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# Understanding Transitional Mental Health and Interpersonal Needs of Newcomer Youth During Resettlement: Seeking Guidance to Strengthen Mental Health Programming

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the supports that newcomer youth may need to promote positive well-being and foster healthy relationships during early resettlement. This study employed qualitative methodology using semi-structured interviews with four newcomer youth between the ages of 14 and 21 years old who have been in Canada for at least two years. Interview data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA). The results indicated that newcomer youth experience significant resettlement challenges and barriers including language barriers, culture shock, and feeling lonely and isolated within their new environments. However, newcomer youth participants also reported that they found various strengths and resources that helped them cope with stress and manage their well-being during their initial years in Canada. Newcomer youth also provided recommendations on how to support better future newcomer youth who may be arriving in Canada. Findings from the study contribute to the current literature on newcomer mental health and may guide future researchers to continue to learn about the distinct resettlement needs of newcomer youth. The findings of this study also provide recommendations for systemic and programming strategies (e.g., mental health program development and counselling implications) to improve resettlement efforts and enhance the well-being of newcomer youth in Canada.

Keywords: newcomer youth, well-being, mental health, refugees, immigrants, healthy relationships

## **Summary for Lay Audience**

This study explored the unique mental health needs, interpersonal needs and supports that newcomer youth may require to promote positive mental health and foster healthy relationships during early resettlement. This study highlights the challenges, barriers and unmet needs of newcomer youth that may hinder their mental well-being and ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships. This study used qualitative methods to explore the perspectives of four youth participants. Participants were asked various questions during a semi-structured interview about their early experiences in Canada, challenges that they may have experienced, what they did to maintain positive well-being and recommendations that they have for other newcomer youth. Two superordinate themes and five sub-themes emerged from the data. The first superordinate theme was mental health and relationships challenges. Under this superordinate theme, two subthemes emerged: 1) Sometimes it was hard: Resettlement challenges and barriers and 2) Let's make it better: Recommendations for future newcomer youth. The second superordinate theme was mental well-being and relationship strengths and resources. Under this superordinate theme, three sub-themes emerged: 1) How we felt supported: Need for school and community resources; 2) The importance of relationships: Connections to peers and family; and 3) It's within me: Inner qualities and strengths. The discussion of this study explores how these findings contribute to the literature on newcomer youth mental health, implications for services and service providers who directly interact with newcomer youth and future directions of research with newcomer youth populations.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Newcomer Youth in Canada**

Canada is recognized for its multicultural and diverse population (Islam et al., 2017). Over the past decade, there has been an exponential increase in settlement of newcomer families across Canada. Canada welcomed the highest number of permanent residents in 2018 since 1913, with over 300,000 newcomers coming from various countries around the world (Government of Canada, 2019). In addition, Canada became a global leader for resettling refugees between 2018 and 2020, ranking first among 26 countries, helping to resettle 28,076 refugees (Statistics Canada, 2019; Government of Canada, 2021). Notably, approximately 34% of all newcomers arriving in Canada were under the age of 25 (Statistics Canada, 2019). In 2016, 20% of Canadian youth between 15 and 30 were first-generation (Statistics Canada, 2019). Densely populated Canadian cities such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver all reported more than 20% of youth as first-generation Canadian immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2019). For my thesis, I will use the term newcomer youth to describe individuals who identify as immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and/or those who have moved to Canada with different visa and residency statuses within the past five years.<sup>1</sup>

### **1.2 Risk Factors for Newcomer Youth Mental Health**

Newcomer youth arriving in Canada come from various cultural backgrounds and countries. Many newcomer families have experienced significant difficulties before arriving in Canada (Hynie, 2017). According to research findings, an estimated 67% of refugees experience trauma pre-migration and many continue to be at risk of facing adversities once they arrive in Canada (Beiser & Hou, 2016; Ellis et al., 2013; Walker & Zuberi, 2020). The traumatic

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<sup>1</sup> The term *newcomer youth* that is used throughout this thesis is consistent with the terminology that Statistic Canada uses.



experiences that newcomer families face during the pre-migration stage have been recognized as significantly impacting their mental health (Herati & Meyer, 2020).

Newcomer youth, especially those from refugee backgrounds, may have experienced pre-migration stressors in their home countries such as civil unrest, climate change, poverty and violence (Dura-Vila et al., 2012; Herati & Meyer, 2020; Miller et al., 2019; Murray et al., 2010). Specifically, the migration journey may be associated with precarious housing, physical and/or sexual exploitation, unsafe travel conditions, separation from families, discrimination and prolonged exposure to trauma (Dura-Vila., 2012; Herati & Meyer, 2020; Miller et al., 2019; Murray et al., 2010). As such, many of these negative experiences during the migration journey can lead to negative health outcomes such as malnutrition, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety (Miller et al., 2019).

Due to the various challenges associated with the migration journeys, there are many factors to consider when exploring the unique mental health needs of newcomer youth. Many newcomer youth and their families face challenges related to systemic barriers, discrimination and marginalization that further exacerbate the ongoing challenges related to settlement and acculturation upon arrival in Canada (Burgos et al., 2019). Post-migration stressors such as language differences, lack of social support, precarious housing and uncertainty about their environment make some newcomer youth vulnerable to mental health concerns (Dura-Vila et al., 2012; Saechao et al., 2012). For example, some newcomer youth may have to deal with the psychosocial effects of adapting to a new environment quickly, which can lead to acculturative stress.

Acculturative stress can arise from experiencing difficulties in a new societal system, conforming to new norms, values and customs, and understanding one's identity in an adaptive

and balanced way (Burgos et al., 2019). Newcomer youth have reported challenges with integration, including being unable to develop meaningful friendships, depleted self-esteem and discrimination (Burgos et al., 2019; Guo et al., 2019). As a result, newcomer youth may experience exclusion and isolation in their schools and communities, which may further impact their mental health (Oxman-Martinez, 2012; Shakya et al., 2010).

The experience of acculturative stress and post-migration challenges can be difficult for newcomer youth as it may add pressures to their current stage of identity formation, relationship building, social skills and ability to develop a strong sense of self (Oxman-Martinez, 2012; Smith et al., 2022). Acculturative stress and post-migration challenges can inherently impact their mental health, well-being and, more specifically, how they perceive themselves and their environment (Smith et al., 2022). Therefore, it is imperative to consider the impact of pre-and post-migration factors from a multi-level perspective, which may warrant the need for appropriate youth-oriented services and interventions that focus on the resettlement strategies for this population.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Although the research on newcomer youth mental health continues to expand, there are certain gaps in the existing literature that do not comprehensively highlight the specific and unique needs of this population. Researchers have not sufficiently incorporated newcomer youth's direct voices and perspectives to create a holistic understanding of their mental health needs upon arrival in Canada (Smith et al., 2022). It is essential that youth are provided with a platform to advocate for themselves, express their opinions and feelings, and voice their concerns as they are the experts on their experiences (James, 2007; Shamrova & Cummings, 2017). Listening to the lived experiences of newcomer youth directly from them can enrich the

understanding of resettlement and adjustment in Canada. This may promote action at the meso and macro levels (e.g., social and systemic changes; Smith, 2022). Evidently, there is immense importance in including and valuing the youth's voice in research, program development and policy making (Grover, 2004; James, 2007; Shamrova & Cummings, 2017; Smith, 2022).

It is essential to consider how maintaining and forming relationships can impact newcomer youth's mental health. Some of the key pre-and post-migration experiences that many newcomer youth face include loss of close relationships, significant change in lifestyle, change in cultural norms, language barriers and adjusting to a new school setting (Pickren, 2014; Smith et al., 2022). All these factors may impact how young newcomers navigate their new environments and how they build relationships. Smith and authors (2022) discuss how newcomer youth often describe feeling misunderstood by teachers, friends and parents about feeling as though they do not belong in Canada. This makes it difficult for newcomer youth to feel accepted by their peers within Canada (Guo et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to consider how existing and developing programming for newcomer youth can be modified and augmented to help youth maintain and develop relationships when they arrive in Canada.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Current Research**

This study aims to investigate supports that newcomer youth may need to promote positive mental health and foster healthy relationships during early resettlement. This study highlights the challenges, barriers and unmet needs of newcomer youth that may hinder their mental well-being and ability to develop and maintain interpersonal relationships.

To better understand the unique mental health, interpersonal needs and struggles of newcomer youth, it is important to directly learn from the lived experience and stories of

newcomer youth. Hearing from newcomer youth directly can aid in developing multi-tier intervention and related referral pathways. The current study takes a strengths-based framework, which may be understood as “an invitation for community members and care providers to view children and their families as “having potential” as opposed to just being “at risk” (Hammond, 2010, p. 3). The application of strength-based frameworks considers various experiences that many newcomer adolescents experience while also engaging in research practices that embrace their resilience and promote personal autonomy.

## **1.5 Overview of the Thesis**

Chapter two provides a review of the relevant literature, including a comprehensive review of the mental health needs of newcomer youth, the role of mental well-being and relationships, and the importance of including perspectives of newcomer voices in research. Chapter two concludes with the purpose of the study and the research questions. Chapter three presents the methods of this research study, and it presents details about the participants, study design and procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations. Chapter four discusses the results of the study. To conclude, chapter five provides a discussion of the significant results, empirical and practical implications, and the limitations and future directions for this area of research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The chapter highlights the importance of newcomer youth mental health, the importance of relationships, the significance of hearing directly from newcomer youth, the importance of taking a strengths-based approach in research and the research questions examined in this study.

### **2.2 Prioritizing Mental Health Needs of Newcomer Youth in Canada**

Mental health care has been identified to be an essential component of resettlement efforts for newcomer youth. Researchers have found that refugee individuals have considerably higher rates of psychological suffering than the general population (Guruge & Butt, 2015; Miller et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2010). During the early stages of resettlement, post-traumatic stress, depression and anxiety are much more prevalent in refugee and immigrant youth compared to the general population (Guruge & Butt, 2015; Miller et al., 2019).

Various studies have been conducted on the pre-migration experiences of refugee youth concerning their mental health (Guruge & Butt, 2015; Wilson et al., 2010). Many adult and youth refugees describe fleeing war, violence, targeted discrimination, sectarian violence, forced migration, displacement and political instability (Khanlou, 2008; Miller et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2010). Importantly, pre-migration trauma is a significant factor that appears to affect the post-migration mental health of newcomer youth (Guruge and Butt, 2015). As such, it is imperative to understand pre-migration trauma, which involves dissecting both collective trauma and personal trauma. Collective trauma is experienced within a distinct cohort, population or region and involves a shared experience (Guruge & Butt, 2015). This may include exposure to war, discrimination, genocide and living precariously in a refugee camp (Guruge & Butt, 2015). By contrast, personal trauma is usually experienced in isolation and may only affect an

individual or a small group of individuals such as a family. Although collective and personal trauma can occur simultaneously during the pre-migration period and exacerbate negative mental health outcomes in newcomer youth, it is important to differentiate between the two types of traumas as it informs the adaptive outcomes for newcomer youth within their new environments (Guruge & Butt, 2015).

Service providers who have worked closely with refugee and immigrant youth have observed that the lateral effects of experiencing trauma may significantly impact the learning and academic performance of newcomer youth (Wilson et al., 2010). Trauma can act as a mitigating risk factor in a newcomer youth's ability to concentrate, learn and build new friendships (Khanlou & Crawford, 2006; Wilson et al., 2010). It is important to recognize that the adverse experiences that newcomer youth face may manifest differently and affect distinctive areas of functioning. As such, it is essential to learn and listen directly from individuals who have experienced migration trauma rather than merely depending on westernized understandings of trauma (Khanlou et al., 2009).

Newcomer families may face challenges post-migration with language differences, seeking employment, navigating the educational system and securing stable housing (Khanlou & Crawford, 2006; Shakya et al., 2010; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2009). Many newcomer parents may become unemployed or are required to work in positions below their qualification level (Wilson et al., 2010). Such significant financial struggles and restricted economic opportunities may negatively affect the mental health of all members of a newcomer youth's family (Wilson et al., 2010). In addition, relocating to another country – especially a western country – can cause feelings of culture shock, acculturative stress, unfamiliarity and interpersonal challenges (e.g., making friends, communicating with peers, resolving conflict) that may inadvertently affect a

newcomer youth's sense of self-worth (Burgos et al., 2019; Guruge & Butt, 2015; Khanlou & Crawford, 2006; Wilson et al., 2010). Due to displacement from one's home country, there is a strong element of the unknown, which may cause anxiety and isolation upon arrival to Canada (Guruge & Butt, 2015; Khanlou & Crawford, 2006; Wilson et al., 2010). Discrimination in neighbourhoods and school environments may also cause problems related to adjustment that may lead to mental health challenges for newcomer youth populations (Burgos et al., 2019; Guruge & Butt, 2015). Thus, understanding the distinct mental health needs of the newcomer youth population in Canada must be prioritized.

### **2.3 Mental Well-being and Relationships**

When unpacking the key factors contributing to positive mental health for newcomer youth, it is critical to understand the difference between mental illness and mental well-being. Mental illness may be a term used to describe an individual who has one or more diagnosed mental disorders. It is a construct that is often used to assess the presence or absence of mental disorders in individuals (Westerhof & Keyes, 2009). A mental disorder may be understood as being "characterized by psychopathology, distress, and impaired functioning" and is often diagnosed using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM; De Cates et al., 2015, p. 195). The assessment of mental illness is often rooted in a dichotomous and medicalized ideology of an individual's ability or inability to achieve optimal mental functioning (Galderisi et al., 2015; Westerhof & Keyes, 2009).

Conversely, mental well-being refers to an individual's ability to develop their potential, work effectively and creatively, build and maintain positive relationships with others and be an active member of their community (De Cates et al., 2015; WHO, 2004). According to Keyes (2013), there are three components to understanding well-being: (1) emotional well-being, which

includes happiness, life experiences and interests, and overall life satisfaction; (2) psychological well-being, which includes having good self-perception and self-confidence, being able to adequately manage responsibilities and having good relationships with others; and (3) social well-being, which refers to a person's level of positive functioning within their social network, feeling part of a community and understanding the society around them (i.e., social coherence; Galderisi et al., 2015; Keyes, 2013).

It can be argued that the terms mental illness ('suffering') and mental well-being ('thriving') are at contradicting ends of a single feature (De Cates et al., 2015; Huppert et al., 2005). The concept of mental well-being and how it is linked to the many facets of an individual's health and social functioning is becoming increasingly accepted (Weich et al., 2011). This is beneficial because including the concept of well-being in the discussion of mental health allows for a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of how mental health is often conceptualized as a state of absence of mental illness rather than an individual's ability to function in their environment and live positively.

