7 مساء

Appendix C



From August 17 - 25, 2017
Opening: Thursday, August 17, 6-9 pm
Refreshments provided by the ACCT New Canadians Kitchen

Charles Street Video
568 Richmond St. W, Toronto

تألف making familiar

مشروع تصوير للشباب السوريين القادمين الجدد في مدينة تورنتو
A participatory photography project with Syrian newcomer youth in Toronto

In July, four Syrian newcomer youth from the Greater Toronto Area took part in a two-week participatory photography research project on their priorities and perceptions of belonging. With point-and-shoot cameras, they photographed meaningful spaces in their lives to evoke how they negotiate a sense of self in a new place.

In collaboration with the Arab Community Centre of Toronto and in partnership with Charles Street Video, this project was facilitated by Kasia Knap, M.A Candidate from the University of Ottawa, for her Master's thesis.

شارك في شهر يوليو / تموز أربعة شبان سوريين من القادمين الجدد الى منطقة تورونتو الكبرى في مشروع بحثي باستخدام التصوير الفوتوغرافي عن اولوياتهم ومفاهيمهم للانتماء، وباستخدام كاميرات (بسيطة) قام هؤلاء الشبان بتصوير أماكن ذات معان في حياتهم حتى يحفظوا طريقة استيعابهم لأنفسهم في محيط جديد.

و بالتعاون مع مركز الجالية العربية في تورنتو (ACCT) و بالشراكة مع شركة تشارلز ستريت فيديو (Charles Street Video) تم متابعة هذا المشروع من قبل كاشا كناپ (Kasia Knap) طالبة الماجستير في جامعة اوتوا من أجل رسالة الماجستير الخاصة بها.



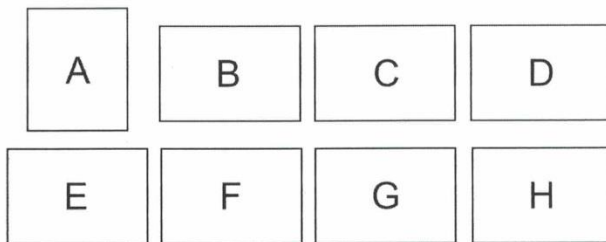
Appendix D

making familiar تآلف

A participatory photography project with Syrian newcomer youth in Toronto.

In July, four Syrian newcomer youth from the Greater Toronto Area took part in a two-week participatory photography research project on their priorities and perceptions of belonging. With point-and-shoot cameras, they photographed meaningful spaces in their lives to evoke how they negotiate a sense of self in a new place. The exhibition features eight of these photographs.

In collaboration with the Arab Community Centre of Toronto and in partnership with Charles Street Video, this project was facilitated by Kasia Knap for her Master's thesis.



List of Works

- A. You can experience lives that are impossible.
- B. Of reality and imagination.
- C. I intended it.
- D. To feel as I do.
- E. It just stretches.
- F. I used to feel the belonging to the sea in Syria.
- G. Peace of mind / bury your frustration
- H. I want to rebuild our house in Syria.