

**Refugee narratives in Montreal:
negotiating everyday social exclusion and inclusion**

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the complex predicament of refugee claimants residing in Montréal. I argue that as claimants wait for immigration officials to determine their status, they become active social and political agents in the city. Drawing on in-depth, semi-structured interviews that I conducted in Montréal with individuals who had claimed refugee status, I examine everyday life practices and tactics through the lenses of social exclusion and inclusion. I use theories from refugee studies, sociology, urban studies, cultural studies, literature on alternative modes of citizenship, qualitative research and narrative inquiry. While much of the existing literature on the subject of refugees has focused predominantly on their marginalization, I contend that social inclusion and exclusion overlap, unfolding simultaneously in refugee claimants' everyday lives. Without dismissing the significant obstacles refugee claimants encounter as they re-settle—such as xenophobia, administrative barriers, economic instability, limited access to basic rights, and even fear of deportation—I focus on instances of social inclusion, revealing claimants' proactive practices and the positive contributions they make to society. During the re-settlement stage that I refer to as a sort of temporal and spatial “in-betweenness”, refugee claimants engage in various practices such as volunteering in the community and partaking in political advocacy. In this way they create moments and sites of inclusivity, belonging, and generate modes of alternative or informal citizenship. Such rarely acknowledged revelations act as a counterpoint to negative perceptions of refugees who are often referred to as “bogus”, “system abusers” or “passive”. These are common misconceptions, often spread through certain media, government and public discourses. To further clarify how refugee claimants negotiate social inclusion and belonging, I also invert the common theory that migrants are “absent” in their place of arrival. I demonstrate the ways refugees navigate and narrate their presence in the city. Furthermore, I argue that the way their forced departure is remembered and articulated is also valuable, as it shapes their construction of their place of origin, and creates a bridge to the way their lives have unfolded in Montréal. Finally, I conduct a textual analysis of two Montréal-based theatrical scripts that integrate actual refugee narratives. I demonstrate how these specific examples of urban cultural production portray the complexities of social exclusion and inclusion associated with forced displacement, while offering alternative and unheard voices to audiences. Overall, I argue that it is imperative to examine the tensions between social exclusion and inclusion in order to better understand the refugee predicament. Identifying and acknowledging refugees' roles as informal citizens provides new avenues to reflect on refugee presence in the city beyond the scope of the prejudices, stereotypes, and labels commonly associated with individuals who are forced to flee their homes, seeking to build safer ones.

Résumé

Cette dissertation examine la situation complexe dans laquelle se trouvent les demandeurs d'asile en tant que réfugiés qui habitent Montréal. Alors que ceux-ci attendent que les agents d'immigration prennent une décision face à leur statut, ils deviennent des agents actifs socialement et politiquement dans leur quotidien. Mon étude est basée sur des entrevues semi-directives faites auprès de gens qui font une demande d'asile en tant que réfugiés. L'analyse porte sur leur quotidien, et considère les notions d'inclusion et d'exclusion. Mon cadre théorique est multidisciplinaire et s'inspire de la sociologie, l'urbanisme, les études sur les modes de citoyenneté alternatives, les méthodes qualitatives et les récits narratifs. Alors que la plupart des études sur les demandeurs d'asile en tant que réfugiés se concentrent sur leur marginalisation, j'affirme plutôt que l'inclusion et l'exclusion sont deux choses qui s'interpellent dans le quotidien. Sans nier les difficultés auxquelles ils font face dans leurs nouvelles vies – la xénophobie, les obstacles administratifs, l'instabilité économique, l'accès limité à certains droits civiques, et même la peur de la déportation – je mets l'accent sur l'inclusion sociale, leur participation active dans la société et ce qu'ils contribuent à leur nouvelle communauté. Durant la période de 'l'entre-deux', alors qu'ils tentent de s'établir, ils s'impliquent dans la société, par exemple dans les domaines du bénévolat ou encore l'action politique. Ils créent ainsi des lieux et des moments d'inclusion, qui leur permettent d'appartenir d'une manière informelle à une certaine citoyenneté. Cette perspective permet donc de contrebalancer les étiquettes sociales négatives qui sont parfois rattachées à ces personnes : « abuseurs du système » ou « paresseux ». Ces fausses perceptions sont communes, et se propagent au sein des médias, du gouvernement et du public en général. Afin de mieux comprendre leur situation, je démontre que ces nouveaux arrivants se forment une place dans la ville. De plus, je soutiens que la façon dont ils ont quitté leur pays d'origine – souvent involontairement – structure la perception de leur pays d'origine et les liens d'attachement avec leur nouveau domicile. Finalement, je propose une analyse qualitative de deux scénarios de pièces de théâtre intégrant des récits réels de réfugiés. Je démontre que ces exemples spécifiques contribuent à une production culturelle urbaine qui dénote toute la complexité des phénomènes d'inclusion et d'exclusion qui émergent suite à la migration des gens, permettant ainsi de s'exprimer d'une manière nouvelle. De ce fait, je note qu'il est impératif de bien examiner les tensions qui existent entre l'inclusion et l'exclusion sociale afin de bien comprendre la situation des demandeurs d'asile en tant que réfugiés. Le fait d'accepter que ces demandeurs d'asile aient un rôle informel en tant que citoyens procure de nouvelles alternatives pour étudier la présence des réfugiés dans la ville, en rejetant les préjugés, stéréotypes et étiquettes.

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Introduction: Refugee Trajectories

“What makes a city hustle? Nothing extraordinary. It takes a lot of unknown people, unseen hands, unread hearts, borderless bodies” (Brand, 2006)

Introduction

While walking around downtown Montréal one night, I encountered an unusual musical performance. Standing and performing at a corner along Ste-Catherine was not your typical busker playing the ubiquitous violin, saxophone, or South American wind instrument. Instead, an elderly man playing the oud and singing in Arabic had replaced the usual elevator music, Sinatra classics, and French-Canadian folksongs often heard along one of Montréal’s main arteries. As the summer air reverberated with Arabic chords, for a brief moment, I mistook Montréal for a Maghrebian city. The “American Eagle Outfitters” banner above the musician’s head on the corner of Peel Street quickly brought me back to reality.

