

Introduction

- Newcomers often face personal, gender, cultural, environmental, and socioeconomic barriers when integrating into a new society.
- Settlement challenges can impact the mental health of newcomers and further reduce access to appropriate resources and care (Gyan, Chowdhury, & Yeboah, 2023).
- Additional research investigating newcomer-related experiences can help to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of mental health services.

Objective

Our objective is to analyze the lived experiences of young newcomers to Canada to determine their challenges and successes relevant for integration and community services.

Methods

- We used snowball sampling to recruit newcomers, aged 18 to 30 originating from Africa or the Middle East.
- Participants completed a survey and submitted written stories that were anonymized.
- We used qualitative narrative analysis to interpret stories, distilling context themes, integration related barriers and facilitators, and resolutions and learnings.
- The resilience framework (adapted from Hart and Blincow, 2007) was used to discuss results and their implications.
- The resilience framework visualizes strategic ways to think and practice doing things to nurture resilience in young people, especially those in more vulnerable circumstances.

Results

- Stories of 16 participants were collected and analyzed
- The majority were female (n=12) and students (n=11)
- Most originated from Africa (n=12)
- The five categories of building resiliency (basics, belonging, learning, coping and core self) were heavily prevalent throughout the stories newcomers shared.

Results: Narrative Analysis

Four groups of themes emerged across the stories

Context - school and work

"What struck me on my first day of university was how little interest people had in talking and making new relations." (Story 12)

Barriers – weather

"The cold of Canadian winter is something that no one really explains to you in ways that can prepare you. I remember leaving the plane and feeling like my skin was being ripped off" (Story 1)

Barriers – cultural differences and language barriers

"I speak and understand English perfectly, but still I was not able to express and be myself around non-Arabic speaking individuals." (Story 4)

Facilitators - social support (family and friends)

"I moved in with strangers who I now consider my family and who impacted my life in such a positive way, providing a home abroad for me." (Story 2)

Facilitators – diversity

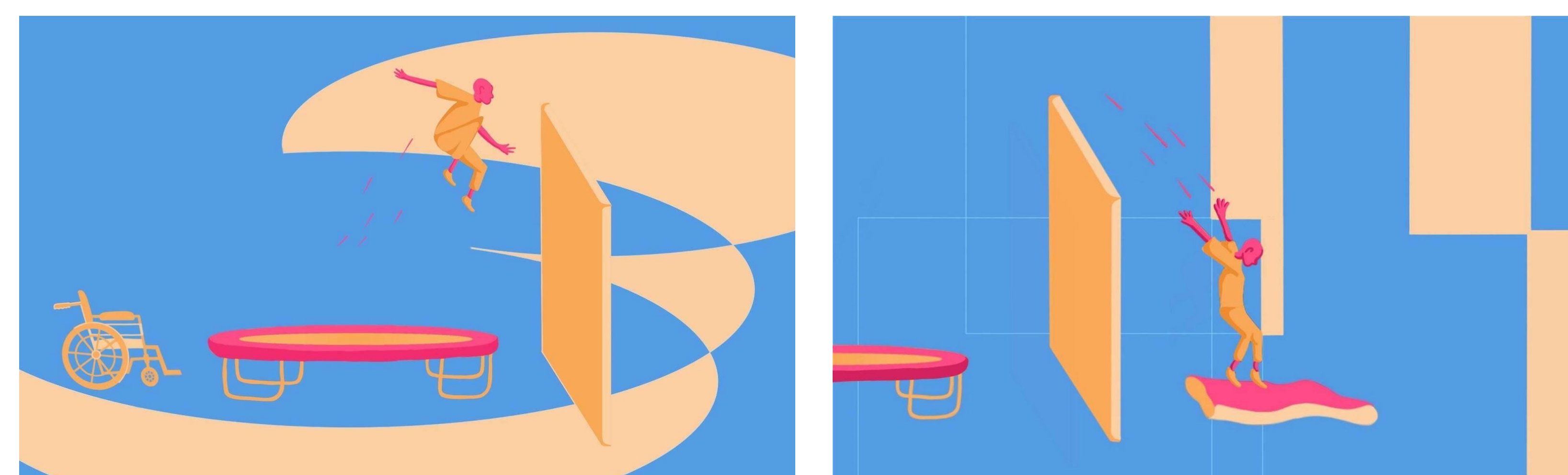
"Being able to explore different cultures and meet people from all over the world gave me an opportunity to learn about different cultures and gain new perspectives on life." (Story 12)

Resolutions - developing new strategies and gaining resilience

"Overall I'm very grateful for all the struggle I went through cause it taught me hard work and not depending on others." (Story 14)