To better understand how mental well-being is closely related to maintaining and forming relationships and social connectedness, the concepts of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being are imperative to dissect (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Weich et al., 2011; Westerhof & Keyes, 2009). Hedonic well-being focuses on subjective aspects of well-being and how individuals themselves experience and evaluate their sense of wellness (Deci & Ryan, 2008; De Cates et al., 2015; Weich et al., 2011; Westerhof & Keyes, 2009). This approach values a more cognitive evaluation of one's life such as an individual's enthusiasm towards life and the notion that increased pleasure and decreased pain lead to greater life satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Weich et al., 2011; Westerhof & Keyes, 2009). Eudaimonic well-being suggests that an individual's level of



happiness does not necessarily equate to their psychological well-being (De Cates et al., 2015; Deci and Ryan, 2006). This concept asserts that an individual's ability to have self-acceptance, healthy relationships, social connection and a sense of belonging significantly contributes to their overall psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Weich et al., 2011; Westerhof & Keyes, 2009). It is evident from both perspectives that personal reflection and social connection are critical components in maintaining positive mental health (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Weich et al., 2011; Westerhof & Keyes, 2009).

Through the various definitions of mental well-being, there is a bi-directional effect on how social connections and healthy relationships can positively impact the mental health of individuals (Bond et al., 2007; Lamblin et al., 2017; Lapshina et al., 2018; Powers et al., 2009; Samara et al., 2020; Seppala et al., 2013; Teja et al., 2013; Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). For example, Werner-Seidler and authors (2017) examined how social isolation and low levels of social support are associated with depression among 8,841 participants between the ages of 18 and 85 who completed the Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Well-being (Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). Respondents indicated how often they were in contact with family members and friends and how many family members and friends they could rely on and confide in (Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). The survey findings suggested that higher social connection was more closely and consistently associated with lower odds of respondents experiencing depression in the previous year, which was moderated by the frequency of social interaction (Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). Friendship, family and overall social connectivity were also found to be important throughout the life course (Werner-Seidler et al., 2017).

Social connections are comprised of structures that can be referred to as social networks (Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). Social networks include friendships, family, co-workers and peers

(Powers et al., 2009; Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). Within social networks, individuals can seek social support, which refers to their ability to access assistance, feelings of belonging and connectedness from their relationships with others (Powers et al., 2009; Seppala et al., 2013; Werner-Seidler et al., 2017). Social connection is essential for maintaining positive mental health as those with fewer interpersonal relationships and lower levels of social support report higher rates of depression and loneliness (Werner-Seidler et al., 2017).

Healthy relationships are social connections where adolescents feel safe and comfortable expressing and advocating for themselves with others (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). Healthy relationships are usually built on trust, honesty, respect, communication and mutual understanding (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). During adolescence, relationships play a significant role in identity formation, self-esteem building and social acceptance that many youth explore at this stage of their life (Graber et al., 2016). Positive friendships and relationships in adolescence may allow youth to feel companionship, support and a sense of belonging that can reinforce healthy behaviours such as positive academic engagement, development of positive social skills and resisting peer pressure (Juvonen et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2018; Smith & Crooks, 2022). Furthermore, having healthy relationships in adolescence may be foundational for a young person's successful relationships later in adulthood (Allen et al., 2020). Accordingly, healthy relationships can act as a protective factor for newcomer youth mental well-being (Samara et al., 2020; Smith & Crooks, 2022).

Newcomer youth face an array of experiences that may make settling in a new environment difficult (Burgos et al., 2019; Samara et al., 2020). However, developing a sense of belonging in schools and neighbourhoods allows for attachment, commitment, involvement and comfort in a youth's new environment (Bond et al., 2007; Lamblin et al., 2017; Samara et al.,

2020). Samara and authors (2020) explored the psychological, behavioural and social aspects of refugee children and how the role of friendship acts as a protective and mediating factor in their psychological well-being. Samara and authors (2020) compared the prevalence of emotional and behavioural problems, self-esteem, friendships and popularity, bullying and victimization, and physical health psychosomatic concerns between refugee children and British-born children between the ages of 6-16 (n = 149). The study found that although young refugees were at risk on various levels due to symptoms of PTSD and emotional and behavioural problems, social relationships and having quality friendships played an essential and protective role in the mental well-being of refugee children (Samara et al., 2020). Furthermore, bullying and having negative peer relations are risk factors that may further intensify a youth's existing psychosocial concerns (Samara et al., 2020).

Teja and authors (2013) examined the association between peer relationships and adjustment amongst Chinese newcomer youth aged 11 to 19 years old. The authors sampled 121 Chinese newcomer youth in an urban Canadian city and used self-report questionnaires to identify the quality of their peer relationships and psychological adjustment (Teja et al., 2013). The authors controlled for sex, age, length of time in Canada and friendship quality (Teja et al., 2013). The results of the study indicated that peer group integration significantly predicted psychological adjustment outcomes for the sample of Chinese newcomer youth (Teja et al., 2013). Chinese newcomer youth who had reported greater peer-group integration reported less anxiety and depression compared to youth who reported less peer-group integration (Teja et al., 2013). Additionally, the results indicated that Chinese newcomer youth who were in friendships with high conflict reported more depressive symptoms, highlighting how unhealthy friendships can act as a risk factor for poor mental health (Teja et al., 2013). Furthermore, Chinese

newcomer youth who reported high conflict friendships also had lower teacher-rated school competence, which suggests quality of friendships and conflict resolution skills may affect youth's overall school functioning. (Teja et al., 2013).

Additionally, it is important to highlight how systemic adversities such as racism, discrimination and bullying may affect newcomer youth's mental well-being and relationship quality in different settings (Burgos et al., 2016; Shakya et al., 2010). Systemic policies and interventions such as appropriate bullying policies, anti-racist educational curriculum and bystander interventions are required for creating safe and accepting school and community environments for newcomer youth (Burgos et al., 2016; Shakya et al., 2010). Simultaneously, individual skill development may provide youth with practical strategies to advocate for their needs, build healthy relationships, safely and effectively navigate complex peer situations, and learn ways to enhance their mental well-being by learning about emotions, stress management strategies and help-seeking behaviours (Burgos et al., 2016; Shakya et al., 2010).

There are existing tier-1 and tier-2 programs that teach youth healthy relationship skills to promote their mental health. For example, the "Healthy Relationships Program-Enhanced" (HRP-E) program aims to improve vulnerable youth's social-emotional competency by teaching them healthy relationships and mental well-being skills (Houston, 2020; Syeda et al., 2021). HRP-E develops skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving ability, how to build and maintain healthy relationships, violence intervention, mental health literacy, and help-seeking practice to avoid peer pressure (Houston, 2020; Syeda et al., 2021). The program is designed for youth ages 12-18 years old and consists of 16 sessions that are one hour each (Houston, 2020). The program uses a trauma-informed and harm reduction approach to support youth who are participating in the program (Houston, 2020; Syeda et al., 2021). Additionally, the Canadian Red

Cross offers “Healthy Youth Relationships”, which is an evidence-informed educational program intended for middle school and high school students (Canadian Red Cross, n.d.). The program covers topics including personal boundaries, media influences, gender identity and consent, which aims to help youth attain knowledge and skills necessary to develop healthy relationships and prevent dating violence (Canadian Red Cross, n.d.).

#### **2.4 Perspectives of Newcomer Youth**

While there are published studies describing the prevalence of mental health disorders in newcomer population groups (e.g., Beiser et al., 2002; Hameed et al., 2018; Kirmayer et al., 2011; Pumareiga et al., 2005), few researchers have directly collaborated with newcomer youth to understand the supports, strategies and skills that are necessary to promote mental health and foster healthy relationships during the early resettlement phase. Similarly, researchers have not sufficiently integrated newcomer’s personal stories to explore social connectedness, relationship success, challenges and difficulties on resettlement experience. Furthermore, it is important for researchers to value the perspective of newcomer youth when exploring their needs with mental health programming. This will likely allow newcomer youth to have the autonomy to advocate for themselves while also acknowledging that their voices are valued and important in the conversation of program development for youth mental health (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017).

Smith and Crooks (2022) conducted a concept mapping study which incorporated the youth voice to help identify considerations for programming to support newcomer youth. The authors mention that it is critical to include the youth voice in research as child and adolescent perspectives have seldom been included in research, especially for the purpose of program development that is directly meant for youth populations (Smith & Crooks, 2022). When researchers and stakeholders include the voices of youth there is potential for the development of

programs to improve and more positively impact the target audience. For newcomer youth to have programs that are appropriate to their needs, newcomer youth need to first have the platform to voice their concerns so that the initiatives can reflect what newcomer youth require to flourish within their new environment.

Burgos and authors (2019) explored the needs of newcomer youth by conducting group interviews with them to understand what they need to make their home environments more supportive. By asking youth directly what they require to feel more supported at home, researchers were able to analyze the direct responses of the participating newcomer youth to truly grasp what this population requires (Burgos et al., 2019). The authors reported that newcomer youth wanted to have increased positive feedback and communication from their parents, increased communication with their family members that valued mutual respect, support and listening, and an environment that was more open and welcoming to friends (Burgos et al., 2019).

Additionally, the study conducted by Morantz and authors (2011) involved directly speaking to children and adults to understand the relocation process of refugees in Montreal, Canada. The study conducted 75 semi-structured interviews (i.e., 36 with children, 39 with adults and 33 with families; Morantz et al., 2011). The results of the study indicate that the experience of leaving their home countries was extremely difficult for parents and children (Morantz et al., 2011). Furthermore, parents found searching for employment stressful but felt hopeful about their children's education in Canada (Morantz et al., 2011). Moreover, children were able to learn language skills faster than adults. Although both adults and children had some initial difficulties making friends, children were faster at making friends (Morantz et al., 2011). However, there was significant shared uncertainty about their new environment for both children

and adults, which led to considerable stress that affected their ability to adapt (Morantz et al., 2011). By examining this study, it is clear that directly interviewing newcomer individuals can allow for a deep and rich understanding of how newcomers experience their environment and the challenges and struggles they face upon arrival in Canada (Morantz et al., 2011).

By including the perspectives of newcomer youth in research, practitioners, program developers and mental health providers may better understand the distinct needs of this population. This may help guide the adaptation, improvement and development of tier-1 and tier-2 mental health resources so that practitioners, program developers, mental health providers and other stakeholders may become more pertinent to the needs of newcomer youth populations in Canada.

## **2.5 Taking a Strengths-Based Framework for Newcomer Youth Research**

Implementing a strengths-based approach in research focuses on the existing characteristics of participants through authentically encouraging personal narratives and expression when interacting with participants during the research process (Hammond, 2010). Having a strengths-based approach avoids problematizing the negative experiences of participants by shifting the focus to the individual and acknowledging that they are the experts of their experiences. Implementing a strengths-based approach when conducting research with newcomer youth values their existing resilience and allows newcomer youth to regain their power and personal autonomy over their experiences (Bowman, 2012; Hammond, 2010). To further elaborate, Hammond (2010) describes nine core principles that researchers and service providers can use when implementing a strengths-based approach in practice. These principles include: (1) the idea that each person has their own unique capabilities and strengths; (2) a focus on the individuals strengths and not their weaknesses; (3) communication and language play a

key role in our self-perception; (4) the idea that change is unavoidable; (5) positive change is cultivated through genuine relationship building; (6) it is critical to be person-centred; (7) people are more motivated to explore the future when they already establish familiarity about what is known to them; (8) skill building is a process and a never-ending journey; and (9) we should celebrate differences and promote coloration (Hammond, 2010). It is essential that these nine core principles of the strengths-based approach are implemented in practice and research when working with diverse communities such as newcomer youth, so that they may feel valued and celebrated when discussing their resettlement experiences. Using a strengths-based framework in research acknowledges the various intersections that shape a newcomer youth's identity and aims to focus on how these connections can be a source of power in an adolescent's life (Miller et al., 2019).

## **2.6 Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of the current study is to learn and listen directly to the perspectives of newcomer youth to better understand their resettlement concerns, challenges and what affects their overall mental well-being. I sought to hear from newcomer youth to learn about what newcomer youth perceive to be helpful to promote their mental health and well-being, as well as to build and maintain their relationships. I wanted to learn about the innate strengths and external supports newcomer youth use to promote their mental health and relationships when they first arrived in Canada. Furthermore, I aimed to better understand what newcomer youth needed and whether existing external supports are reflective of their needs when they arrive in Canada. In consideration of the research goals mentioned, I specifically formulated two main research questions:



- (1) According to the perceptions of newcomer youth, what do newcomer youth need to promote positive mental health during the early years of their resettlement journey? What challenges, unmet needs and barriers come in the way of their mental well-being?
- (2) According to the perceptions of newcomer youth, what skills and strategies do newcomer youth use to build new and maintain existing interpersonal relationships during the early years of their resettlement journey? What challenges, unmet needs and barriers come in the way of building relationships?

## **Chapter 3: Methods**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter first provides a description of the study participants, followed by a detailed review of the study design, procedures and data collection process. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the data analysis procedures used to address the study's research questions and the ethical considerations of the study.

### **3.2 Participants**

#### **3.2.1 Youth Participants**

Four newcomer youth (two females and two males), between the ages of 14 and 21, who had been in Canada for at least two years participated in the investigation. The age distribution of youth participants was as follows: one participant (aged 14 to 15) and three participants (aged 16 to 21). In addition to varying age distributions, all four youth participants were from different countries of origin.

### **3.3 Data Collection Tools**

#### **3.3.1 Eligibility Criteria Form**

An eligibility criteria form (see Appendix A) was developed for the study so that interested newcomer youth could assess if they are eligible to participate in the study. The eligibility form asked newcomer youth about their age range to ensure that they fit the desired age criteria (between the ages of 14 and 21). Furthermore, the form asked newcomer youth if they had been living in Canada for at least two years to five years. Based on the newcomer youth's responses (i.e., if they are between the ages of 14 and 21 and if they have been in Canada for at least two to five years) they will either be eligible or ineligible to participate in the study. Initially, we recruited youth who were required to be residing in Canada for at least two to five

years. However, due to recruitment challenges we expanded the range to newcomer youth residing in Canada for at least two years. The purpose of the eligibility criteria form is for participants to know whether they qualify to participate in the study and to provide the research team with an indication of the age distribution of the participants in the study.

### **3.3.2 Interview Guide**

An interview guide (see Appendix B) was created by the primary researcher and supervisor for the semi-structured interviews that the primary researcher was conducting with newcomer youth. The interview guide begins with an opening statement which outlines the purpose of the current study and reiterates consent, confidentiality and the safety measures involved in the interview process. The interview guide then discusses the topics of mental health and well-being to provide participants with a western-based definition of the two concepts. Finally, the interview guide consists of five main questions that aid the primary researcher during the interview. The five primary questions asked participants to reflect on their initial years in Canada, experiences, overall mental health, challenges, ability to form and maintain relationships and supports that they valued as a newcomer and/or wished they had when they first arrived in Canada.