Uprooting, displacement, border-crossing, ongoing connections between old and new homes: these are the experiences that drive this dissertation. The destabilizing effects and the obstacles encountered when one leaves one’s home have a significant impact on the everyday realities and existential conditions of migrants, especially those who have no other choice but to flee. Upon their arrival to a country of asylum, refugees are devoid of legal citizenship. Such a predicament establishes grounds for simultaneous presence and absence within

the new dwelling place; services and security are limited due to their lack of status, yet refugees lead an active everyday life. They are faced with a constant duality as they apply and wait for status. Disembarking in a foreign city, displaced, and often fleeing traumatic and life threatening events, only reinforces the uneasiness of being a refugee. In the city, refugees may be greeted by a mixed welcome. This welcome may involve a convivial reception (involving positive interpersonal communication, community and social services), but also an antagonistic reception (hostile interpersonal communication, limited mobility and access to health care) in the city. Given the fact that refugees lack official citizenship, some government officials, media commentators, and other members of society question whether refugees belong in the city, and whether they are entitled to certain rights, such as health care. As a result, refugees are often perceived as “outsiders” who take advantage of social services, when in fact; refugees do not choose to come to Canada the way immigrants make a choice. Instead, they are forced to leave their countries of origin in order to escape persecution, torture, and violence.

How accurate is it to perceive displaced individuals strictly as being “out of place”¹ and marginalized in their new environment? Regarding the plight of refugees, why is it that the contributions refugees make to the new city or instances in which they clearly belong to the urban space are rarely brought to light by mainstream media and the government? It is impossible to neglect the

¹ Here, I borrow the expression “out of place” as the title of Edward Said’s (1999) memoir bearing the same title. Throughout his memoir, he explores his own status as a refugee, his sense of always feeling “out of place”—whether personally, geographically and linguistically. He also explains how everyone, in a sense, is comprised of “multiple identities.”

presence of refugees in any given city, particularly the instances of social inclusion. A closer examination of refugee claimants' everyday life practices reveals that they frequently manage to carve out agency for themselves. They do not passively wait for the state to decide their fate, and certainly do more than simply "abuse" the system, a common accusation leveled against refugees. Furthermore, they share the same city space, metro cars, and lunch tables in the food court. Nonetheless, this proximity, at times, adds to the invisibility of this population, even though so many are "too close for us not to hear the echo of their rage and pain in our lives" (Beneduce, 2008, p. 509).

When I saw the elderly man performing on his oud, many questions arose in my mind. Such shifting urban soundscapes increasingly characterize the complexity of Montréal, alternately referred to as bicultural, intercultural, plural and as a "multicultural city" (Burman, 2007b, p.258). Its thriving diversity is represented through individuals, food markets, clothing, and spiritual spaces. I cannot help but think about how the continuous demographic shifts occurring in Montréal inscribe themselves onto the city's ever-changing auditory and visual landscape, as countless stories of displacement remain unheard. Who was the man with the oud? Perhaps, he was once a revered musician, an oud master, in his country of origin. Maybe he was a doctor, who played the oud as a hobby alongside his profession. How and when did he arrive to Montréal? What led him to perform on Ste-Catherine Street on balmy summer nights? Did he flee a war zone, or political persecution? Has he witnessed acts of violence? How many borders did he cross before arriving in Montréal, and what risks did these

crossings entail? For all I know, though, he could very well have been born in Canada.

When we think of borders, what usually come to mind are controlled boundaries defined by the state. Such lines do more than just make up geographic divides: they are at once political, social, cultural, and psychic exclusionary mechanisms. In fact, socially, borders render many outsiders, aliens and “others,” based on race, religion, and nationality, among other criteria. Such lines are heavily patrolled. Barbed wire is often used to demarcate territorial zones, and surveillance cameras are plentiful. Borders are defended, contested, fought over, and for some, especially refugees, borders are opportunities for a new life, conjuring the “disturbing vacillation between death and wish” (Beneduce, 2008, p. 521). Countless migrants perish in attempts to cross rivers, deserts, and oceans. And if they do make it alive, they face the immigration apparatus of the state, which either ushers them in or pushes them out, through detainment³ and deportation. In the meantime, they wait, at times deprived of basic rights, for the system to determine that they are legitimate refugees, even if they possess the documentation and the (in)visible scars attesting to persecution and torture experienced in their countries of origin. The wait soon becomes a “Kafkaesque

³ Bill C-4, which calls for a “balanced refugee reform” is meant to prevent human smugglers from abusing Canada’s Immigration Act. However, in reality, refugees are becoming the target of this Bill as some refugee claimants, including refugee children, will be mandatorily detained, without possibility of independent review for a year. Cleveland, Rousseau and Kronick (2012) demonstrated how detainment, even for a short period of time, has a negative impact on the mental health of asylum seekers in both adults and children. A systematic and scientific study was conducted with asylum seekers held in detainment centres in Montréal (Laval) and Toronto. Their findings were presented to the Canadian House of Commons Committee on the Bill. Also, for more on the negative mental health impact of detention and temporary status for refugee claimants under Bill C-31, see Cleveland and Rousseau (2012).

universe of differently applied regulations, or never-ending waiting, where the ‘response’ (regarding status or a work permit) takes on the shape of a verdict” (ibid., p.417). This results in a reality of “in-betweenness,”⁴ which is not necessarily as unproductive a space as some may take it to be. I am interested in exploring everyday existence during extended waiting times: the precarious, yet fulfilling moments that accompany the existential condition of seeking asylum.

Plural Montréal

Almost everyone has a story of how they arrived in Montréal - families who have been established here for generations, refugees fleeing political repression, even temporary migrant workers who arrive for seasonal work in rural Québec fields. However, too many migratory stories remain untold, even though they speak to the political, historical and social realities of Montréal and elsewhere. Just walking around a number of neighborhoods on the island of Montréal, one can see the palpable changes inscribed in demographics and urban scenery, converting the city into a palimpsest that testifies to the spatial and social displacement of people as it unfolds at an accelerated pace.