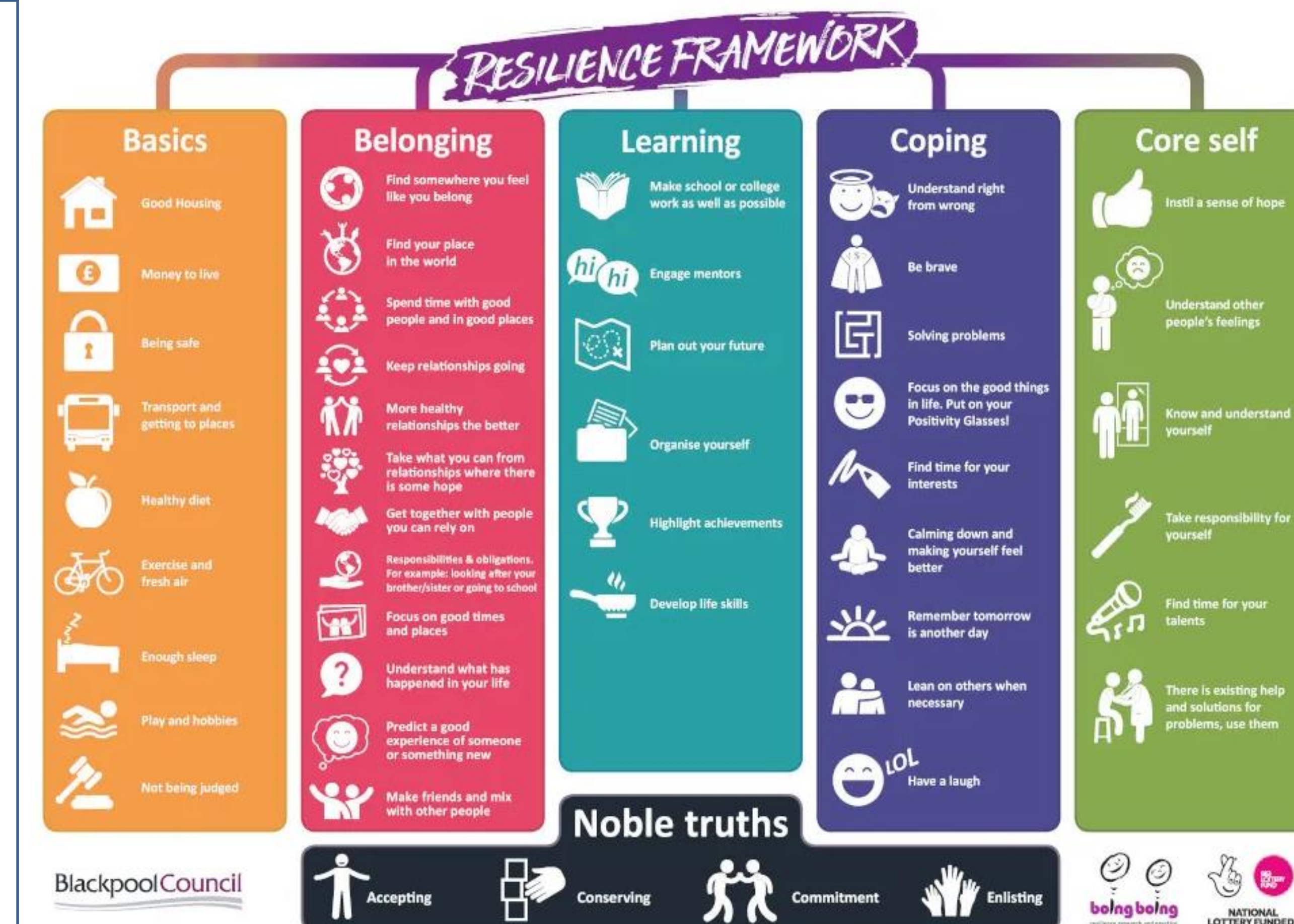
Resolutions – change, courage and hope

"Adapting to the language, culture, and people is still something I work on every day. It is part of me growing as a person ... I hope that in a few years, I will be able to confidently say "Canada is home." (Story 4)



When we face adversity, misfortune, or frustration, resilience helps us bounce back. It helps us survive, recover, and even thrive in the face and wake of hardship. (Resilience Theory)

Resilience Framework



Conclusions

- The young newcomers shared their integration stories that showed fear of the unknown and early struggles.
- Friendships, family support, new opportunities, learning and access to services facilitated integration and led to new resilience.
- Although integration to Canada is a challenging journey, with support, gained resilience, hope and time to adapt, Canada begins to feel more like a new home to newcomers.
- Community building, friendships, and services emerged as key themes important for future mental health research.

Acknowledgements

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References

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