### **3.4 Procedure**

Interested newcomer youth were requested to complete an eligibility screening form and consent form (see Appendix K and L). The eligibility form consists of asking participants how long they have been residing in Canada, their age range to confirm that they meet the age requirement and whether they require a translator to participate in the interview. Based on the method of recruitment (e.g., online, email or videoconference), the participants were notified that they may participate and were provided with the appropriate information regarding interview

proceedings. During the interviews, participants were asked the five questions previously mentioned that are based on the study's research questions. Each interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete, and all participants received a \$20 gift card for their participation in the interview.

The interviews sought to identify specific resources and strategies that would be useful for newcomer youth and their families when they initially arrive in Canada by considering the various difficulties they may face. More specifically, the interviews asked newcomer youth to reflect on their first two years living in Canada and identify the types of needs they had during this time, the supports they required to build better friendships and social relationships, and what they believe would have positively impacted their mental health and well-being. In addition, the interview process sought to obtain any recommendations that newcomer youth have for services and programs that they may have received and, more generally, what they wish they had known or been provided with as newcomers to Canada. All interviews adhered to Western University's secure Zoom protocol (e.g., Zoom meeting ID was shared only with participants who consented to participate in the interview and the Zoom meetings were password protected).

#### ***3.4.1 Newcomer Youth Recruitment and Consent Procedures***

Youth were recruited to participate in the study through various avenues (e.g., online, social media, telephone, etc.). Initially, the research team collaborated with community partners who the Centre for School Mental Health (CSMH) had existing relationships with and requested that these organizations share the study information and poster online and within their facilities to generate exposure. The research team provided community partner organizations with recruitment scripts (e.g., email, telephone, videoconference, etc.) (see Appendix C through H) and the study poster (see Appendix M). Interested newcomer youth were able to scan the quick

response (QR) code on the study poster and/or access the study link online which routed them to the online eligibility form and letter of information (LOI) and consent form. Newcomer youth also had the option of contacting the research team directly through email to receive more information about the study. Despite reaching out to several community partners for recruitment, the initial response was negligible. Subsequently, the research team boosted the recruitment strategies and developed a multipronged approach through expanding poster distribution to businesses and other organizations outside of CSMH community partners in the project. For example, the research team requested organizations such as community libraries, religious congregation centres, community centres, and university and colleges to have the poster visible within their facilities and distribute it to individuals who visited their organizations. Upon receiving inquiry about the poster and/or receiving a completed LOI and consent form online, the primary researcher contacted eligible participants and scheduled an interview with the participant over Zoom. For youth under the age of 16, parent/legal guardian consent for their child to participate was obtained. Parents/guardians were contacted about the study either by email or telephone. A research team member reviewed the eligibility screening forms for youth under 16 and confirmed that parent/guardian consent has been received prior to scheduling an interview.

### ***3.4.2 Data Collection***

Prior to beginning participant interviews, the primary researcher in this study ensured that participant eligibility was assessed, and that consent was obtained from youth and/or parents/guardians when necessary (see Appendix I and J). Upon confirming consent, newcomer youth participants were interviewed over Zoom and engaged in a conversation with the researcher about their experiences as a newcomer youth in Canada. Participation in the research

tasks was not mandatory for any participant, and newcomer youth were able to refuse participation and withdraw from the study at any time.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

This study employed qualitative methods to analyze data using Braun and Clarke's (2021) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach. In using this approach, it is important to note that there is no predetermined sample size in which researchers should follow. Rather, it is more important to consider the volume and richness of each data item and consider the homogeneity and heterogeneity of the data set as whole. Furthermore, unlike other forms of thematic analysis, RTA strives to capture both the similarities and individual differences within the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Through use of this methodology, each participant was asked to share their lived experiences and perspectives as newcomer youth through their personal lens during interviews. Built within RTA is the consideration for research subjectivity and reflexivity in the analysis process. Therefore, the analysis of the data in this study represents my personal interpretations of the participants' narratives. Although, using Braun and Clarke's (2021) approach allows for rigorous analysis that goes beyond surface level descriptions of participant experiences, I have utilized my own positionality and experiences to provide deeper interpretation and meaning when analyzing participants' experiences.

#### ***3.5.1 Research Positionality***

When using RTA in qualitative research, it is essential to consider the researcher's positionality because it helps inform the meaning making process when analyzing participant data (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I am a first-generation Canadian woman who was born to a refugee father and immigrant mother. My father and his family initially obtained asylum in the United Kingdom after being displaced from his home-country of Uganda before later immigrating to

Canada. My mother and her family immigrated to Canada from Punjab, India in the mid 1970s in search for more opportunity and a better life. Although both of my parents came to Canada when they were young, I have heard many accounts from my parents and grandparents about the hardships and difficulties that they faced as newcomers in a western country. Specifically, my family has witnessed not only violence and socioeconomic disparities in their home countries, but also discrimination, financial difficulties, racism and adversity when they arrived in Canada. Listening to stories of my parents and grandparents and learning about the challenges that they faced as newcomers motivated me to listen to the voices of newcomer youth to learn more about the mental health challenges that they face when they arrive in Canada.

As a woman of colour, I have also realized the unique position that I am in as a Canadian-born, able-bodied, young person who has been allotted certain privileges and opportunities. Within my role as a graduate student at Western University, I have engaged in learning about newcomer mental health and the need for cultural humility in psychological research and practice. Specifically, listening to my parents and grandparents about their experiences as newcomers to Canada may have impacted how I interpreted the data in the study. However, it is because of my family's experiences that I am motivated to learn about the lived experiences of newcomer youth and honour their voices in my research.

### ***3.5.2 Data Analysis***

Prior to analysing the data in this study, I, the primary researcher used the consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) checklist to ensure that all facets of qualitative research (e.g., research team and reflexivity, study design, coding consistency and theme derivation, etc.) are being considered and to ensure reliability in the data analysis process. To analyze the data, I conducted RTA with the four semi-structured interviews that were

conducted with newcomer youth. Using RTA, researchers can identify, categorise, organize and describe various themes present within a given data set (Nowell et al., 2017). The current study used a deductive approach and employed the six-phase model for conducting thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Firstly, interviews were conducted with all the participants and the researcher ensured that adequate notes, transcriptions and recordings were acquired. Additionally, I began to familiarize myself with the data. This included detailed examination of the data, developing reflective insights, organizing the raw data in an appropriate manner, and ensuring that all records (e.g., notes, recordings, consent, etc.) were obtained. Subsequently, I generated preliminary codes through in-depth reflexive journaling, note-taking, summarizing, and paraphrasing. Generating codes allowed me to simplify and narrow specific aspects of the data (Nowell et al., 2017). In addition, upon having regular meetings with myself and my supervisor, who provided me with alternative perspectives, thoughts, ideas and insights related to the development and refinement of codes, I established twelve distinct codes and developed a code table to help refine the data and begin theme development (see Appendix N). Next, I began to search for commonalities and develop themes by placing them in distinct superordinate themes. During this time, I reviewed themes and developed detailed subthemes. At the end of this phase, I developed a sufficient understanding of the various themes, how they relate to one another and the overall narrative that they produce about the data (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, I developed detailed descriptions and definitions identifying what each theme signifies in relation to the data. The theme names provided a substantial understanding of what the theme suggests. In addition, I consulted my supervisor to discuss the process of defining and naming the themes so that various perspectives were considered (Nowell et al., 2017). Lastly, I produced a detailed analysis of the data and findings. This process used thick



description, direct quotes from participants and a valid reason that describes the given themes to describe the data.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

Non-medical Research Ethics Board approval by Western University was obtained for the current study. According to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2), it is important to consider that the sample in this study included newcomer youth who may be vulnerable (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2018). The TCPS 2 (2018) outlines that vulnerable populations include individuals who may be unable to advocate or care for themselves such as ethnic minorities, Indigenous groups, people living with disabilities, people living with mental illness, socio-economically disadvantaged people, and people experiencing substance use disorders. As such, when researching with vulnerable populations, researchers should determine whether specific processes may require supplementary measures to ensure that participants are protected against exploitation, discrimination and harm (TCPS, 2018). Accordingly, in this study, we researched about the mental well-being of newcomer youth (e.g., managing stress, eating well, doing things they enjoy) rather than inviting them to discuss explicit trauma experiences or mental health disorders. Additionally, individuals who participated in the study always had the option to skip any questions they may not feel comfortable answering and/or withdraw from the study at any point. Language support was also offered to participants if they required a translator, as well as additional resources including a debriefing space, external resources such as KidsHelpPhone, and community support information to increase the likelihood that participants

felt supported, welcomed and safe during the interview process. Overall, promoting equity and fairness throughout the research process was an essential component of the study.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

The results of the current study, including the analysis involving themes, participant quotes and researcher interpretation, are presented in this chapter. A total of four youth participated in interviews for this study. In considering the research questions of this study, I, the primary researcher, and my supervisor collaborated to formulate superordinate themes that are directly related to the study's research objectives and interview questions. Using the qualitative method of RTA, I identified two superordinate themes, and five sub-themes were subsequently created. The two superordinate themes discussed in this chapter are: 1) Mental health and relationship challenges and 2) Mental well-being and relationship strengths and resources.

### **4.1 Mental Health and Relationship Challenges**

The participant interview questions were guided in accordance with the study's main research questions and themes were subsequently organized into two distinct categories. The first superordinate theme I identified was mental health and relationship challenges. During the interviews with newcomer youth, I asked participants to reflect on their initial resettlement stages and discuss any challenges and/or stressors that may have affected their overall well-being. In addition, I asked newcomer youth if they experienced any challenges and/or barriers in building new social relationships and maintaining existing ones (e.g., with siblings). Participants identified various mental health and relationship challenges that made initial resettlement in Canada challenging. Specifically, participants mentioned that they experienced difficulties forming new friendships with their peers, adjusting to their new environment and speaking English. Furthermore, during the interviews, participants suggested potential supports and resources that they believed might have helped them with their mental health and relationships during their initial period in Canada.

Within this theme, I developed two sub-themes to further expand on the challenges newcomer youth experienced: 1) Sometimes it was hard: Resettlement challenges and barriers and 2) Let's make it better: Recommendations for future newcomer youth.

### ***Sometimes It Was Hard: Resettlement Barriers and Challenges***

Newcomer youth emphasized various resettlement challenges such as language differences, feelings of uncertainty and culture shock as significant barriers when interacting with peers, teachers and developing friendships when they initially came to Canada. Participants felt that although these challenges and barriers were mostly prevalent during the early stages of resettlement, it was significant at the time because it led them to feel uncomfortable within their new environment. Participants stressed that lack of English language proficiency was one of the biggest challenges that they experienced during their initial period in Canada. The language barrier significantly contributed to participants feeling distant from their environment, not confident in being able to communicate with their peers and teachers, and lowered their sense of belonging within the Canadian context. This led newcomer youth to feel isolated within their environment and acted as an obstacle for youth to have positive experiences.

For example, a participant described facing difficulty when they initially arrived in Canada due to language barriers:

When we come Canada, it's difficult for us because we don't know a lot of language and also country I'm going to. [...] At first, we have some stress when we come because we don't know the culture. We don't know the language so much. And also, then the people. All thing is new for us. [...] I think the first difficult thing is we don't know English. I think it's some difficult and we can't if we don't know the language, we can't learn good. If we try to learn English, maybe we can improve and we can be good with our life. With

our knowledge. [...] Also, the culture and the people and the environment, new environment. It's also difficult for us (Participant 2).

Additionally, another newcomer youth participant highlighted how language barriers were a factor that impacted their ability to maintain positive well-being and form new relationships:

I think one of the biggest challenges I faced, especially with mental health was my language skills coming here with like almost no skill. Speaking English and coming here with the fact that I have no one here and just. Absolutely. No, nothing. No thought and no knowledge of how to speak English was so difficult on my mental health. It was frustrating at some points. Where I want to express myself, but I couldn't because I only knew how to speak Arabic. Other times even with like peers at school or others or teachers or whoever, it was kind of like hard to describe what I'm feeling. Because I did not speak English well... (Participant 3).

Furthermore, culture shock was another challenge that newcomer youth faced when they first arrived in Canada. Participants perceived culture shock as being in a new environment that is considerably different than what they are used to in their home country. Youth described that the culture shock they experienced was primarily related to not knowing how things are, both socially and culturally, in Canadian society. For example, one youth mentioned that the culture shock they felt when they initially arrived in Canada was related to peer socialization in Canadian society and that it was significantly different than what the youth was used to in their home country:

The huge cultural shock wasn't even like a little bit. It was really huge. Especially like where I came from was a lot more conservative. Especially at school, in grade four, we

got separated from girls. We don't look at girls, we don't see girls. [...] So, it's like then you come here and then the girls are just with you all the time and they're wearing this, they're wearing that, it was a huge culture shock. It wasn't like you moved from a conservative country to another conservative country where you understand their culture. No. Was kind of like you had to learn everything again... (Participant 3).

Participants expressed that the resettlement challenges and difficulties in their new environment might have indirectly impacted their mental well-being when they first arrived in Canada. For example, newcomer youth mentioned how not knowing anyone in the community led to feelings of isolation which negatively impacted their self-esteem and ability to feel confident in forming new relationships. Specifically, one youth expressed the following: "It was hard for me to make friends, and my mom often recalls that she would see me pack my suitcase to go back home" (Participant 1).

When describing feelings of isolation and how they impacted their mental well-being, one youth elaborated on how moving to Canada also impacted their identity formation and self-perception:

Oh, no, it was terrible when I first came, it was terrible, I felt like I lost my identity. I felt like I lost everything. Not only like my friends but I kind of like, I felt like I lost myself as well because I had to form this new persona and personalities around people all around now. Like over here, it's not like you don't have to be tough in school, like you don't have to be walking around like you always have someone looking at you bad or something. You have to be nice. You have to play with people, we have to do this, and that, it's a whole different culture as a whole, different. I guess it's a whole different environment, especially at school, especially with your friends. It's not that you don't

deal with them the same. It was like I lost everything, and I had to renew it. It was kind of like a rebuild sort, like it's kind of like you're in a new country, you've lost everything, you don't have anyone to talk to and you have to start all over again. And it was, I'm not going to lie, it was talk like it was probably one of the toughest years of my life (Participant 3).

Thus, when speaking with newcomer youth about their early experiences in Canada, it was apparent that they faced difficulties that directly and indirectly impacted their mental well-being. Participants mentioned that integration barriers including language and culture shock led them to feel isolated and secluded in their new environments.

### ***Let's make it better: Recommendations for Future Newcomer Youth***

While newcomer youth participants voiced challenges and struggles that they faced when they initially arrived in Canada, they provided recommendations for future newcomer youth who arrive in Canada that may face similar challenges. Newcomer youth were able to identify a few external resources that they found useful when they first came to Canada and provided suggestions for programs that may not currently exist but that they feel would be useful for future newcomer youth to integrate into their new environments. Participants identified that having access to external resources such as cultural community centres, community activities and sports allowed them to form connections with other newcomer youth, practice their language skills and keep meaningful affiliations with their home country and cultural identity. During participant interviews, newcomer youth also expressed that they would have benefitted from a mentorship program where they could speak to and learn from an older peer who was of the same culture and also once a newcomer youth.