How is multiplicity grounded in Montréal’s urban space? Caribbean grocery stores, Halal markets, Asian eateries, East European and kosher delis and bakeries all represent various waves of immigrant arrivals to the city, as do places

⁴ I put quotation marks around “in-betweenness” throughout the dissertation, as this term is specific to my project. In chapter Two, I elaborate on my definition of “in-betweenness” within the context of re-settled urban refugee claimants. “Liminality” is often used in describing refugees living in camps and more broadly has more of a negative undertone associated with social exclusion. Instead, I propose a more nuanced approach by using the idea of “in-betweenness” as a more constructive moment and site for refugee inclusivity.

of worship, whether they have existed for decades or just recently been erected. Men, women and children wearing different religious or traditional dress are noticeable, particularly in specific boroughs of the island, such as Ville Saint-Laurent.⁵ Riding the bus along Côte-des-Neiges exposes one to the panoply of languages being spoken thousands of miles away from various homelands. Interestingly, in terms of language, the 2011 census data emphasizes Canadian cultural diversity by highlighting the languages spoken at home. The data shows that more than one in five⁶ Montréal residents speaks a language other than French or English at home. This has a particular resonance for refugee claimants who reside in Montréal, as a number of claimants face considerable difficulty overcoming language barriers in the city. It is important not to overlook the local urban context and its effects on claimants' experiences, especially given the distinct dynamics of the plural landscape of Montréal. Through their empirical research, Ley and Smith (2008) have recognized that place has a profound impact on shaping immigrants' experiences. In fact, the duality of social inclusion and exclusion unfolding in everyday refugee life in Montréal is likely further exacerbated by what Sherry Simon (2006) calls the politics of a "divided city."⁷ Montréal, as a distinct urban setting, continuously struggles to reconcile its bicultural and bilingual nature along with the implications of influxes of immigration within a culturally, racially, and religiously diverse city space. The

⁵ See CIBL Radio-Montréal. (2010).

⁶ See The Canadian Press (2012, October 24). Allophone population on the rise in Montréal. CBC News Montréal. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2012/10/24/montreal-census-language-allophones-growing.html>

⁷ Montréal's cultural geography and history are divided into two sides, the Anglophone West and the Francophone East. As Sherry Simon (2006) points out, "today Montréal is a cosmopolitan city, with French as the matrix of its cultural life" (p.3).

way refugee claimants occupy space and attempt to establish belonging unfolds against this backdrop of multiplicity. Such urban plurality echoes Leonie Sandercock's (as cited in Isin, 2002) definition of a cosmopolis, "which is an always unfinished and contested construction site, one characterized, above all, by its space for difference" (p. 266). Is the liminality inherent in the refugee condition further heightened by certain characteristics unique to Montréal, namely its bilingual, bicultural and plural nature? Several refugee claimants encounter significant difficulty when communicating in French, and may face hostility for their poor knowledge of French or be blamed for having a distinct accent. On the other hand, the plural landscape can contribute to forging a sense of "home" for those who are displaced. Montréal is therefore a unique ground for language politics, not only for citizens, but also for refugee claimants adapting to their new environment. However, most refugees did not necessarily plan to arrive in Canada, let alone Montréal. Rather, their exit from their home country is usually a last minute and desperate measure, with priorities centered on survival and not necessarily on learning to communicate in French immediately.

In striving to position itself as a "cultural metropolis", Montréal positions its plurality as a fertile ground for cultural endeavours. Its multicultural demographics are clearly perceived as a strength, particularly within municipal political discourse. This observation stems from a policy document that projects the development of Montréal's cultural policy for the years 2005-2015:

A population composed of heirs of the aboriginal culture, a francophone majority with a long tradition of Québec creativity, a native English-speaking

community well connected to North American dynamism, and multiple other communities that brought with them the cultures of more than a hundred countries.⁸

The “other cultural communities” this policy document refers to is what is commonly known as the allophone community, grouped separately from the city’s non-Franco and non-Anglo residents. This strong division between official language groups dominates the historiography of this site, argues Burman (2007b), as “‘others’ are shunted into a narrow third space, which parallels the third space occupied by ‘multiculturals’ at the federal policy level” (p.258). As much as this plural backdrop exists in Montréal, refugees are not, by definition, citizens. This dissertation does not delve into the history and the critiques of multiculturalism for two reasons. First, because multiculturalism is in large part an issue connected to citizens, and not explicitly to refugees. Second, Québec holds a far from enthusiastic stance on the policy. While many refugee claimants do eventually go on to become permanent residents and citizens, their precarious pre-citizen status means their immediate priority is securing basic living needs, such as food, housing, health care and education. Furthermore, another reason I do not consider multiculturalism in depth is because historically, Québec has been opposed to official multiculturalism (G. Rousseau, 2006). Instead, the province adopts interculturalism, deeming it a more appropriate model. In fact, it has been branded as a model for integration and as a solution to some of the anti-immigrant backlash that has accompanied the debate over the accommodation of minorities

⁸ Ville de Montréal. (2000). *Cultural Metropolis: A cultural development policy for Ville de Montréal 2005-2015*. Retrieved from Ville de Montréal website http://ville.Montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/page/librairie_Fr/documents/Mtl_metropole_culturelle_en.pdf

in Québec. It takes for granted the centrality of francophone culture. From there, it works to integrate other minorities into a common public culture, while respecting their diversity. As much as this plurality is supposed to be respected in theory, nevertheless, the reality is far from utopian.⁹ Even so, as global flows intensify (Appadurai, 1996; Castles & Miller, 2003; Papastergiadis, 2000; Sassen, 2006), diverse cities such as Montréal are bound to be characterised by tensions stemming from migratory movement, as multiple ethnicities, countries of origin and immigration statuses, namely documented and undocumented immigrants and refugees,¹⁰ inhabit the city.

