

Halifax as a welcoming and an unresponsive community for youth from refugee backgrounds

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Findings: Factors that contribute to the integration of the youth and the manifestation of Halifax as a welcoming community

Education

- Younger than 19 years.
- Complete secondary education.

Employment

- Younger than 19 years.

Official Language

- Younger than 19 years.
- Private Sponsorship (language proficiency as a requirement).

Health

- Government-Assisted Refugees.

Housing

- Government-Assisted Refugees.

Social Connections

- Government-Assisted Refugees.
- Originally from Syria.

Objective

- To examine experiences of integration and marginalization of youth from refugee backgrounds resettled in Halifax by looking at the network of formal and informal supports accessed by them.

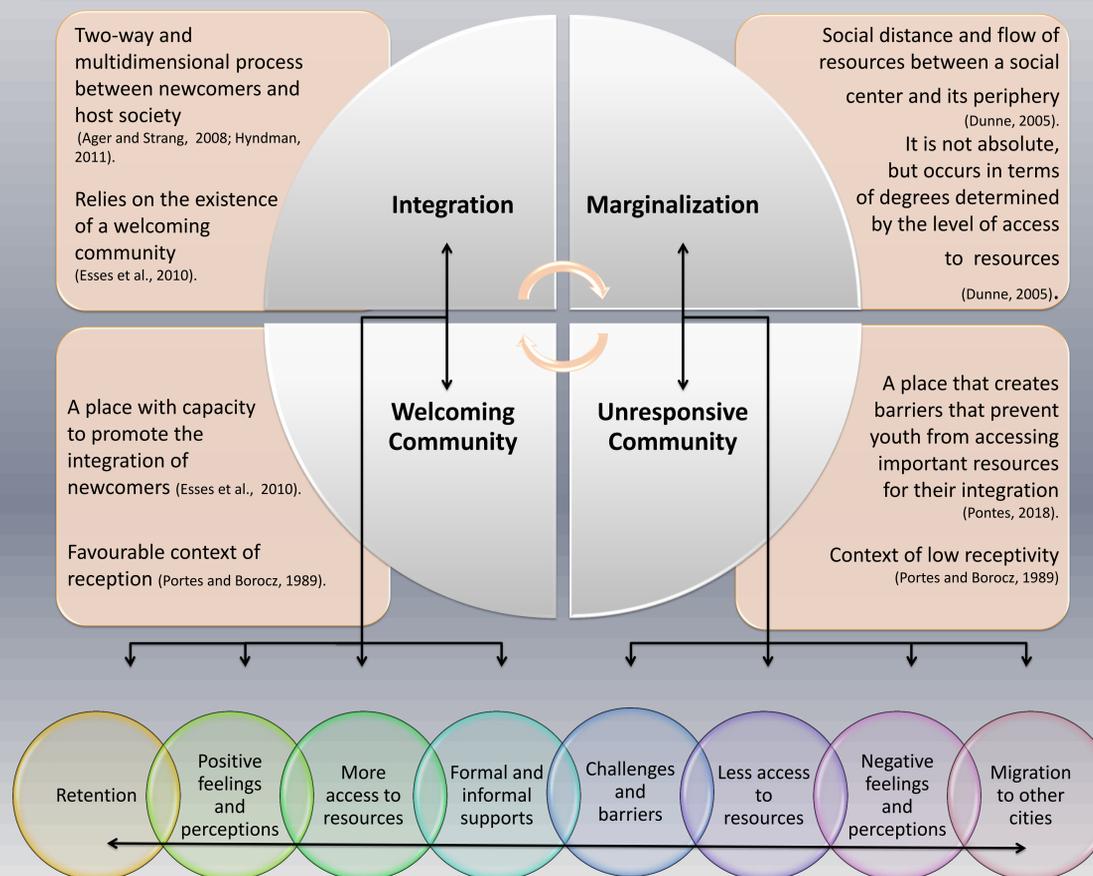
Design

- Qualitative; Individual Interviews.
- Transformative, anti-oppressive, structural perspectives.
- 6 Participants:
 - Ages 18-27.
 - Syria, Eastern Africa.
 - Government and Private sponsorship.

Areas of integration analyzed

- Education.
- Employment.
- Official Language.
- Health.
- Housing.
- Social Connections.

Conceptual framework



Findings: Factors that contribute to the marginalization of the youth and the manifestation of Halifax as an unresponsive community

Education

- Older than 19 years and incomplete secondary education.

Employment

- Older than 19 years.
- Incomplete secondary education.

Official Language

- Older than 19 years, incomplete secondary education and government-assisted.

Health

- Private Sponsorship.

Housing

- Private Sponsorship.

Social Connections

- Private Sponsorship.
- Originally from Eastern Africa.

Discussion: Understanding Welcoming and Unresponsive Community

- This study understands integration, marginalization, and welcoming community as multidimensional and complementary (not opposed) concepts. The experiences of integration and marginalization of the youth indicated the need for a new concept to make the conceptual framework more consistent. Therefore, the notion of *'unresponsive community'* was developed and applied throughout the analysis.
- In simple terms, if a welcoming community fosters integration, an unresponsive community creates and maintains barriers for the youth, which increases their risk of marginalization. However, the experiences of the youth did not fit into this binary conceptualization. Instead, they related different levels of integration and marginalization in each integration area. That means that Halifax oscillated between being a welcoming and an unresponsive community for the youth.
- As a community, Halifax is a geographic location and a complex social structure that shapes a set of attitudes towards the youth (Amit, 2002; McGrath, Moffatt, George, & Lee, 1999). In this sense, at times, Halifax provided the youth with the supports they needed to access resources in a specific area (i.e., employment support and language classes). At times, the youth did not find the support they needed, which prevented them from accessing important resources for their integration (i.e., suitable and affordable housing).
- Therefore, Halifax was welcoming and unresponsive at once, influenced by factors such as age, level of education, country of origin, and type of sponsorship of the youth. After all, the ability to provide these youth with meaningful job opportunities demonstrated crucial to their retention.

Making Halifax more welcoming: Policy implications

- Supporting the development of social connections of the youth resettled without their families, as they may be in higher risk of social isolation.
- Creating more Initiatives to connect youth with people originally from the host community.
- Diversifying free language learning opportunities.
- Being more attentive to the housing situation of lone privately-sponsored refugees after the first year of resettlement, as they may be in higher risk of homelessness.
- Fomenting cultural sensitivity among staff and faculty members in universities and colleges.
- Facilitating the access to Adult Education for youth without secondary education and who cannot attend regular high school due to their age.

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