For example, one participant mentioned that it may have been beneficial to have an older mentor who was also once a newcomer to help guide and support them through some of the difficulties that they faced:

Probably a mentor. And so, it would be perfect. Mentor that dealt with this stuff before me. Another thing, any type of program that takes me in and talks. Let me talk to others like me who are imperfect, right? Like I said, ESL was not good because they're teaching English, it was good because I was talking to others like me. So, a mentor and program that can discuss with Arabic speaking people about my struggle, and they can talk to me about their struggles. [...] What did they do? I want to try to do that and deal with it or see how they're able to deal with it and so forth (Participant 3).

This participant explained the value of learning from others who have gone through similar experiences and the potential benefit of having a mentorship program where newcomer youth from the same and/or similar background can converse in their native language with an older newcomer youth and ask them questions that they may have about resettlement, integration, or anything else.

In addition, another youth suggested that maintaining a connection with youth who are from their home country was beneficial because they were able to preserve their cultural identity while living in Canada:

I remember in high school and in middle school as well, I started going to like the community centres that were fully affiliated with my home country, so that kind of helped me realize where I was coming from. Yet you're in Canada. So, there are a lot of a lot of youth there that were born and raised in Canada, but yet they still had kind of affiliations with that country and with those cultures, so doing like a mix of both kind of



helped me. And it's something that I recommend if it's attainable for everyone to do.

(Participant 1)

As such, it was clear that newcomer youth hoped for more external resources to be created so that future newcomer youth can have more support and opportunities to connect with peers in their new environment.

## **4.2 Mental Well-being and Relationship Strengths and Resources**

During the interviews I asked newcomer youth to share their stories and experiences about what helped them manage their stress and promote their well-being when they came to Canada. The resources and strengths that youth mentioned in relation to managing their well-being were skills that they built as they continued to spend more time in Canada. Through engaging in this discussion with newcomer youth, I developed the second superordinate theme: mental well-being and relationship strengths and resources. This superordinate theme encompasses newcomer youth's thoughts and experiences about their inner strengths, resilience, external resources and supports that helped them cope and manage their stress when they first arrived in Canada. Within this superordinate theme, I identified three sub-themes: 1) How we felt supported: Need for school and community resources; 2) The importance of relationships: Connection to peers and family; and 3) It's within me: Inner qualities and strengths.

### ***How We Felt Supported: Need for School and Community Resources***

During the interviews participants were asked to reflect on their first couple of years in Canada and think about what helped them maintain positive mental health and manage their everyday stress. Participants highlighted that they benefitted from school and community resources that allowed them to develop their English language skills, build connections with peers, and socialize and develop friendships. All participants truly valued having the English as a

second language (ESL) program at their schools, having community sports at their local park and community centre, and being able to form connections with other peers through attending summer camps and community centre programs.

Participants believed ESL programs embedded within the school allowed them to feel supported within their new environment by their teachers and peers while also building their confidence in the English language. Youth highlighted that there was a sense of collective experience amongst the students in the ESL program. This allowed them to feel like they were not alone with their feelings of being in a new country because ESL programs have a diverse set of students who are working to improve their English language skills collectively. For example, one participant highlighted the benefit of the ESL program at their school:

I was also enrolled in the ESL program within my school, so that definitely helped. And the teachers at the school were just outstanding. They helped me just develop my language and I guess learn more about the culture [...] there are a lot of, I guess, days where they would take us out skating (Participant 1).

In addition, another youth participant emphasized how interacting with other ESL students in similar positions allowed them to feel like they were not alone in what they were experiencing:

...ESL was pretty good. The kids inside, we express the same things and because we express the same feelings, so talk to each other. We would understand how like how we were each feeling, and it's kind of perfect. And like I said, it was difficult for me because my language skills again. But that was perfect because I could see they're also struggling with that (Participant 3).

Furthermore, a few participants also identified the benefit of having school and community sports programs because it helped them form relationships and feel supported within their communities. The ability to have access to team sports programs provided youth with an outlet to meet other youth with similar interests, utilize their teamwork skills, practice their language and communication, and improve their self-confidence. Newcomer youth also valued how team sports provided them with an opportunity to learn about the social culture in their communities, meet new peers their age and form lasting relationships that they are currently still maintaining.

For example, one youth felt that they were able to utilize their strong soccer ability and use that to help them form relationships and connections at school:

I like playing sports. For example, soccer, especially in Middle East, we came from the Middle East, so we know how to play soccer pretty, fairly well. So, when we were at school, I found a lot of relationships playing soccer with peers and most of my relationships are formed with me playing soccer literally, and most of the time that's how I made friends (Participant 3).

Another youth also mentioned that their family encouraged them to join the soccer team and basketball team at school to help them meet peers. This youth emphasized that various sports such as tennis, basketball and soccer helped them stay active and enjoy their evenings with new friends in the neighbourhood and community:

Yeah, I made a lot of friends. I was in the basketball team, so a lot of friends there. [...]  
So, we have a community centre, lawn, tennis park and basketball and football ground.  
So, I used to go there in the evening and play with my friends (Participant 4).

As such, community programs and sports played a positive role in connecting newcomer youth to other peers in their community which had a positive impact on their ability to manage their stress and maintain their well-being.

### ***The Importance of Relationships: Connection to Peers and Family***

When asked about forming new relationships and maintaining existing relationships, participants shared that social connection to friends and family was important for their positive resettlement experience in Canada. Newcomer youth strongly valued having connections and felt like it was an important factor to maintain positive well-being because they did not feel alone in their environment or in what they were experiencing. Youth described that they appreciated the comfort that they had within their families and that the collective experience of migration and difficulty that all members of the family similarly experienced allowed for a shared identity within the family unit. In other words, the shared experience between family members and other newcomers in their community helped them feel connected and supported within their environment. Newcomer youth emphasized the importance of relationships with parents and siblings during the early stages of arrival in Canada. It is understandably difficult for newcomer youth to instantaneously integrate and adapt to their new environment. However, participants described feeling like their immediate family members (i.e., parents and siblings) were their main support system when they first arrived in Canada. Newcomer youth appreciated family members and friends who also experienced migration challenges because it gave them a special connection to family and friends who they can confide in about the difficulties they are facing that are unique to resettlement. For example, one newcomer youth mentioned that “it [family] has become closer now [...] Because they [parents and sibling] were my only friends when I came to Canada” (Participant 4).

Similarly, another newcomer youth expressed sentiments related to the importance in having familial connection when they initially arrived in Canada:

[...] when we moved here, everyone was, dealing with the same kind of shock, culture shock, and the movement was kind of scary for everyone. So, everyone would share their experience together at dinner or to the family and talking to each other, especially having my sister, my younger sister, my older brother with me at the same school was kind of like, really helpful. We would always like support each other to make sure that we're safe together at school, make sure that we're talking together, having fun stuff like that, so it was good that I had a big family, and they were really supportive. That's kind of what kept me going (Participant 3).

Therefore, it is important to recognize how existing relationships such as relationships with parents and siblings plays an important role in the well-being of newcomer youth and allows them to feel supported in their new environment.

### ***It's Within Me: Inner Qualities and Strengths***

Newcomer youth identified their inner and existing strengths that aided them in having positive mental well-being. Newcomer youth recognized that their personal strengths such as their personality traits (e.g., being outgoing, friendly, confident, and determined) and their personal skills (e.g., being able to navigate social media to connect with peers) helped them manage their stress and build new relationships. These personal strengths contributed to their existing resilience and self-confidence which helped them form new relationships and build a place for themselves within their communities. To elaborate, the personal skill of determination to build new relationships depicted by newcomer youth is a significant factor to highlight. Newcomer youth who exhibit determination come into their new environment with an existing

positive attitude and ambition to find various ways to build friendships and maintain a positive mindset. This is an important inner quality to recognize because newcomer youth who are coming into difficult situations relating to resettlement use their existing traits, qualities, and abilities to make the most out of their situation.

Furthermore, newcomer youth mentioned that although it was initially difficult to find ways to make friends and integrate into their new environment, once they recognized that they could use what they already have within them (i.e., their personal strengths), connecting with peers at school and in the community became easier. For example, a newcomer youth participant, when asked about what was helpful or what worked when building new relationships, stated the following:

It wasn't in class, it wasn't anywhere. It was just through peers. It was just through talking to people and being outgoing. I would play with the whole class. I made sure I was trying to integrate as much as possible (Participant 3).

This newcomer youth was able to draw upon their own existing personal strengths (i.e., their outgoing personality and determination to make new friends) to do the best that they could to form meaningful new relationships in Canada.

Additionally, another newcomer youth mentioned that they used their technology and social media skills to meet new youth their age and connect with peers in their community. The youth noted, "I mean, so like, I used to message them [in the group chat] that you want to come play this game? and they said yes. Then after some time, I just made friends" (Participant 4). This newcomer youth's ability to confidently navigate social media and reach out to other youth in the community allowed them to form new positive relationships in Canada.

To conclude this chapter, the results of the study were analyzed by conducting an in-depth analysis of participant interviews using RTA. The two superordinate themes that were created (mental health and relationship challenges and mental well-being and relationship strengths and resources) reflect the perspectives of newcomer youth through what they found difficult when they initially arrived in Canada as well as what they found to be beneficial for their mental well-being. Through analyzing participant interviews, newcomer youth face a diverse set of challenges while also having the common experience of being able to use their resilience and resources around them to cope with their stressors and difficulties associated with being a newcomer youth in Canada. Interviews with newcomer youth provided direct perspective into what newcomer youth felt upon resettlement, their recommendations for programs and how they managed their well-being when they initially came to Canada.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

In considering the various difficulties newcomer youth face pre- and post-migration, it is evident that directly listening to newcomer youth about their lived experiences and perceptions is valuable to better understand their distinct mental health needs. By incorporating newcomer youth voices in research, researchers, mental health care providers and community professionals may be able to develop and enhance programming to be more culturally responsive, trauma-informed and directed at the needs of this population (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2016). In conducting this study, we aimed to provide youth with a platform to voice their thoughts and identify the unique needs that they have by considering their experiences and learning from the difficulties that they faced when they initially arrived in Canada. While listening to newcomer youth, we also considered the resilience that they used to cope with their difficulties and the ways in which they were able to foster positive well-being. In this concluding chapter, I will present a summary of the findings, implications of the study, the limitations, and the future directions of research with newcomer youth populations.

### **5.1 Summary of the Current Study**

The present study sought to examine the various supports and resources that newcomer youth may need to have positive mental health and well-being during their initial years in Canada. Prior to conducting interviews with newcomer youth, I examined the existing literature regarding newcomer youth's mental health. It is evident that there is a need for further investigation into the unique needs of newcomer youth within the Canadian context (Burgos et al., 2019). Researchers were encouraged to directly incorporate newcomer youth's voices in their studies to have their experiences and perspectives direct the development and improvement of



educational and mental health resettlement services (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017; Smith, 2021).

Newcomer youth in the current study described that they benefitted from both formal supports (i.e., ESL programs at school, summer camps, school field trips and community sports) and informal supports (i.e., having meaningful connections with family and friends and using their skills and strengths to feel confident in their new environment). The value of having both formal and informal support for newcomer youth was also apparent in the article written by Smith and authors (2022) which examined the advice that newcomer youth have for other newcomer youth. In addition, Francis and Yan (2016) discussed similar evaluations on formal supports as the current study. The authors discussed that young newcomers find it valuable to seek support through external resources such as community centres and ethnocultural group organizations. Francis and Yan (2016) also highlighted that external resources and programming usually employ a one-size-fits-all model which fails to consider the diverse needs of young newcomer populations. In relation to the benefit of informal supports, the youth participants in the current study emphasized how the collective experience of resettlement and migration with their family members allowed for a mutual understanding within the family unit about the resettlement barriers that they were facing and the struggles that newcomer youth faced outside of their home. Similarly, the discourse analysis study conducted by Caxaj and Berman (2010) examined 25 purposively selected written online texts (blogs and electronic forums) and pre-existing transcripts (from previous studies) that examined the resettlement, displacement, belonging and health of newcomer youth. This study found that newcomer youth valued familial connection as it allowed for resettlement challenges and changes to be experienced collectively within their family (Caxaj & Berman, 2010). In addition, this study's findings highlighted that

newcomer's sense of belonging was strongly related to the support that they received within their family (Caxaj & Berman, 2010).

In the current study, newcomer youth reported that language differences and lack of English proficiency were significant resettlement challenges when they arrived in Canada. Language differences made it challenging to form new friendships and generally engage in social interaction. Experiencing language barriers was a resettlement challenge that participants strongly emphasized and expressed as being difficult to overcome. Participants also felt that reduced English proficiency decreased their self-confidence and impacted their well-being. Previous researchers have also highlighted how language differences could affect newcomer youths' well-being and be a significant barrier during early resettlement. For example, the book written by Mackay and Tavares (2005) reports on a study which explored the needs of young newcomers with English as a second language. The study surveyed schools in Manitoba between grade 7 to 12 and reported on the quantity of ESL learners, ESL learning trends, characteristics of ESL students, perceptions of existing programming, and the challenges and opportunities for refugee learner success (Mackay & Tavares, 2005). It was found that limited programming for newcomer youth may lead to students withdrawing from the school system and increased challenges in continuing educational and life opportunities for these youth (Mackay & Tavares, 2005; see also Christmas & Christmas, 2017; Smith & Crooks, 2022). In addition, the authors report that there is a lack of appropriate and focused programming for newcomer youth who are ESL learners which does not prioritize the language needs for this population and may exacerbate socio-emotional difficulties and learning challenges related to language barriers for newcomer youth (MacKay & Tavares, 2005; see also Caxaj & Berman, 2010). Therefore, as found in the current study and mentioned by Mackay and Tavares (2005), it is essential to ensure

that newcomer youth are provided with appropriate language support so that they may be able to communicate effectively with peers to allow for a positive sense of belonging within their new environments.

Furthermore, newcomer youth in the current study expressed feeling a sense of culture shock when they initially moved to Canada. Newcomer youth shared that they were unaware of the social culture in Canadian society and had difficulty with their peers as they were uncertain about what was appropriate behaviour amongst their peers. Similarly, the study by Caxaj and Berman (2010) found that newcomer youth expressed that unfamiliarity with western culture and adjustments to a new environment contributed to feelings of alienation and isolation. These findings emphasize that newcomer youth do experience significant culture shock and changes related to their new socio-cultural environment when they initially resettle in Canada. Future research and programming with newcomer youth can seek to better understand the phenomenon of culture shock and how it impacts newcomer youth to ensure that programs and services are targeted at better supporting youth with socio-cultural challenges that exist within their new environments.