The Project

In this introductory chapter, I first delineate the existing, and, at times negative perceptions and discourses circulating around refugee claimants, to contextualize the reasoning behind my focus on both social inclusion and exclusion. I proceed to explain the objectives of the dissertation and how I choose to frame my approach. It is necessary to address the phenomenon of global migration before looking at how the Canadian government defines refugees. I

⁹ Cases of racial profiling by police are not uncommon in Montréal. In 2010, the Québec Human Rights Commission announced that there were more than a dozen cases involving accusations of racial profiling by police. These cases were stalled by the city. A more recently mediatized case of racial profiling involves a young black man in Montréal who was brutalized by the police. Montréal Police later admitted that they had the wrong suspect. See

Montréal man accuses police of racial profiling. (2102, October 31). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/Montréal/story/2012/10/30/Montréal-racial-profiling.html>

¹⁰ It is necessary to highlight the distinction between immigrants, who move to another country based on their free will, as opposed to refugees, who are forced to leave their countries due to persecution. I define the term “refugee” in more detail further into in this Introduction. It is also noteworthy that there are a considerable number of non-documented migrants in Montréal. According to 2012 report by La Presse, approximately 40 000 migrants live clandestinely in the city. See Nicoud, A. (2012, May 6). 40 000 clandestins se terrent à Montréal. *La Presse*. Retrieved from <http://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/regional/Montréal/201205/06/01-4522453-40-000-clandestins-se-terrent-a-Montréal.php>

then discuss some of the main debates surrounding the term “refugee” as a subject and “refugeeness” (Lacroix, 2004) as a condition. Next, I outline my project’s methodology, followed by an overview of some of the previous key areas of research on refugees in Montréal. Finally, a brief breakdown of each chapter offers a roadmap to the project.

It has been well documented that public perception and certain media discourses generally frame refugees as being “bogus” claimants, opportunists who abuse and live off the system, as outlined by Pratt and Valverde (2002); who pose a threat to national security, as described by Bigo (2002); and, as argued by Ong (2003), who are deemed invisible in the national consciousness. In order to counter such stereotypes and misconceptions about refugee claimants, I pursue a closer examination of the critical period integral to urban refugee re-settlement,¹¹ during which indefinite waiting times are imposed. I chose to conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews with individuals who once claimed refugee status to better understand the predicament of refugee claimants in Montréal. I integrate the narratives that I collected throughout the project and, in the last chapter of the dissertation, I explore refugee narratives found in theatrical texts. I worked with two scripts containing elements of documentary theatre that are partly based on actual refugee testimonials in the city; this is significant in terms of understanding

¹¹ The use of the hyphen in the term “re-settlement” throughout the dissertation is intentional. It is meant to emphasize the multiple phases of movement and settlement refugee claimants’ experience, as their journey often begins long before arriving in the country of asylum. Forced departure from the homeland and settlement in a new dwelling place are just two of the phases of multi-staged and multi-faceted journeys that refugee claimants face.

the opportunities to create wider dialogue about refugee issues within urban cultural production, as these texts engage various audiences.

Furthermore, the refugee predicament, particularly in urban settings, is at times oversimplified and often addressed only in terms of social exclusion based on factors such as poverty, for instance. Authors who address migratory issues and social exclusion include Miles and Thranhardt (1995). They examine the dynamics of exclusion of migration and integration in Europe. Ley and Smith (2000) study the relationships between urban deprivation and the immigrant population in 1991. They compare this relationship with that of 1971, based on data from Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver. Phillimore and Goodson (2006) contend that the high levels of unemployment and underemployment experienced by asylum seekers in the UK may serve to exclude them from society in dispersal areas, which exacerbates the general levels of social exclusion in those areas. Goldring et al. (2009) analyze the institutionalized production of precarious migration status in Canada. They observe that Canadian policy routinely generates pathways to multiple forms of precarious status, including precarious access to public services. Segregation and ethnic urban ghettos in Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver have been addressed in a report by Apparicio and Seguin (2008).

In reality, refugee claimants¹² who re-settle in urban centres embody a complex predicament. Their condition is controlled by regulations and often

¹² The term “refugee claimant” is commonly used in Canadian government parlance. The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), a non-profit umbrella group committed to the rights and the protection of refugees, defines the term “refugee claimant” as a person who has made a claim for protection as a refugee. This term is roughly equivalent to “asylum seeker” and is considered standard in Canada, while “asylum seeker” is the term more often used internationally. See

marked by circumstances of social, racial, and economic marginalization. Though rarely acknowledged, it is also frequently defined by instances where refugee claimants manifest their belonging to the city, create meaning in their lives, and carve out agency as non-citizens. This dissertation examines some of the everyday lives of refugee claimants living in Montréal through the lenses of social exclusion and inclusion, based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews that I conducted in Montréal during 2008-2009 with 10 individuals who had once claimed refugee status. In doing so, I underscore how, despite facing important obstacles during the re-settlement process, certain circumstances can foster pathways of agency and engagement, as opposed to strictly reproducing cycles of exclusion commonly associated with refugee claimants, as documented by other authors.

Claimants are confronted with indefinite waits, which may extend anywhere between nine weeks and nine years. However, I argue that this “in-betweenness,”¹³ in both temporal and spatial dimensions, can foster a proactive stance, despite their lack of status, limited access to resources, and possibly reduced mobility. As such, refugees become active social and political subjects. Given that the category of everyday life can be defined as a “place where structure and agency are connected and localized in time and space” (H. Lefebvre et al., 2008, p. 52), I consider both the temporal and spatial dimensions of refugee claimants’ “in-between” existence and how it can engender instances of social

Canadian Council for Refugees. (n.d). Talking About Refugees and Immigrants: A Glossary Of Terms. Retrieved from <http://ccrweb.ca/glossary.PDF>

¹³ I use the invented term “in-betweenness” throughout the dissertation to address the condition of liminality seen through a more productive and positive lens, as will be explained further in the dissertation.

inclusion, agency, and belonging in the city. The narratives I collected are used to elucidate how refugee claimants partake in and contribute to local community life, whether through volunteerism, community involvement, or political activity surrounding other refugees and immigrants, or with the community at large. Such a focus debunks the stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding refugee claimants, and also offers the possibility of viewing refugee presence in the city as modes of alternative and informal citizenship.

