

Refugees are Immigrants at Risk

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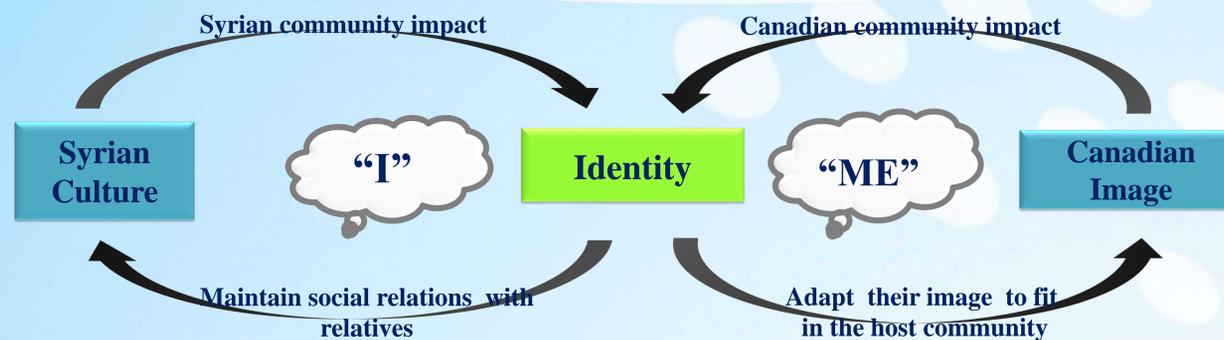
Frequently, refugees' desire to start over conflicts with their desire to preserve the past. This is especially true of traumatized Syrian refugee youths. Their socioemotional needs (e.g., negotiating multiple identities equal their need to learn a new language to succeed academically^{1,2,6}).

1 Socioemotional Needs

Their needs grew out of five-years of being barred from countries of asylum, and numerous dislocations while seeking a place that would ensure their safety, and preserve their dignity and cultural identity at the same time. Multiple displacements negatively impacted their sense of belonging and identity development⁵. Belonging and feeling at home have become essential needs for them. Many newcomer students fail to engage and participate in academic and non-academic activities, and do not feel accepted by their classmates or educators¹³. Furthermore, they gradually lose interest in school, and begin feeling alienated from school life¹³.

2 Learning Needs

In the first two years of resettlement in a host country, many refugees struggle due to their limited in the dominant language, a foreign language for them¹³. Upon arriving in Canada, a major challenge Syrian youth refugees face is learning French or English⁷. While learning the host country's language is a major obstacle for all Syrian refugees, younger Syrian refugees seem to learn English or French quicker than usual, possibility due to their desire to integrate and succeed academically in Canada¹².



3 Models of Acculturation

- Assimilate:** to participate in one's new culture at the expense of the old (i.e., rejecting it)⁴.
- Integrate:** to preserve one's old (original) culture while accepting the new one⁴.
- Separate/segregate:** to preserve one's old (original) culture while rejecting the new one⁴.
- Marginalize:** to reject both one's old (original) and one's new culture⁴.

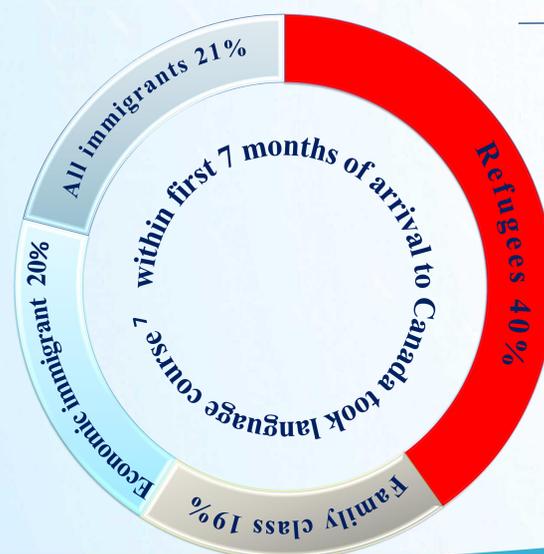
Fadia 19 years

•"We had pizza in Syria. We had computers. We weren't living in the *Stone Age*, you know?" (We're not from the stone age section, para. 1)¹⁰

Amina 17 years

•"My brothers and sisters and I want to learn so we will be able to help rebuild Syria,[...] I believe that I will return one day." (Meeting conflict with community section, para. 4)³.

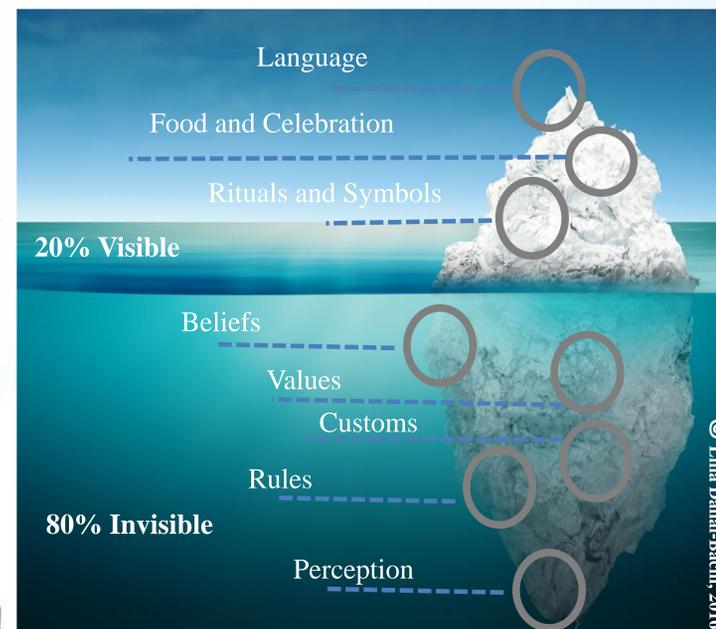
Sami 15 years



•"I can see my future [in being a doctor],...I just need a chance; an opportunity. I don't just want to sit and watch TV. I want to do something and be remembered" (para. 13)⁹.

Role of Canadian Schools

When educators build classroom interactions on students' prior linguistic, cultural and experiential background, they contribute to establishing a "microcosm" (Cummins, 2001, p. X) of society where students can develop a strong sense of belonging, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background². The benefits are mutual for both students and teachers when refugees' personal experiences are integrated into literacy activities⁸. Education and assistance programs in schools can be customized to fit the needs and status of Syrian refugee teenagers.



References