Although newcomer youth described facing challenges and barriers with resettlement, they also provided recommendations for future newcomer youth to maintain positive mental well-being and feel more secure in their new environment. Participants emphasized the benefit of having access to external resources such as cultural community centres, sports and programs, as well as connecting with family and peers who have had similar experiences of resettlement. The study by Smith and authors (2022) employed qualitative methods by conducting focus groups with 37 newcomer youth in Ontario to explore the advice that newcomer youth have for other newcomer youth in Canada. Similar to the current study, the newcomer youth participants in the

study by Smith and authors (2022) also emphasized the importance of having a strong sense of community support to promote newcomer youth resilience. Moreover, Smith and authors (2022) reported similar findings to the current study with respect to newcomer youth valuing the shared experience of resettlement with family and peers, which helped newcomer youth recognize that they are not alone in their experiences. Additionally, participants in the current study recommended that future newcomer youth use external resources available in their communities during the early resettlement period to utilize available benefits. Similarly, Smith and authors (2022) reported that the participants in their study suggested that newcomer youth access external supports at newcomer-serving organizations as it may contribute to youth meeting new peers and expanding their social network. Furthermore, participants in the current study recommended having a mentorship program in place where future newcomer youth can connect with an older peer from the same cultural background and who speaks their native language because it would allow them to relate to someone who has already gone through the resettlement process. The literature review conducted by Christmas and Christmas (2017), which sought to examine the impact of peer relationships on newcomer youth in their new environment, similarly highlighted that newcomer youth feel value in having and continuing cultural connections with their home countries through engaging in cultural centres, interacting with peers of the same ethnic origin and maintaining proficiency with their native language.

Additionally, newcomer youth in the current study were asked about how they were able to manage their stress and promote their well-being when they first came to Canada. Participants reported that they felt supported through school and summer programs to meet people their age. Specifically, newcomer youth valued the ESL program at school because they felt supported by the teachers, staff and other students. Having these supports in place allowed newcomer youth to

feel comfortable in the school environment and maintain positive well-being. Moreover, participants valued community sports such as being on the school soccer and basketball team because it provided them with opportunities to connect with peers with similar interests and form new meaningful relationships, practice their social and communication skills, and maintain a positive state of mind during early resettlement.

Thus, by interviewing newcomer youth about their early resettlement experiences in Canada, it is evident that they face many challenges and barriers that can impact their mental well-being and ability to manage stress. However, it is important to recognize that newcomer youth also have many inner strengths that have helped them cope with adversities that they faced.

## **5.2 Implications of the Study**

### **5.2.1 *Implications for Research***

The findings of the current study contribute to the understanding of newcomer youth well-being. Directly listening to newcomer youth about their mental health and well-being needs allows for a better understanding on how to support their positive well-being and what resources need to be enhanced to meet their mental health needs. Although this study engaged with the youth voice to better understand their resettlement needs and perspectives for mental well-being, it would be important that future research with this population includes newcomer youth in the research process (Ozer & Douglas, 2015). Including youth in the research process will allow them to share their existing knowledge on what worked for them in certain situations, engage in advocacy on topics that are of importance to them, provide their lived experience and insight into the research process and provide them with agency and empowerment to act as leaders in their communities (Ozer & Douglas, 2015).

In addition, there is a need for more strategies that aim to foster stronger partnerships for research participation in communities with newcomer youth. Having stronger research partnerships with organizations that directly serve and interact with newcomer youth may allow for a reciprocal and dual relationship between research and communities, in that, newcomer youth are able to become active members in the research process and feel more comfortable in research participation. The discussion on the need for stronger connections with partner organizations will be further discussed in section 5.5.

### ***5.2.2 Implications for Service***

The findings of this study have various implications for service providers and individuals (i.e., educators, school staff, program providers) that directly interact with newcomer youth. Specifically, newcomer youth mental health and well-being initiatives must be considered through a multi-level process which involves individuals, systems and institutions that all collectively impact newcomer youth well-being when they initially arrive in Canada (Kirmayer, 2014).

Schools and community organizations are well positioned to address the basic resettlement needs of newcomer youth populations (Brar-Josan & Yohani, 2017). Along with language support programs, psychoeducational programs that teach youth how to build meaningful social connections may be beneficial to enhance newcomer youth's well-being during resettlement (Crooks et al., 2020).

Many newcomer youth express feeling culture shock, discomfort and uncertainty when they initially arrived in Canada (Burgos et al., 2019; Guruge & Butt, 2015; Khanlou & Crawford, 2006; Wilson et al., 2010). There may be aspects of western culture that may act as a barrier for newcomer youth to feel comfortable in their social environment (e.g., having young boys and

girls in the same classroom which is not a social norm in other parts of the world). Programs and services that are specifically developed to help newcomer youth recognize and celebrate their existing values and beliefs while also offering support on how to communicate and build new relationships in Canada may be beneficial to ease newcomer youth into their new environment. Such programs that directly support newcomer youth and foster their innate resilience and social skills could strengthen their self-efficacy when interacting with peers and adults in their communities (Crooks et al, 2020; Smith & Crooks, 2022). Additionally, schools are a space where many newcomer youth initially interact with new peers and teachers. As such, it is necessary for schools to have embedded vocational programs and interactive opportunities for newcomer youth to practice their English language skills and strengthen their communication skills. It is also critical for schools to have adequate training for teachers, staff and students on diversity, cultural competency and the distinct needs of newcomer youth (Crooks et al., 2020). This would help create a supportive and welcoming space for newcomer youth to thrive (Crooks et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the findings of this study emphasize that taking a strengths-based approach to develop appropriate supports for newcomer youth is essential because it values their existing strengths, resilience and capabilities. By listening to newcomer youth who participated in this study, it is evident that they use what is available within them to help them cope with daily stressors and difficulties that they face related to their new environments. For example, one youth mentioned that they utilized their soccer skills to make new friends, while another youth mentioned that they used social media to connect with other youth in their community. As such, existing programs should provide opportunities for newcomer youth to explore their existing and inner resources to help them reduce any difficulties and enhance their well-being.

### ***5.2.3 Implications for Counselling Practice***

The current study also has implications for counselling practice because it provides insights into the various struggles that newcomer youth face during resettlement that can directly impact their well-being. The findings highlight that newcomer youth may feel isolated during their initial resettlement phase. To ensure that newcomer youth are provided with counselling services that are appropriate to their needs, it is important to implement a culturally sensitive, strengths-based and trauma-informed approach into counselling practices (Liu et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2019). A few examples of developing counselling practices that encompass these approaches include ensuring that a counselling clinic has posters and forms in various languages, showing alliance with the LGBT2Q+ community, having services provided in multiple languages and having counsellors who take an active and conscious effort to learn about the lived experiences of racialized and marginalized communities. Having these three core approaches embedded in counselling practices with newcomer youth may allow newcomer youth to feel comforted, supported and safe within the therapeutic environment.

In addition, counsellors can consciously engage in self-reflection and reflect on any existing biases that they may have to ensure that they are not perpetuating any of these biases in their practice (Bansal, 2016; Foronda et al., 2016; Mosher et al., 2017). Maintaining safety with newcomer youth clients is important as it will provide a comforting environment and platform for them to vocalize their feelings, emotions and thoughts within the therapeutic setting (Curtis et al., 2019). Furthermore, counsellors should acknowledge that most counselling practices in Canada are embedded in western and colonial ways of thinking that may not fit the unique needs of the newcomer youth population (Curtis et al., 2019). Therefore, counsellors should strive to be



flexible in their therapeutic approaches and express respectful curiosity when asking newcomer youth clients about their mental health and well-being.

As a future practitioner in counselling psychology, the current study has provided me with extensive insight into the unique challenges that newcomer youth may face during resettlement. As a future therapist, I recognize the immense importance of knowing the challenges that newcomer youth face so that I can create and facilitate a counselling environment that is appropriate to address newcomer youth needs and ensure that they feel supported.

### **5.3 Limitations**

#### **5.3.1 Participant Recruitment**

The primary limitation of the current study was the low sample size. The total sample size for the study was four newcomer youth participants. The initial recruitment for the study was conducted online. The team members either directly reached out or connected me with community organizations where CSMH had existing agreements and collaboration for newcomer programming. Specifically, we sent out recruitment materials including study information, social media postings, posters and consent forms for the study. While many of our partner organizations shared the recruitment posters and accompanying materials with their networks (e.g., previous program participants, email listservs), we did not receive much response from newcomer youth. In addition, to further supplement the recruitment process, I, the primary researcher sought one-on-one consultations with community organizations to better understand the ways in which participant recruitment can be best conducted within their organization. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic posed extensive barriers to the various avenues for participant recruitment for the current study. Accordingly, the initial outcome for recruitment

was not as successful as anticipated. A brief review of the literature suggests that other researchers also had similar challenges related to participant recruitment and low sample size.

Nist and authors (2022) reported that decreased in-person contact during the pandemic caused researchers to face significant challenges and uncertainty with participant recruitment due to continuously changing restrictions. Nist and authors (2022) discussed having to constantly update and change electronic recruitment materials to ensure that it reached the desired audience on online platforms because in-person recruitment was suspended. Additionally, Sharma and authors (2022) described that the closure of community centres, faith centres and community day programs resulted in reduced access to many sites that serve larger racialized and minoritized populations. This is a noteworthy factor for the limited participant recruitment in the current study because COVID-19 regulations resulted in similar closures in the Ontario region.

Moreover, Sharma and authors (2022) discussed additional difficulties with recruiting participants from vulnerable populations during the pandemic. Specifically, recruitment challenges were associated with recruiting participants from racial and ethnic minority populations and the high rates of COVID-19 within these groups, staff layoffs, financial strains at community-based organizations and overall economic hardship (Sharma et al., 2022). Furthermore, Sharma and authors (2022) indicated that community leaders disclosed feeling overwhelmed from requests to address the transmission of COVID-19 and vaccines by government actors. Although the current study's community partners were not involved in this particular task, the experience of community leaders that is highlighted by Sharma and authors (2022) shows additional tasks and responsibilities that organizations had to take on to support vulnerable communities during the pandemic.

After noticing that initial recruitment initiatives were not working as hoped and upon the re-opening and easing rules of the COVID-19 regulations, the current study's promotional materials were updated to improve clarity and reduce potential ambiguity in the first version and an additional ethics amendment was submitted to make the eligibility criteria more open to participants who may have been interested in participating. Upon receiving approval from ethics for the updated recruitment poster, I obtained permission from various community organizations (e.g., community libraries, faith centres, colleges and university campuses) where I thought newcomer youth may visit and went in-person to post physical versions of the study poster in these places. The changes in recruitment posters, in-person communication with local organizations and the expansion of eligibility criteria led to some improved interest in the study, but it was still considerably lower than expected.

#### **5.4 Future Directions**

Future researchers should continue to include the direct perspectives and voices of newcomer youth, given the significant value that is associated with hearing directly from them. Additionally, considering the sample size of the current study, I would encourage researchers to continue to listen and hear from more newcomer youth about what helped them with their well-being and relationship skills when they initially arrived in Canada. Continuing this research will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of newcomer youth's needs, which may better inform the development of programs and resources to enhance their transitional resilience. Furthermore, I would encourage future researchers to continue to implement a strengths-based framework in their research practices with newcomer youth as it contributes to a genuine and authentic relationship between the researcher and participant. Using this approach provides the participant with an autonomous platform to share their story and provide thoughtful and

authentic insight into their experiences while also allowing the researcher to shift the expert role to the participant to give power and self-determination to the participant in the research process.

Future research in this area can also seek to involve other family members (e.g., parents and siblings) and individuals who interact with newcomer youth (e.g., teachers and community members) to include multiple voices in the discussion of newcomer youth mental health. Involving family members and other individuals who interact with newcomer youth in the research process will allow for a multi-stakeholder perspective on the challenges newcomer youth face inside and outside of their homes. Including parents in the discussion of the needs of newcomer youth may provide parents with a platform to discuss what they think their children need additional support with and how they, as parents, have witnessed difficulties that their children have faced as newcomers. In addition, including school staff such as teachers in the conversation about newcomer mental health will provide a deeper perspective into the socialization challenges, language barriers and educational difficulties that newcomer youth may face within their school environment during the early resettlement period.

Program developers are also recommended to collaborate with newcomer youth to co-create program contents through participatory research that involves youth in the program development and adaptation process (Ozer & Douglas, 2015; Smith & Crooks, 2022). Allowing newcomer youth to be involved in the research and development process may provide them with the agency to advocate for their needs. In addition, engaging non-newcomer youth in the research process may be another direction to pursue. Researchers may be able to better understand any existing biases about immigration, discrimination and negative attitudes towards newcomer families. This area of research will allow for further exploration into whether the institutions that newcomer youth engage within (e.g., schools and community centres) are truly

inclusive and welcoming. Future researchers may also investigate the benefits of a mentorship program with newcomer youth.

## **5.5 Lessons Learned**

In conducting the current study, I learned a variety of lessons on the importance of ongoing communication and existing relationships with community partners and newcomer youth in our communities. I have realized that it is essential to ensure that we are critically thinking about how to best promote research studies that seek to hear from newcomer youth and ensure that they are reaching the desired population. For example, upon reflection, it may be beneficial to have posters in multiple languages to ensure that newcomers are able to properly understand the purpose of the study and what participation in the study entails. I encourage future researchers to re-evaluate where it is best to promote study materials to motivate newcomer youth to participate in the research. Furthermore, it is important to consider how compensation for participation is established. I have realized that it is best for researchers to be authentic with newcomer youth and value the knowledge exchange that is present when conducting research with this population. In addition to providing monetary compensation, I recommend that future researchers strive to provide other forms of reciprocal benefits (e.g., leadership opportunities for newcomer youth and recreational games and activities) to help establish a long-term relationship with newcomer youth communities who are participating in research and to provide extra meaning to their contributions. Furthermore, to really develop a strong relationship with newcomer communities where they feel trusted to participate in research, it is essential for organizations to honour their connections with newcomer youth, establish who they (the organization) are in the community and obtain trust from newcomer families. As researchers in this area, we often ask newcomer youth to be vulnerable and trust us

with their experiences. I realize that there is immense importance in having existing connections with community organizations especially when conducting research with newcomer populations. I encourage future researchers to become members of the communities that they are interested in working with and to show these communities that they are active participants and that their relationship goes beyond the scope of research engagement.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The current research contributes to the existing literature on newcomer youth mental health and supplements our understanding of the unique mental health needs of newcomer youth populations during early resettlement. The current study examined the distinct challenges and barriers that newcomer youth face during their initial years in Canada as well as the various strengths and resources that they used to maintain positive well-being and cope with stress related to resettlement. In addition, the current study asked newcomer youth about recommendations and suggestions that they have for future newcomer youth who may experience similar challenges when they first come to Canada. Overall, the current study valued the rich perspectives of the newcomer youth who participated in the study and hopes that the findings of this study can further enhance existing research on newcomer youth mental health, provide suggestions on continuing research with this population and provide insight into the needs of this growing population in Canada.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A:

#### Newcomer Youth Eligibility Form

Thank you for your interest! This study seeks to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer youth. This study will also help us develop and improve mental health and healthy relationship programs for newcomer youth in Canada. If you would like the study information in a language other than English, then please contact the research team.