Other authors have also considered refugee claimants' involvement in the community, and have formulated this reality in various ways. Danso (2002) has discussed how Ethiopian and Somali refugees in Toronto, for instance, have attempted to reconstruct their "social geographies" during the initial settlement experiences. Mohamed (1999) has outlined resistance strategies during re-settlement, in particular how "Somali women [...] negotiate dynamic identities of resistance and defy prescriptions and stereotypes in their daily lives (p.55)" Kumsa (2006) addresses questions of "be-longing" and underpins both the fixed and ever-shifting nature of selfhood based on empirical work conducted on Oromos refugee youth in Toronto. Authors, such as Indra (1989) and Israelite et al. (1999) have highlighted the shift that takes place in gender roles during re-settlement. Moreover, previous work on how newcomers access various social networks and community organizations has been addressed by Rose, Carrasco, and Charbonneau (1998), as well as by Walton-Roberts (2008). These authors consider the dynamics in the formation of social capital through weak and strong

ties¹⁴. I am interested in the ways in which social exclusion and inclusion in everyday lives of refugee claimants function in tandem and how this tension is concretely expressed by the refugees themselves. By the everyday life context, I refer to how claimants manage to secure basic services such as health, education, employment (at times with considerable difficulty). Looking more closely at various quotidian activities allows us to see claimants becoming active social and political agents in the city. Also, in examining seemingly banal acts of everyday life, such as walking around the city, we can see how leisure activities help create instances of inclusivity. Other glimpses into everyday life revealed some of the xenophobic encounters refugee claimants experienced.

I complement the narratives I collected with refugee experiences described within the realm of urban cultural productions, namely in theatrical texts. The two scripts I chose written and produced in Montréal have hardly been explored, and are rich sites where I examine the refugee dialogue that unfolds in everyday life. Such an approach combines the humanities and the social studies with artistic production. Though I have not come across studies that describe the impact this type of theatre may have on refugee communities specifically in Montreal, my textual analysis extends my emphasis on refugee voice throughout this dissertation and serves as a site featuring alternative voices found in cultural production. These voices reach audiences and offer a different viewpoint on refugee presence in the city that defers from what mainstream media and government offer. Therefore, theatrical performances create an important bridge

¹⁴ Strong and weak ties are explained in more detail in Chapter Two on social inclusion.

between refugee and non-refugee experiences, acting as mediators for culture and politics in the city.

Global migration

Addressing forced displacement within the larger context of global migration is fundamental. In their seminal book, *The Age of Migration*, Castles and Miller (2003) observe that throughout human history, international migration is a constant, not an aberration. Moving populations always accompany demographic growth, changes in technology, political conflict, and warfare. They write:

Over the last five centuries mass migrations have played a major role in colonialism, industrialization, the emergence of nation-states and the development of the capitalist world market. However, international migration has never been as pervasive, or as socioeconomically and politically significant, as it is today. Never before have statesmen accorded such priority to migration concerns. Never before has international migration seemed so pertinent to national security and so connected to conflict and disorder on a global scale (p. 283).

Amid the global trends of migration, Canada occupies an important position, as it is a nation defined by immigration, referred to as a settler colony, built by French and British settlers upon the pre-existing Aboriginal community (Abu-Laban 1998, p. 69). This settlement process has had devastating consequences for Canada's First Nations. The traditional Aboriginal ways of life were drastically and irreversibly disrupted by violence, disease, alcohol, and the greed and insensitivity of settler land developers, both private and public, who appropriated

their lands, largely condemning the Native people to impoverishment, often confined to remote reserves (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010, p. 21). In addition to the dispossession of First Nations populations, Canada, like many other Western countries, adopted racist admission policies, despite having to turn to migration in order to fulfill the country's labour force requirements, such as the Chinese Head Tax discussed in more detail in Chapter One. When formal racism was finally removed from the Immigration Act after 1967, other biases related to race/ethnicity, class, and gender began to affect Canada's immigration policy, through the immigration point system¹⁵ that still structures the current policy as argued by Abu-Laban (1998). Despite such shortcomings, Canada has been considered a "model" in immigration policy for decades, offering protection and re-settlement to displaced populations following war, political unrest, and environmental disasters (Dauvergne C., Angeles L. , & Huang A., 2006; Lacroix, 2004). Learning from past wrongs and exclusionary practices such as racist policies and internment camps, Canadian refugee policy is recognized as being one of the more generous policies in the world. In fact, in 1986, Canada received the Nansen Medal¹⁶ for its work with refugees. Since the mid-1980s however,

¹⁵ Immigrants are assessed on a point system based on six selection factors. These factors are assigned numerical values. For instance, in order to qualify as a federal skilled worker or professional, an individual planning to immigrate to Canada must score at least a 67 out of a 100 in order to be eligible. The six selection factors are: English and/or French skills, education, experience, age, arranged employment in Canada, adaptability. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2013). *Six selection factors – Federal skilled workers*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-factors.asp>

¹⁶ The Nansen Medal, now known as the Nansen Refugee Award is named after the late Norwegian polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen. He was the first League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the 1922 Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Instituted in 1954, the Nansen Refugee Award is given annually to an individual or an organization, or in this case, a country, in recognition of extraordinary and dedicated service to refugees and is the most prestigious honour conferred by UNHCR. The award consists of a commemorative medal and a US\$100,000 monetary prize donated by the governments of Norway and Switzerland. See

there have been many changes in the Canadian refugee system that have engendered sharp criticism from refugee rights advocacy groups (Lacroix, 2004, p. 147).

Based on a recent government document, *Facts and figures 2011: Immigration overview*,¹⁷ the top source countries for refugee claimant entries in Canada are the following: Hungary (17.5%), China (7.4%), Colombia (3.7%), Pakistan (3.5%), Namibia (3.3%), Nigeria (2.8%), and Mexico (2.7%)¹⁸. Specifically, 1683 refugee claimant entries were recorded in Montréal. This equates to 6.6% of the entire country's refugee claimants. The province of Québec received a total of 11% of entries altogether. This means there were close to 25 000 refugee claims made throughout Canada in 2011.¹⁹

Canada offers refugee protection to individuals who fear persecution and who are unwilling or unable to return to their home country. Currently, individuals in Canada are eligible to make a refugee claim if they fit within the Geneva Convention definition,²⁰ are outside their home country or the country where they normally live, and are unwilling to return because of a well-founded

UNHCR. (2013). *Nansen Refugee Award*. Retrieved from UNHCR online <http://www.unhcr-centraleurope.org/en/about-us/unhcr-events/nansen-refugee-award.html>

¹⁷ See pages 102-107 of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's report *Facts and Figures 2011: Immigration Overview Permanent and Temporary Residents*. Retrieved from CIC online <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/research-stats/facts2011.pdf>

¹⁸ CIC explains the "source country" referring to the principal country of alleged persecution.

¹⁹ The precise figure is 24 900. In recent years, the average number of claims made is between 24 000 and 25 000. For more information about the "In-Canada Asylum Program" for people making refugee protection claims from within Canada, see Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *In-Canada Asylum Program*. Retrieved from CIC online <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/canada.asp>

²⁰ The United Nations Geneva Convention or the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is the key legal document in defining who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states. The 1967 Protocol removed geographical and temporal restrictions from the Convention. See UNHCR. (2013). *The 1951 Refugee Convention*. Retrieved from UNHCR online <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html>

fear of persecution based on: race, religion, political opinion, nationality, or membership in a particular social group, such as women or people of a non-normative sexual orientation²¹. This definition of “refugee” set by the Convention is now widely adopted by Western countries, including Canada, for treatment of refugees and produces what Lisa Malkki (1995) calls the social, political, and legal constructions that are recognized as “refugeeness” (p. 506). In fact, in problematizing the construction of the refugee as an object of knowledge, Malkki offers a critical mapping of what she calls the “construction-in-progress” of refugees from an anthropological domain of knowledge. She explains how terms such as “the refugee” and “refugee studies” emerged by identifying two factors. First, historically, by studying the way in which displacement was managed in Europe following World War II,²² and second, through discursive and institutional regimes, including international law, international studies, and data gathered by the United Nations, as well as other international refugee agencies. This dissertation relies on the social, political, and legal constructs Malkki mentions in addressing the construction of “refugeeness” within Canada.

²¹ See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Determine your eligibility – Refugee status from inside Canada*. Retrieved from CIC online <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/inside/apply-who.asp> Furthermore, a “person in need for protection” which means a person in Canada whose removal to their home country or country where they normally live would subject them personally to: a danger of torture; a risk to their life; or a risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

²² Malkki (1995) discusses how refugees were not always framed as being an international humanitarian problem, which is a common contemporary approach. Instead, during the last years of World War II and the postwar years, individuals who were displaced in Europe were perceived as being a military problem, as controlling civilians was considered a combat issue (p.499). Furthermore, the basic blueprint of the military camp was emulated when the new spatial and disciplinary practices were emerging in refugee camps throughout Europe (ibid).

Refugeeness

Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1995) has famously commented on Hannah Arendt's work "We Refugees," reflecting on Arendt's original analysis (1943) fifty years later. According to Agamben, Arendt's writings have not lost any of their currency, considering that the refugee problem is as urgent now as it was then.²³ He observes that with the decline of the nation-state and the corrosion of traditional legal-political categories, the refugee is possibly the "only imaginable figure of our day":

At least until the process of the dissolution of the nation-state and its sovereignty has come to an end, the refugee is the sole category in which it is possible today to perceive the forms and limits of a political community to come. Indeed, it may be that if we want to be equal to the absolutely novel tasks that face us, we will have to abandon without misgivings the basic concepts in which we have represented political subjects up to now (man and citizen with their rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, etc.) and to reconstruct our political philosophy beginning with this unique figure (p.114).

Edward Said considers the migrant an apt metaphor for modernity, as well as post-modernity, with crossing boundaries and resistance to (en)closure being the mark of modern literature (Cresswell, 1997, p. 361). In his book *Culture and*

²³ The most recent refugee crisis is taking place in the Middle East as a result of the current unrest in Syria, as neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, and Jordan now face a large number of displaced individuals within their respective borders. Official sources report that more than 600,000 have fled the conflict in Syria and registered as refugees. See UNHCR. (2012). *Syria Emergency*. Retrieved from UNHCR online <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/5051e8cd6.html>. In fact, the Syrian civil war has contributed to push the numbers of refugees and those displaced by conflict within their own nation to an 18-year high of 45.2 million worldwide by the end of 2012. See World's displaced people at 18-year high of 45.2 million. (2013, June 19). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2013/06/19/refugees-displaced-united-nations-syria.html>

Imperialism (1993), Said's closing discussion revolves around exile and dispossession; he states that within the contemporary world, the state of exile is the norm rather than the exception, as people have been on the move over the course of history, particularly within the context of imperialism, and how exile is the "truth on the political map of the contemporary world" (p.332):

For surely it is one of the unhappiest characteristics of the age to have produced more refugees, migrants, displaced persons, and exiles than ever before in history, most of them as an accompaniment to and, ironically enough, as afterthoughts of great post-colonial and imperial conflicts. As the struggle for independence produced new states and new boundaries, it also produced homeless wanderers, nomads, and vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate rebelliousness (ibid, p. 332)