Please complete the questions on the next page to determine if you are eligible to participate in the study.

1. Are you a youth or a parent?
  - Youth – please complete Section 1 Below
  - Parent – please complete Section 2 Below

#### Section 1 – Youth Study Eligibility

1. What is your age range?
  - Under 14
  - 14 to 15
  - 16 to 21
  - Over 21
2. Have you been living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years?
  - Yes
  - No

**If you are between 14 to 21 and you have been living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years, you are eligible to participate in this study.** If you would like to participate, please review the letter of information and complete the consent form. If you are under the age of 16 your parent's permission is required in order for you to participate in this study – please contact the research team for more information.

#### Section 2 – Parent Study Eligibility

1. Are you a parent of a newcomer youth that is between the ages of 14 and 21?
  - Yes
  - No

2. Have you been living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years?

Yes

No

**If you answered yes to both of the questions above, you are eligible to participate in this study.** If you would like to participate, please review the letter of information and complete the consent form.

## Appendix B:

### Newcomer Youth Interview Guide

#### **Opening statement – Why are we doing these interviews with you today?**

I am meeting with you today because I would like to understand your ideas and your thoughts about what helped you to have positive mental health when you initially arrived in Canada.

We all know that how we feel can be different every day, it can go up and down – so I would like to discuss with you how/what made your mental health go up and what helped you when it was down. Specifically, today we will be talking about two things – our mental health and our relationships with others. In addition to knowing how we personally manage our mental health; our relationships and friendships play a big role in that.

Before we proceed with the interview, I would like to remind you that participation in this study is voluntary and that part of the consent you provided will allow me to share some of the ideas and thoughts that we discuss in today's interview. No personally identifiable information will be shared or used for the study. However, I am also required to protect the safety of youth who are participating in this research. If I learn that you are at risk of hurting yourself, others or if you have been hurt by others, I will be required by law to report this information to protect you. You may refuse to answer any questions at any time, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. For researcher purposes, if you prefer to provide me with a pseudo name rather than me assigning you a number for data analysis purposes, please let me know.

#### **What is Mental Health and Well-Being?**

Mental health is our emotional and psychological well-being. Positive mental health allows us to think and act in ways that help us enjoy life and deal with our daily life stresses, problems, and unexpected life events.

#### **Newcomer Youth Interview Questions:**

1. Think about the first couple of years of you being in Canada, how would you describe your overall mental health?
  - a. Follow up: What helped you maintain positive mental health? Did you do anything (e.g., maybe with family, friends, or on your own) to help you feel positive, hopeful, and manage your stress?
  - b. Follow up: What were some of the challenges or what was stressful that made it difficult to have positive mental health (i.e., difficult to stay positive, hopeful, or enjoy life)?
2. Moving to a new place also means that we have to form new relationships. For example, we have to make new friends, build relationships with new teachers and other adults in our community/neighbourhood. In your first couple of years of moving to Canada, how was the process and experience of forming these relationships?

- a. Follow up: What was helpful or what worked to build these new relationships? Do you have any tips for other newcomer youth to help them build new relationships?
  - b. Follow up: Were there any challenges related to forming these new relationships?
3. Along with new relationships, we also come to Canada with existing relationships (e.g., siblings and parents). Did you notice any changes in these relationships?
4. Looking back, what are some resources and supports you wish you had during those 1 to 2 years to help with your mental health?
5. What about supports for building and maintaining relationships? Do you wish you had any specific resources or programs?

### **External Resources**

If participation in this interview brought up any feelings of discomfort or distress, we have some resources that you may wish to access to ease these feelings.

1. The Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex Support line
2. Naseeha Mental Health Hotline
3. Kids Help Phone

## Appendix C:

### Newcomer Youth Participant Verbal Recruitment Script

#### **Participant Verbal Recruitment Script**

##### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

Below is the recruitment script that will be read aloud to youth and parents either in-person or via videoconference. Please ensure that you read the script word for word to the youth or parents. If you have any questions, please contact the research team. If translation assistance is being provided in-person, please ask the translator to document and sign on the consent form. If translation assistance is being provided on videoconference, please send a PDF copy of the consent form to the translator to complete and sign the translation attestation section. Please return all paper copies of eligibility screening and signed consent forms to the research team by scanning and uploading the forms to the private Wester SharePoint/One Drive folder that has been set up for you.

##### **VERBAL RECRUITMENT SCRIPT:**

As a newcomer youth or parent, you are invited to participate in an interview to talk about your first two years living in Canada. This research project is being conducted by the Centre for School Mental Health at Western University to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer youth. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will take place over Zoom. Each participant will receive a \$20 electronic gift card for participating in the interview. Youth who wish to participate in the study must fall between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Parents who wish to participate must be parents/guardians to youth who are between 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Participating in the study is voluntary and in no way affects the services and/or programs you receive. Staff at [name of community organization] may assist in collecting consent forms but they will not have access to your responses in the interview.

##### **If in-person:**

First, we will go over the eligibility screening form to ensure that you meet the study requirements to participate. \*Go through the eligibility criteria form with the individual. Be sure to thoroughly read them the form and ask them to fill in their responses.

\*If eligible, please hand out the letter of information and consent form and read the following aloud:

You are eligible to participate. I have handed you a Letter of Information. Please take a few minutes to read over the letter and let me know if you have any questions. If you would like to participate in the interview, please complete the consent and return the form to me. The letter of information is for you to keep.

\*If they are not eligible, please read the following aloud:

Thank you for your interest in participating, but unfortunately, you are not eligible to participate. If you have any further questions about the study you can contact the research team.

**If over videoconference:**

First, we will go through the eligibility screen form so that we can determine if you are eligible to participate in the study.

\*Go over eligibility criteria with individuals so that they may determine if they are able to participate.

I am now going to read you the letter of information that outlines the purpose of this study, the research procedures, and your rights as a participant. Please feel free to ask me any questions you may have or clarify any of the information I am reading to you.

I am now going to post the link to the online eligibility screening form, letter of information and consent form using the chat feature. If you are interested in participating in the study, you may click the link below that I have now posted and complete the forms.

[https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3lphtER2mWNP810](https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3lphtER2mWNP810)

**\*If verbal consent will be obtained**, please read the following and have the link below to the online Letter of Information and Verbal Consent Form open

[https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eXyw26Aof4N12US](https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eXyw26Aof4N12US)

(if in a group setting) To obtain verbal consent I will need to set us up in a breakout room where I may confidentially document your verbal consent on videoconference. Once I set up the breakout room you will need to click the “join breakout room” popup on the screen.

\*Confirm participant’s eligibility by going through the eligibility questions on the link above.

\*If they are not eligible, please read the following aloud:

Thank you for your interest in participating, but unfortunately, you are not eligible to participate. If you have any further questions about the study you can contact the research team.

\*If participant is eligible, continue by reading the following below:

If you’d like to participate, I can write down your consent to participate on your behalf.

\*Continue to online Verbal Consent Form on the link above, review questions with the participant, and then document their responses on their behalf.

Do you have any questions? \*Answer any questions

\*Please document your name at the end to indicate that you have explained the study to the participant.



## Appendix D:

### Newcomer Youth Participant Telephone Recruitment Script

#### **Youth and Parents Telephone Recruitment Script**

**Instructions:** Below is the recruitment script that will be read aloud to youth or parents on the telephone. Please ensure that you read the script word for word to the youth and parents. If you have any questions, please contact the research team. If translation assistance is being provided for the call, please send a PDF copy of the consent form to the translator to complete and sign the translation attestation section.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Prior to calling the youth and/or parents, prepare by opening the link below that includes the eligibility screening form and the letter of information and verbal consent form.  
[https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eXyw26Aof4N12US](https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eXyw26Aof4N12US)
2. Phone the youth or parent using the script below.
3. Document consent using the verbal consent form that is provided in the link above following the letter of information.

#### **Telephone Script**

Hello, may I please speak with **[insert the name of the youth or parent here]**.

\*If they are not home, ask if there is a better time to call. Do not leave a message as it may be a confidential matter you are calling about that may not be apparent to you\*

\*If they are home, continue with the conversation\*

Hi, **[insert the name of the youth or parent here]** this is **[insert your name here]** calling from **[insert name of your organization]**. I am calling to let you know about a study that Western University is conducting to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer youth. This study involves an individual interview where they will ask newcomer youth and parents to discuss their first two years living in Canada. Youth who wish to participate in the study must fall between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Parents who wish to participate must be parents/guardians to youth who are between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will take place over Zoom. Each participant will receive a \$20 gift card for participating in the interview. Staff at **[name of community organization]** may assist in collecting consent forms but they will not have access to your responses in the interview.

Please note that participating in the study is voluntary and in no way affects the services and/or programs you receive.

Would you like to learn more about the study?

\*if yes, continue.

\*if no, thank them for their time.

Okay, I will now go over the eligibility screening form with you to determine if you are eligible to participate in the study.

\*If they are not eligible, please read the following aloud:

Thank you for your interest in participating, but unfortunately, you are not eligible to participate. If you have any further questions about the study you can contact the research team.

\*If they are eligible, please read the following aloud:

Okay, I will now read you the letter of information that outlines the purpose of this study, the research procedures, and your rights as a participant. Please feel free to ask me any questions you may have or clarify any of the information I am reading you.

\*Clearly read the letter of information provided on the link above\*

Do you have any questions?

\*Answer any questions they may have\*

If you would like to participate, I can write down your agreement to participate on your behalf.

\*If yes, continue to online Verbal Consent Form on the link above, review questions with the participant, and document their responses on their behalf.

## Appendix E:

### Newcomer Youth Participant Email Recruitment Script

#### **Email Recruitment Script for Youth and Parents**

##### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

The following is the email recruitment script that will be sent to newcomer youth and parents. When sending the email, please ensure that you have the required subject line and attachments in the email. Please ensure that you use the script as written below. If you need to make any changes, please contact the research team before sending to youth or parents. If you have any questions, please contact the research team.

##### **EMAIL SCRIPT:**

**Subject:** Invitation to a Participate in a Study by Western University

**Attachments:** Participant Letter of Information and Consent Form

As a newcomer youth or parent, you are being invited to participate in an interview to talk about your first two years living in Canada. This research project is being conducted by the Centre for School Mental Health at Western University to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer youth. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will take place over Zoom. Youth who wish to participant in the study must fall between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Parents who wish to participate must be parents/guardians to youth who are between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Each participant will receive an electronic \$20 gift card for participating in the interview.

Please note that **participating in the study is voluntary** and in no way affects the services and/or programs you receive. Staff at [name of community organization] may assist with collecting consent forms but they will not have access to your responses in the interview.

Please **click on the link below** to read the Letter of Information. The letter outlines the purpose of the research, procedures, and your rights as a participant. **If you are interested in participating**, please complete the consent form on the same link below. A copy of the letter is attached for your records.

**LINK to Letter of Information and Consent Form:**

[https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3lphtER2mWNP810](https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3lphtER2mWNP810)

If you have any questions about this study or would like the study information provided in another language, please contact the research team at Western University by email.

Thank you

## Appendix F:

### Guardian Telephone Recruitment Script

#### **Guardian Telephone Recruitment Script**

**Instructions:** Below is the recruitment script that will be read aloud to parents/guardians on the telephone. Please ensure that you read the script word for word. If you have any questions, please contact the research team.

. If translation assistance is being provided for the call, please send a PDF copy of the consent form to the translator to complete and sign the translation attestation section.

#### **Procedures:**

1. Prepare by opening link to the Guardian Letter of Information and Verbal Consent form: [https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_4TS05BAGLBMAj7o](https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4TS05BAGLBMAj7o)
2. Phone parent/guardian using the script below. If the parent/guardian contacted you, ask them to hold until you have the script available and the link to the Letter of Information and Verbal Consent open.
3. Document consent using verbal consent form that is provided in the link above following the letter of information.

#### **Telephone Script**

If you are contacting the parent/guardian:

Hello, may I please speak with [**insert the name of the parent/guardian here**].

\*If guardian is not home, ask if there is a better time to call. Do not leave a message as it may be a confidential matter you are calling about that may not be apparent to you\*

\*If they are home, continue with the conversation\*

Hi, [**insert the name of the parent/guardian here**] this is [**insert your name here**] calling from [**insert name of your organization**]. I am calling to let you know about a study that Western University to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer youth. This study involves an individual interview where they will ask newcomer youth and parents to discuss their first two years living in Canada. I am calling you as a parent or guardian of a newcomer youth, to inform you of the study, and determine whether you agree or not agree for your child to participate in this study. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will take place over the phone. Your child will receive a \$20 electronic gift card in appreciation for their participation.

Please note that participating in the study is voluntary and in no way affects the services and/or programs you or your child receive. Staff at [name of community organization] may assist with collecting consent forms but they will not have access to any of your child's responses in the interview.

I am now going to read you the letter of information over the phone that outlines the purpose of this study, the research procedures, and your child's rights as a participant. Please feel free to ask me any questions you may have or clarify any of the information I am reading to you.

\*Clearly read the letter of information provided on the link above\*

Do you have any questions?

\*Answer any questions they may have\*

If you agree for your child to participate, I can write down your agreement to participate on your behalf.

\*If yes, continue to online Verbal Consent Form on the link above, review questions with guardian, and document their responses on their behalf.

In addition, we are also asking for the parents of newcomer youth to participate to provide their insight and perspectives on what their children required during their initial years in Canada. If participating in this study as a parent is of interest to you, please let me know and we can go over the letter of information and consent to have you participate as well.

\*If parent is interested, please use the Participant Telephone Recruitment Script, and follow the noted procedures for obtaining consent.

## Appendix G:

### Guardian Email Recruitment Script

#### **Guardian Email Recruitment Script**

##### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

The following is the email recruitment script that will be sent to parents/guardians of newcomer youth. When sending the email, please ensure that you have the required subject line and attachments in the email. Please ensure that you use the script as written below. If you need to make any changes, please contact the research team before sending to parents/guardians. If you have any questions, please contact the research team.

##### **EMAIL SCRIPT:**

**Subject:** Invitation to a Participate in a Study by Western University

**Attachments:** Guardian Letter of Information and Consent Form

As the parent/guardian of a newcomer youth, you are being invited to give permission for your child to participate in an interview to talk about their first two years living in Canada. This research project is being conducted by the Centre for School Mental Health at Western University to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer youth. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will take place over Zoom. Youth who wish to participant in the study must fall between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Each participant will receive an electronic \$20 gift card for participating in the interview.

Please note that **participating in the study is voluntary** and in no way affects the services and/or programs your child receives. Staff at [name of community organization] may assist in collecting consent forms but they will not have access to your child's responses in the interview. Please **click on the link below** to read the Letter of Information. The letter outlines the purpose of the research, procedures, and your child's rights as a participant. **If you are interested in providing your child with permission to participate**, please complete the consent form on the same link below. A copy of the letter is attached for your records.

**LINK to Guardian Letter of Information and Consent Form:**

[https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_b1VTOsZfXH9Wkh8](https://uwo.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b1VTOsZfXH9Wkh8)

If you have any questions about this study or would like the study information provided in another language, please contact the research team.

Thank you

## Appendix H:

### Guardian Online Letter of Intent and Consent

#### **Guardian Letter of Information and Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Developing a healthy relationships program for newcomer youth

**Principal Investigator:**

Claire Crooks, PhD, Director of Centre for School Mental Health  
Faculty of Education, Western University

**Study Information**

As the parent/guardian, you are invited to give permission for your child to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer youth. This study will also help us develop and improve mental health and healthy relationship programs for newcomer youth in Canada.

Youth who wish to participant in the study must fall between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Parents who wish to participate must be parents/guardians to youth who are between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years.

**Study Procedures**

As the parent/guardian, you are being invited to give permission for your child to participate in an interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour complete and it will take place over Zoom. During the interview, we will ask your child to discuss their first two years in Canada and to identify the types of needs they required during this time, any challenges that they faced, and resources or skills that they wish were available. At any time, your child may refuse to answer any questions that they do not want to answer.

If you agree for your child to participate, we will contact them to schedule an interview via Zoom. It is mandatory for the interview to be audio-recorded to accurately capture participants' responses. A translator can be provided during the interview you're your child's request. Direct quotes may be used in the reported findings but will not be linked to your child's identifiable information.

**Possible Risks and Harms**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. However, the interview may make your child think about topics or experiences which could bring about emotional discomfort.

**Possible Benefits**

There are no personal benefits to participating in this study. The information provided by your child will help us gain an in-depth understanding into the specific needs and requirements of newcomer youth. This information will also aid in the development new initiatives and the improvement of existing newcomer youth programs.

## **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You and your child may refuse to participate with no effect on any services or programs you or your child receives. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this consent form. Your child may refuse to answer any specific questions at any time. You and your child have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If you or your child would like to withdraw, please contact the research team listed below. Once the study has been published, we will not be able to withdraw your information.

## **Confidentiality**

All data will remain confidential and is only accessible to authorized staff at the Centre for School Mental Health at Western University. A list linking your child's unique study ID with their personal information will be stored in a secure location and kept separate from the information they provide. Your child's individual data will not be linked to their name or shared with anyone outside of the research team. A staff member at the community organization that invited your child to participate may assist with obtaining your consent, but they will not have access to your child's interview responses. The information is reported only as group findings.

Your and your child's consent forms and data will be stored in locked files in a locked office at Centre for School Mental Health or stored on a secured server at Western University. Your child's data will be stored separate from their consent form.

If you are completing this online, your and your child's informed consent and contact information will be collected through a third party, secure online platform called Qualtrics. Qualtrics uses encryption technology and restricted access authorizations to protect all data collected. In addition, Western's Qualtrics server is in Ireland, where privacy standards are maintained under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which is consistent with Canada's privacy legislation. Please refer to Qualtrics's Privacy Policy (<https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>) for more details about Qualtrics's information management practices. The data will then be exported from Qualtrics and securely stored on Western University's server.

Interviews will be conducted through the use of a third-party online video conferencing software called Zoom. Since this is a third-party software, your child's confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, researchers will put in place several measures to help protect your child's confidentiality by enabling features in Zoom that allow only permitted participants. Zoom automatically records both audio and video files. Immediately following the interview, the video files will be destroyed. Audio files will be used for transcription and destroyed after transcription has been completed. The Trint and Dedoose are third party software's used to transcribe and analyze the interview are encrypted and located in secure servers based in the United States. Please refer to Trint, and Dedoose's privacy policies (<https://explore.zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy.html>, <https://trint.com/privacy-platform>, <https://www.dedoose.com/about/security>) for more details on their information management practices. Following transcription, the audio files will be destroyed.

All data collected from this study will be destroyed after seven years. Representatives of the University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.



**Compensation**

Your child will be provided a \$20 gift card for participating in the interview.

**Consent**

To indicate your consent, please fill out the consent form.

**Contacts for Further Information**

If you have any questions about your participation in this research, please contact the research team.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics. This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

**Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.**  
[Online Consent Forms will also include the following:]  
**Click the link below to download a copy of the letter.**  
**Click the arrow to the right to go to the consent form.**  
**[PDF link to download copy of LOI]**

**Guardian Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Developing a healthy relationships program for newcomer youth

**Principal Investigator:** Claire Crooks, PhD, Director of Centre for School Mental Health  
Faculty of Education, Western University

I have read the Letter of Information and understand what I have read. The study has been explained to me and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction. **I give consent for my child to participate in an interview.**

Your Child’s Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Your Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide your email or mailing address below. It will be used to send you a copy of the letter of information and the signed consent form.



## Appendix I:

### Guardian Verbal Letter of Intent and Consent Form

#### **Guardian Letter of Information and Verbal Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Developing a healthy relationships program for newcomer youth

**Principal Investigator:**

Claire Crooks, PhD, Director of Centre for School Mental Health  
Faculty of Education, Western University

**Study Information**

As the parent of a newcomer youth, you are being invited to give permission for your child to participate in a study that will explore topics related to the transitional and unique mental health needs of newcomer youth and parents. This study will also help us develop and improve mental health and healthy relationship programs for newcomer youth in Canada.

Youth who wish to participate in the study must fall between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Parents who wish to participate must be parents/guardians to youth who are between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years.

**Study Procedures**

As the parent/guardian, you are being invited to give permission for your child to participate in an interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour complete and it will take place over Zoom. Your child will be asked to reflect on their first two years in Canada and to identify the types of needs they required during this time, any challenges that they faced, services or programs that they found useful and resources or skills that they wish they had during their first few years in Canada.

If you agree for your child to participate, we will contact them to schedule an interview via Zoom. It is mandatory for the interview to be audio-recorded to accurately capture participants' responses. A translator can be provided during the interview you're your child's request. Direct quotes may be used in the reported findings but will not be linked to your child's identifiable information.

**Possible Risks and Harms**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. However, the interview may make your child think about topics or experiences which could bring about emotional discomfort.

**Possible Benefits**

There are no personal benefits for participating in this study. The information provided by your child will help us gain an in-depth understanding into the specific needs and requirements of newcomer youth. This information will also aid in the development new initiatives and the improvement of existing newcomer youth programs.

## **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You and your child may refuse to participate with no effect on any services or programs you or your child receives. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this consent form. Your child may refuse to answer any specific questions at any time. You and your child have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If you or your child would like to withdraw, please contact the research team listed below. Once the study has been published, we will not be able to withdraw your information.

## **Confidentiality**

All data will remain confidential and is only accessible to authorized staff at the Centre for School Mental Health at Western University. A list linking your child's unique study ID with their personal information will be stored in a secure location and kept separate from the information they provide. Your child's individual data will not be linked to their name or shared with anyone outside of the research team. A staff member at the community organization that invited your child to participate may assist with obtaining your consent, but they will not have access to your child's interview responses. The information is reported only as group findings. Your and your child's consent forms and data will be stored in locked files in a locked office at Centre for School Mental Health or stored on a secured server at Western University. Your child's data will be stored separate from their consent form.

Your and your child's informed consent and contact information will be collected through a third party, secure online platform called Qualtrics. Qualtrics uses encryption technology and restricted access authorizations to protect all data collected. In addition, Western's Qualtrics server is in Ireland, where privacy standards are maintained under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which is consistent with Canada's privacy legislation. Please refer to Qualtrics's Privacy Policy (<https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>) for more details about Qualtrics's information management practices. The data will then be exported from Qualtrics and securely stored on Western University's server.

Interviews will be conducted through the use of a third-party online video conferencing software called Zoom. Since this is a third-party software, your child's confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, researchers will put in place several measures to help protect your child's confidentiality by enabling features in Zoom that allow only permitted participants. Zoom automatically records both audio and video files. Immediately following the interview, the video files will be destroyed. Audio files will be used for transcription and destroyed after transcription has been completed. The Trint and Dedoose are third party software's used to transcribe and analyze the interview are encrypted and located in secure servers based in the United States. Please refer to Trint, and Dedoose's privacy policies (<https://explore.zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy.html>, <https://trint.com/privacy-platform>, <https://www.dedoose.com/about/security>) for more details on their information management practices. Following transcription, the audio files will be destroyed.

All data collected from this study will be destroyed after seven years. Representatives of the University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

### **Compensation**

Your child will be provided a \$20 gift card for participating in the interview.

### **Consent**

To indicate your consent, please fill out the consent form.

### **Contacts for Further Information**

If you have any questions about your participation in this research, please contact the research team.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics. This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

**Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.  
Click the arrow to the right below to go to the consent form.**

## **Guardian Verbal Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Developing a healthy relationships program for newcomer youth

**Principal Investigator:** Claire Crooks, PhD, Director of Centre for School Mental Health  
Faculty of Education, Western University

1. Do you confirm that I have read you the Letter of Information, that you understand what I have read, and that all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction?

- Yes
- No

2. Do you give permission for your child to participate in the interview?

- Yes
- No

3. Do you give permission for your child's direct quotes to be extracted from the audio-recorded interview for the reporting and analysis of data? To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of your child, direct quotes will not be linked to identifiable information.

- Yes
- No

Parent's name:

---

Youth's name:

---

Parent's email or mailing address (to send them a copy of letter and consent form):

---

Your name (person recording consent):

---

Date:

---

Time:

---

Signature:

---

**Was the participant assisted during the consent process (translation provided)?**

Yes  No

If yes and you provided translation, please fill in your name and information in the section below. If you were not the translator, please provide their name and contact information, and a research assistant will contact them to sign the consent form.

The person signing below acting as a translator for the participant during the consent process and attests that the study as set out in this form was accurately translated and has had any questions answered.

Translator's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Translator's Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Translator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Language Used: \_\_\_\_\_

**For research team use only:**

My signature indicates that I have explained the study to the research participant named above and I have answered the participant's questions.

Researcher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please click the arrow to the right below to submit the consent form.**

## Appendix J:

### Newcomer Youth Participant Letter of Intent and Consent Form

#### **Participant Letter of Information and Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Developing a healthy relationships program for newcomer youth

**Principal Investigator:**

Claire Crooks, PhD, Director of Centre for School Mental Health  
Faculty of Education, Western University

**Study Information**

As a newcomer youth or parent, you are invited to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer youth. This study will also help us develop and improve mental health and healthy relationship programs for newcomer youth in Canada.

Youth who wish to participate in the study must fall between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Parents who wish to participate must be parents/guardians to youth who are between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years.

**Study Procedures**

You are invited to participate in an interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will take place over Zoom. We will ask you to discuss your first two years in Canada and the types of mental health needs required during this time, any challenges, and resources or skills that you wish were available during your first few years in Canada.

If you consent to participate, we will contact you to schedule a Zoom meeting at the email or telephone number that you provide on your consent form. A link and password for the meeting will be sent to you. It is mandatory for the interview to be audio-recorded to accurately capture participants' responses. A translator can be provided during the interview upon request. Direct quotes may be used in the reported findings but will not be linked to your identifiable information.

For youth under 16 years old, your parent or guardian's consent is required for you to participate. If you complete the consent form, we will contact you by email or phone to provide you more information.

**Possible Risks and Harms**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. However, the interview may make you think about topics or experiences which could bring about emotional discomfort.

**Possible Benefits**

There are no personal benefits to participating in this study. The information provided by you will help us gain an in-depth understanding into the specific needs and requirements of newcomer youth. This information will also aid in the development of new initiatives and the improvement of existing newcomer youth programs.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate with no effect on any services or programs that you receive. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this consent form. You may refuse to answer any specific questions at any time. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If you would like to withdraw, please contact the research team listed below. Once the study has been published, we will not be able to withdraw your information.

### **Confidentiality**

All data you provide will remain confidential and is only accessible to authorized staff at the Centre for School Mental Health at Western University. A list linking your unique study ID with your personal information will be stored in a secure location and kept separate from the information you provide. Your individual data will not be linked to your name or shared with anyone outside of the research team. A staff member at the community organization that invited you to participate may assist with obtaining your consent, but they will not have access to your interview responses. The information is reported only as group findings. Your consent forms and data will be stored in locked files in a locked office at Centre for School Mental Health or stored on a secured server at Western University. Your data will be stored separate from your consent form.

If you are completing this online, your informed consent and contact information will be collected through a third party, secure online platform called Qualtrics. Qualtrics uses encryption technology and restricted access authorizations to protect all data collected. In addition, Western's Qualtrics server is in Ireland, where privacy standards are maintained under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which is consistent with Canada's privacy legislation. Please refer to Qualtrics's Privacy Policy (<https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>) for more details about Qualtrics's information management practices. The data will then be exported from Qualtrics and securely stored on Western University's server.

Interviews will be conducted through the use of a third-party online video conferencing software called Zoom. Since this is a third-party software, your confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, researchers will put in place several measures to help protect your confidentiality by enabling features in Zoom that allow only permitted participants. Zoom automatically records both audio and video files. Immediately following the interview, the video files will be destroyed. Audio files will be used for transcription and destroyed after transcription has been completed. The Trint and Dedoose are third party software's used to transcribe and analyze the interview are encrypted and located in secure servers based in the United States. Please refer to Trint, and Dedoose's privacy policies (<https://explore.zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy.html>, <https://trint.com/privacy-platform>, <https://www.dedoose.com/about/security>) for more details on



their information management practices. Following transcription, the audio files will be destroyed.

All data collected from this study will be destroyed after seven years. Representatives of the University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

### **Compensation**

You will be provided a \$20 gift card for participation in the interview.

### **Consent**

To indicate your consent, please fill out the consent form on the following page.

### **Contacts for Further Information**

If you have any questions about your participation in this research, please contact the research team.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics. This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

**Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.**

Online Consent Forms will also include the following:  
**Click the link below to download a copy of the letter.**  
**Click the arrow to the right below to go to the consent form.**

[PDF link to download copy of LOI]

### **Participant Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Developing a healthy relationships program for newcomer youth

**Principal Investigator:** Claire Crooks, PhD, Director of Centre for School Mental Health  
Faculty of Education, Western University

I have read the Letter of Information and understand what I have read. The study has been explained to me and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to participate in an interview.

I consent to direct quotes being extracted from the audio-recorded interview for the reporting and analysis of data. To ensure your confidentiality and anonymity direct quotes will not be linked to identifiable information.