The experience of being a refugee has often been defined as a universal one, as Lacroix (2004) points out. What makes it universal, besides crossing borders and the reality of being uprooted, "is a common characteristic of those who have been forced out of their countries and as such constitutes an irreversible element in the construction of their present subjectivity" (p.148). In framing the refugee as a subject in the past, some theorists have opted to generalize and essentialize what they call the "refugee experience" (Keller, 1975; Stein, 1981). Beyond representing a so-called universal condition, the refugee has also been defined as the anomaly within the normalized and stable society, because currently "state sovereignty is part of a natural or necessary order of things" (Malkki, p. 511). However, Malkki critiques this approach of there being a "single, essential, transhistorical refugee condition" (ibid). She does not see the value of taking a

highly “mobile unstable social phenomenon” and considering it as “essential traits and characteristics attached to or emanating from individual persons”. Instead she emphasizes the “commonalities and differences in the socio-historical processes that produce refugees” (ibid). As a result, Lacroix (2004) explains that in order to understand “refugeeness”, it is essential to start with a definition and then move beyond and consider the individual’s subjective experience of being forced to flee his or her country (p.149). Furthermore, in terms of mental health, those individuals who have become refugees suffer greatly from having been tortured, raped, terrorized, spied on, attacked by paramilitaries, separated from family and friends, and often having witnessed death close up. As Brik et al.(1988) have observed, it is a generally accepted conclusion that refugees constitute a high-risk group as far as mental health is concerned, due to the mere fact that they have been forced to emigrate (p.179). Although the mental health of refugee claimants is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to recognize that even though the loss and suffering refugees have suffered is beyond the imagination of most people, one should not assume that refugee status constitutes a recognizable, generalizable psychological condition (Malkki, 1995, p.510).²⁴

Zygmunt Bauman (2004) discusses how refugees are treated as “human waste,” contending that they are people who have been excluded from their own societies and have become excess population, by-products of globalization. This

²⁴ Frontline workers warn that the recent federal government's changes to the refugee health program are putting refugees at greater risk of suicide and mental health issues. See Fitzpatrick, M. (2012, August 17). Refugee mental health at risk with cuts, experts warn. *CBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/story/2012/08/16/pol-mental-health-refugees.html> Also, the cuts to the Federal refugee health plan are addressed in more depth in Chapter 1 on Social Exclusion.

presents a particular problem in contemporary societies because refugee human waste is a new source of insecurity and fear in the societies refugees flee to. In addition to the discriminatory tendencies of globalization, Canadian refugee policy has now come to be a part of the global trend of “tightening borders, restricting mobility, and criminalizing asylum seekers” (Lowry & Nyers, 2003, p. 67). As Catherine Dauvergne (2003) concludes in her evaluation of Canada’s new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), the changes brought forth within the IRPA respond in characteristic ways to contemporary globalizing forces and these legal developments are constrained by nostalgic politics (p.726). Currents of globalization, combined with a world threatened by terrorism—a threat heightened by the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the New York City World Trade Centre and The Pentagon in Washington, D.C.—have had a profound impact on immigration and refugee policy. Therefore, in terms of migration, exclusion of the “other” (involving criminalization, detention, and deportation) and the control of borders (with strict controls on entry and applications) exist in tension with efforts relating to human rights, responsibilities, and possibilities of different types of citizenship.

Methodology

In line with Lacroix’s approach to understanding “refugeeness” which starts with a definition, but then moves beyond in order to consider the individual’s subjective experience of being forcefully displaced (2004, p.149), we must ask how liminality, or what I call “in-betweeness” in the city is experienced and expressed by refugee claimants. With tensions of social inclusion and

exclusion operating within the daily lives of refugee claimants, I deem it crucial to incorporate refugee narratives and insight. Therefore, qualitative research is the primary method used, specifically based on in-depth semi-structured interviews, which I explain in more detail later in this section. By integrating refugee voices describing fragments from their daily experiences, the existential condition of seeking asylum is represented in the language of the refugee claimants themselves. The research respondents generously and vividly offered their experiences while they were claiming refugee status, formulated in/on their own terms, echoing what Lawler (2002) has written regarding qualitative data: “The truths people produce through such stories are not ‘truths’ as conventionally understood by positivist social science: nevertheless, they do speak certain ‘truths’ about people’s (socially located) lives and identities” (p. 254).

Furthermore, there is a conscious engagement with cultural texts containing refugee narratives in the last chapter of my dissertation. I conduct an interpretative analysis of cultural, particularly theatrical, production that integrates actual refugee testimonies found in two Montréal-based and produced scripts. In fact, interpreting my own collected data alongside refugee narratives mediated through theatre is ultimately a methodological move; I seek to bridge data seen as social scientific with the humanities and arts. This approach can lead to exploring possibilities and methods for the wider diffusion and dissemination of refugee urban re-settlement experiences.

Over the past two decades, narrative as a form of social research has received growing attention (Andrews, 2007; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Goodley,

2004). Many scholars have pointed to the complexity of this form of research and how working productively within this complexity is a challenge. By choosing to focus on narrative, “we are able to investigate not just how stories are structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means; the mechanisms by which they are consumed; and how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted” (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 2). However, this type of research has its own limitations and difficulties. For instance, narrative research does not offer automatic starting or finishing points. As Andrews et al. contend: “Since the definition of 'narrative' itself is in dispute, there are no self-evident categories on which to focus as there are with content-based thematic approaches, or with analyses of specific elements of language. Clear accounts of how to analyse the data, as found for instance in grounded theory and in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, are rare” (p.1).