Your First and Last Name:

---

Signature:

---

Date:

---

If you are consenting to participate in this study, **please provide your email address and/or telephone number below**. It will be used to contact you to schedule the interview, as outlined in the Letter of Information

Email Address:

---

Telephone Number:

---

**For research team or community partner use only:**

My signature indicates that I have explained the study to the research participant named above and I have answered the participant's questions.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

[Paper consent form only]

**Was the participant assisted during the consent process?**

Yes  No

If yes, the person signing below acting as a translator for the participant during the consent process and attests that the study as set out in this form was accurately translated and has had any questions answered.

Translator's Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Translator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Language Used: \_\_\_\_\_

[online consent only] **Please click the arrow to the right below to submit your consent form**

## Appendix K:

### Newcomer Youth Participant Verbal Letter of Intent and Consent Form

#### **Participant Letter of Information and Verbal Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Developing a healthy relationships program for newcomer youth

**Principal Investigator:**

Claire Crooks, PhD, Director of Centre for School Mental Health  
Faculty of Education, Western University

**Study Information**

As a newcomer youth or parent, you are invited to participate in this study. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the mental health needs of newcomer youth. This study will also help us develop and improve mental health and healthy relationship programs for newcomer youth in Canada.

Youth who wish to participate in the study must fall between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years. Parents who wish to participate must be parents/guardians to youth who are between the ages of 14 and 21 and be living in Canada for at least 2 to 5 years.

**Study Procedures**

You are invited to participate in an interview. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and will take place over Zoom. We will be asking you to reflect on your first two years in Canada and discuss the types of needs you required during this time, any challenges that you faced, and resources or skills that you wish were available during your first few years in Canada.

If you consent to participate, we will contact you to schedule a Zoom meeting at the email or telephone number that you provide on your consent form. A link and password for the meeting will be sent to you. It is mandatory for the interview to be audio-recorded to accurately capture participants' responses. A translator can be provided during the interview upon request. Direct quotes may be used in the reported findings but will not be linked to your identifiable information.

For youth under 16 years old, your parent or guardian's consent is required for you to participate. If you complete the consent form, we will contact you by email or phone to obtain your parent's contact information.

**Possible Risks and Harms**

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. However, the interview may make you think about topics or experiences which could bring about emotional discomfort.

**Possible Benefits**

There are no personal benefits for participating in this study. The information provided by you will help us gain an in-depth understanding into the specific needs and requirements of newcomer youth. This information will also aid in the development of new initiatives and the improvement of existing newcomer youth programs.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate with no effect on any services or programs that you receive. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this consent form. You may refuse to answer any specific questions at any time. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If you would like to withdraw, please contact the research team listed below. Once the study has been published, we will not be able to withdraw your information.

### **Confidentiality**

All data you provide will remain confidential and is only accessible to authorized staff at the Centre for School Mental Health at Western University. A list linking your unique study ID with your personal information will be stored in a secure location and kept separate from the information you provide. Your individual data will not be linked to your name or shared with anyone outside of the research team. A staff member at the community organization that invited you to participate may assist with obtaining your consent, but they will not have access to your interview responses. The information is reported only as group findings. Your consent forms and data will be stored in locked files in a locked office at Centre for School Mental Health or stored on a secured server at Western University. Your data will be stored separate from your consent form.

Your informed consent and contact information will be collected through a third party, secure online platform called Qualtrics. Qualtrics uses encryption technology and restricted access authorizations to protect all data collected. In addition, Western's Qualtrics server is in Ireland, where privacy standards are maintained under the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation, which is consistent with Canada's privacy legislation. Please refer to Qualtrics's Privacy Policy (<https://www.qualtrics.com/privacy-statement/>) for more details about Qualtrics's information management practices. The data will then be exported from Qualtrics and securely stored on Western University's server.

Interviews will be conducted through the use of a third-party online video conferencing software called Zoom. Since this is a third-party software, your confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. However, researchers will put in place several measures to help protect your confidentiality by enabling features in Zoom that allow only permitted participants. Zoom automatically records both audio and video files. Immediately following the interview, the video files will be destroyed. Audio files will be used for transcription and destroyed after transcription has been completed. The Trint and Dedoose are third party software's used to transcribe and analyze the interview are encrypted and located in secure servers based in the United States. Please refer to Trint, and Dedoose's privacy policies (<https://explore.zoom.us/docs/en-us/privacy.html>, <https://trint.com/privacy-platform>, <https://www.dedoose.com/about/security>) for more details on

their information management practices. Following transcription, the audio files will be destroyed.

All data collected from this study will be destroyed after seven years. Representatives of the University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

### **Compensation**

You will be provided a \$20 gift card for participation in the interview.

### **Consent**

To indicate your consent, please fill out the attached form.

### **Contacts for Further Information**

If you have any questions about your participation in this research, please contact the research team.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics. This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

**Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.**

### **Participant Verbal Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Developing a healthy relationships program for newcomer youth

**Principal Investigator:** Claire Crooks, PhD, Director of Centre for School Mental Health  
Faculty of Education, Western University

1. Do you confirm that I have read you the Letter of Information, that you understand what I have read, and that all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction?

- Yes
- No

2. Do you agree to participate in the interview?

- Yes
- No

3. Do you consent to have direct quotes being extracted from the audio-recorded interview for the reporting and analysis of data? To ensure your confidentiality and anonymity direct quotes will not be linked to identifiable information.

- Yes
- No

4. Youth participants: Are you under 16 years old?

- Yes (guardian consent will be obtained)
- No

Participant's full name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's email address (to schedule interview):

\_\_\_\_\_

Participant's phone number (to schedule interview):

\_\_\_\_\_

Your name (person recording consent): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Was the participant assisted during the consent process (translation provided)?**

Yes  No

If yes and you provided translation, please fill in your name and information in the section below. If you were not the translator, please provide their name and contact information, and a research assistant will contact them to sign the consent form.

The person signing below acting as a translator for the participant during the consent process and attests that the study as set out in this form was accurately translated and has had any questions answered.

Translator's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Translator's Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Translator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Language Used: \_\_\_\_\_

**For research team use only:**

My signature indicates that I have explained the study to the research participant named above and I have answered the participant's questions.

Researcher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please click the arrow to the right below to submit the consent form.**



Appendix L:  
Study Poster



## Newcomer Youth, It's Our Turn To Listen to You!

We invite you to participate in a Zoom interview to learn about your experiences with mental health and relationships (e.g., friendships) when you first arrived in Canada.

### What's Involved?

You will be participating a 45-minute Zoom interview.

### Eligibility

You are eligible to participate if you are between the ages of 14 and 21 and have been living in Canada for at least 2 years.

For youth under 16 years of age parent/guardian consent will be required.

### What's in it for me?

You will receive a \$20 gift card for participating in the interview.

### How do you participate? (Pick one of the three options below)

1. Take a picture of the poster and contact us at the email below.
2. Scan the QR code to get the link to sign up.
3. Email us at [redacted]

### QR Code



Principal Investigator  
Dr. Claire Crooks  
[redacted]

Version 2: 2022-04-29

Appendix M:  
Ethics Approval



**Date:** 15 June 2022

**To:** Dr. Claire Crooks

**Project ID:** 114272

**Study Title:** Developing of a healthy relationships program for newcomer youth

**Application Type:** Continuing Ethics Review (CER) Form

**Review Type:** Delegated

**Date Approval Issued:** 15/Jun/2022 16:02

**REB Approval Expiry Date:** 11/Jul/2023

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Dear Dr. Claire Crooks,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board has reviewed this application. This study, including all currently approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above.

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The Office of Human Research Ethics

*Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).*

Appendix N:

Participant Interview Code Development Table

| Code Label  | Definition   | Example Quote   |
|---|--|---|
| Learning English was critical                     | Participants identified that learning English was a significant factor in newcomer youth being able to socialize in their new environments and feel confident in making new friends.   | “I think they're the first difficult thing is we don't know English. I think it's some difficult and we can't if we don't know the language, we can't learn good. If we try to learn English, maybe we can improve and we can. Good with our life. With our knowledge” (Participant 2).   |
| Language Barriers                                 | Newcomer youth participants identified that language barriers, specifically, being unable to speak English impacted how they formed new relationships and how they felt within their new environment.                        | “I think one of the biggest challenges I faced, especially when mental health was my language skills coming here with like almost no skill. Speaking English and coming here with the fact that I have no one here and just. Absolutely. No, nothing. No thought and no knowledge of how to speak English was so difficult on my mental health. It was frustrating at some points. Where I want to express myself, but I couldn't because I only knew how to speak Arabic” (Participant 3). |
| Culture shock and the stress of a new environment | Newcomer youth participants described the feeling of culture shock and being in a new environment as contributing to their feelings of uncertainty, feelings of isolation and being unaware of the social culture in Canada. | “The culture shock was definitely a big one. And. Yeah, it was it was hard to for me to meet people and make friends, and my mom often recalls that she would see me like pack my suitcase to go back home. So, yeah” (Participant 1).  |

|                                  |   |   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Benefits of cultural communities | Newcomer youth participants described the importance in maintaining and fostering connections with their cultural communities that allowed them to have existing ties with their home country even though they were in Canada.                  | “I remember in high school and in middle school as well, I started going to like the community centres that were fully affiliated with my home country, so that kind of helped me realize where I was coming from. Yet you’re in Canada. So, there are a lot of a lot of youth there that were born and raised in Canada, but yet they still had kind of affiliations with that country and with those cultures, so doing like a mix of both kind of helped me. And it’s something that I recommend if it’s attainable for everyone to do” (Participant 1). |
| ESL classrooms                   | Newcomer youth participants discussed the benefits of having the ESL program in their school which allowed them to improve their English language skills and meet other newcomer youth who were also struggling with similar language concerns. | “ESL was pretty good. The kids inside we express the same things and cause we express the same feelings, so talk to each other. We would understand how like how we were each feeling, and it's kind of perfect. And like I said, it was difficult for me because my language skills again. But that was perfect because I could see they're also struggling with that” (Participant 2).  |
| Relationships with teachers      | Newcomer youth described that having supportive teachers positively contributed to their initial experiences within the school environment by allowing them to feel supported and included.   | “And the teachers at the school were just outstanding. They helped me just develop my language and I guess learn more about the culture [...] there are a lot of, I guess, days where they would take us out skating” (Participant 1).  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Isolation and anxiety</p>              | <p>Participants described feeling a sense of isolation and anxiety when they initially arrived in Canada which negatively impacted their mental well-being, identity formation and relationship building.</p>  | <p>“Oh, no, it was terrible when I first came, it was terrible, I felt like I lost my identity. I felt like I lost everything. Not only like my friends but I kind of like, I felt like I lost myself as well because I had to form this new persona and personalities around people all around now. Like over here, it’s not like you don’t have to be tough in school, like you don’t have to be walking around like you always have someone looking at you bad or something. You have to be nice. You have to play with people, we have to do this, and that, it’s a whole different culture as a whole, different. I guess it’s a whole different environment, especially at school, especially with your friends. It’s not that you don’t deal with them the same. It was like I lost everything, and I had to renew it. It was kind of like a rebuild sort, like it’s kind of like you’re in a new country, you’ve lost everything, you don’t have anyone to talk to and you have to start all over again. And it was, I’m not going to lie, it was talk like it was probably one of the toughest years of my life” (Participant 3).</p> |
| <p>Sports and recreational activities</p> | <p>Newcomer youth participants described how sports and recreational activities allowed them to make new friends, become involved in their communities and engage in something that they were good at which positively impacted their self-confidence.</p> | <p>“So, we had a community center, lawn, tennis park and basketball, football ground. So, I used to go there in the evening to play with friends” (Participant 4).</p> <p>“So, when we were at school, I found a lot of relationships playing soccer with peers and. Most of my relationships that are formed with me playing soccer literally, and most of the time that's how I made friends” (Participant 2).</p>   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Courage: putting yourself out there</p>  | <p>Newcomer youth identified inner skills and strengths that they possessed which helped them come out of their shell and engage in various ways that they felt comfortable (sports, social media, etc.) to meet other peers their age and form relationships.</p>                    | <p>“I think it was kind of like I have a really outgoing personality.” (Participant 3) &amp; “It wasn't in class, it wasn't anywhere. It was just through peers. It was just through talking to people and being outgoing. I would play with the whole class. I made sure I was trying to integrate as much as possible” (Participant 3).</p>   |
| <p>Sibling relationships</p>  | <p>Participants valued having close sibling relationships which allowed them to feel understood in their new environment and have a mutual understating about the difficult relocation experiences that all siblings were similarly experiencing within the family.</p>               | <p>“Honestly, it was mostly like my brother sharing with them the things that is going on with me share the things that I was experiencing. The sadness, the shock, the anger, sometimes because I left stuff behind that I didn't want to. All this stuff was really important because if I didn't have someone to talk to, I would have bottled it in but that stuff was important, especially that I have an anxious personality, so like being able to share that with someone was kind of really helpful” (Participant 3).</p>   |
| <p>Mentor/seeking knowledge (from someone who has gone through similar experiences but can also guide you with integration)</p> | <p>Participants mentioned that having a program such as a mentorship program may allow them to connect within someone who has already gone through similar experiences and consult with the individual to help guide them with integration difficulties that they may experience.</p> | <p>“Probably a mentor. And so, it would be perfect. Mentor that dealt with this stuff before me. Another thing, any type of program that takes me in and talks. Let me talk to others like me who are imperfect, right? Like I said, ESL was not good because they're teaching English, it was good because I was talking to others like me. So, a mentor and program that can discuss with Arabic speaking people about my struggle, and they can talk to me about their struggles. [...] What did they do? I want to try to do that and deal with it or see how they're able to deal with it and so forth” (Participant 3).</p> |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Persevering relationships with family</p> | <p>Newcomer youth discussed how they valued having familial support and how this positively contributed to their experience as a newcomer in Canada. Specifically, youth described that having a collective resettlement experience that all members of the household went through allowed for a shared identity within the family home.</p> | <p>“It (family) has become closer now [...] Because they (parents and sibling) were my only friends when I came to Canada” (Participant 4)</p> <p>“Just because we have a big family, and when we moved here, everyone was, dealing with the same kind of shock, culture shock, and the movement was kind of scary for everyone. So, everyone would share their experience together at dinner or to the family and talking to each other, especially having my sister, my younger sister, my older brother with me at the same school was kind of like, really helpful.” (Participant 3)</p> |
|--|--|--|

## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Anjali Ruparelia

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** Western University  
London, Ontario, Canada  
M.A., Counselling Psychology  
2020-Present

University of Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
Honours BSc, Mental Health and Health Studies  
2015-2019

**Related Work and Volunteer Experience:** Intern Psychotherapist  
London Family Court Clinic  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2021-2022

Crisis Line Responder, Volunteer  
Distress Centres of Greater Toronto  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2020

Research Assistant, Volunteer  
Early Child Cognition (ECC) Lab, Toronto Metropolitan University  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
2019

**Training:** Healthy Relationships Plus Program – Enhanced  
Program Facilitator Training  
Centre for School Mental Health, Western University  
London, Ontario, Canada  
June 2021