While a considerable amount of qualitative research has been conducted in refugee camps (Ager & Agier, 2009; Malkki, 1996), I am interested in qualitative research that studies refugees as city dwellers, which integrates refugee narratives (Blommaert, 2001; Candappa & Egharevba, 2003; Danso, 2002; Dauvergne C. et al., 2006; Grabska, 2006; Jiwani, 2006; Ong, 2003; Williams, 2006)²⁵. Unlike

²⁵ These authors all incorporate interviews with refugees in their respective studies. Dauvergne et al. (2006) interview refugees and key individuals involved in the refugee process in their study on how, when and why gender matters in Canada's refugee determination process. Ong (2003) integrates interviews with Cambodian refugees who reside in Oakland and San Francisco. Jiwani (2006) interviews immigrant and refugee girls and young women of colour living in Canada, growing up in a White dominant society. Grabska (2006) conducts interviews with Sudanese refugees who are settled in Cairo. Danso (2002) examines the initial resettlement of African (Somali and Ethiopian) refugees in Toronto. Williams (2006) studies the social networks of refugees in the UK. Candappa & Igbini (2003) interview refugee youth in London to shed light on their everyday lives. Blommaert (2001) studies refugee narratives related to the refugee process in Europe, by recording interviews with African asylum seekers in Belgium.

some existing literature that neglects refugee voices,²⁶ this project takes a different approach, making a different intervention, as I rely on refugee voices to shape some of the main arguments.

Also informed by qualitative data, Aihwa Ong (2003) illustrates the complexity of citizenship for Cambodian refugees in Oakland and San Francisco, as she integrates excerpts of interviews with refugees who tell her stories of flight and adjusting to a new life in America. Ong focuses on “everyday processes of being-made and self-making in various domains of administration, welfare, church, and working life (p.xvii). She contends that “citizenship is not a matter of acquiring multiple passports or identifying business opportunities, real estate deals, or top universities in global cities, but rather a matter of figuring out the rules for coping, navigating, and surviving the streets and other public spaces of the American city” (p.xiv). Similarly, my aim is to trace refugee journeys, experiences, and movements in everyday urban life, as seen and experienced by refugees. Questions such as how refugees familiarize themselves with their new surroundings, how they move around the city, where they converge socially, and whether or not they participate in Montréal’s civic life are important considerations.

I began the recruitment process upon receiving approval from the McGill Research Ethics Board²⁷ to conduct qualitative research on human subjects. Given

²⁶ While I do not disregard the important contributions made by such studies, I do position my research against literature pertaining to refugees that does not adopt the use of interviews in their methodologies. Examples include Pratt and Valverde’s (2002) article on Somali refugees in Toronto, Richmond’s (2002) discussion of refugee social exclusion and Greenberg’s (2000) work on opinion discourse in Canadian newspapers and the arrival of “illegal” Chinese.

²⁷ See the McGill Ethics Board Approval and Approval Renewal documents in appendix at the end of the dissertation.

the sensitive and private nature of the topics discussed, finding research participants was challenging. The primary sampling strategy was snowball sampling²⁸ which relied on referrals, personal contacts with individuals active in refugee advocacy circles, and word of mouth through my existing contacts, such as friends and family. I began my search for informants by soliciting existing contacts and, in the process, established new contacts, thereby widening my database of potential interview candidates. This approach eventually led me to a total of ten individuals who met the research criteria and, most importantly, were willing to discuss their experiences. Naturally, not all ten participants emerged at once. Instead, I collected interviews over a period of time, starting in September of 2008 and finishing in early May of 2009. The lengthy process depended on networking opportunities to obtain references, such as attending Canadian Council for Refugees consultations in Montréal. Also, it took time to establish contact with potential research respondents to explain the project and confirm their willingness, as well as to coordinate the actual interviews.

In the end, the ten participants recruited were five women and five men from different walks of life, all living in various neighbourhoods on the island of Montréal. The informants' countries of origin are Algeria, Colombia, Congo Brazzaville, Lebanon, Mauritius, Mexico, Pakistan (two individuals), Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. These individuals fled their countries of origin due to persecution

²⁸ Snowball sampling is a form of “non-probability sampling” in which the researcher starts by identifying an individual perceived to be an appropriate respondent. This respondent is then asked to identify another potential respondent. This process is repeated until sufficient data has been collected by the research. See Oliver P. (2006) Snowball Sampling. In *The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods*. Retrieved from DOI:10.4135/9780857020116.

as outlined by the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.²⁹ At the time of the interviews, these research respondents had either been granted permanent resident status or Canadian citizenship. The earliest date of arrival was June of 1989 and the most recent arrival was in October of 2001. Upon their arrival, all claimed refugee status based on various forms of persecution suffered in their country of origin. Some were refused and received deportation orders that they successfully overturned. Others were rejected as refugees but were granted stays on humanitarian and compassionate grounds (H&C). A few did succeed in their appeal for refugee status. At the time of the interviews the respondents' ages ranged from early twenties to late sixties. The interviews were conducted either in French or English, depending on the level of comfort of each respondent. Interview meetings took place in the location of the participant's choice, usually their home, but other locations, such as cafés, community centres were also common. I did not know any of the individuals prior to the interviews. I was a complete stranger probing them with very personal questions and asking them to revisit traumatic and disturbing events in their lives and difficult re-settlement experiences. Telling these highly intimate and painful stories represents a great gesture of trust on their behalf, and hearing them was a privilege that I could not

²⁹ As previously outlined, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is the key legal document in defining who is a refugee, and outlining their rights and the legal obligations of states. It is important to add that the 1967 Protocol removed geographical and temporal restrictions from the Convention. According to the Convention, a refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries. See the United Nations refugee agency: <http://www.unhcr.org>

abuse or exploit. In order to protect their identity and honor the trust they granted me, the respondents' real names are not used.³⁰

The interviews were semi-structured as the questionnaire generally contained close to twenty open-ended questions, which covered issues such as refugee claimant experiences at the border, immediately upon arrival, their reception and initial impressions of the city and of the people they met, and whether they encountered any hostility. The same questionnaire was used for all participants, with interviews conducted either in French or English.³¹ Also, the respondents were asked to describe, among other aspects of urban re-settlement, their everyday life, namely the state of being in limbo, which I refer to a state of “in-betweenness” throughout the dissertation. Other questions addressed were: where they went and what they did to socialize, how they went about circulating in the city, which neighbourhoods they felt more secure in, who they turned to for front-line services, and if they were involved in refugee and immigration activism at all. I also inquired about conditions prior to their departure from their homelands, and proceeded with this topic only if the respondents were willing to revisit that portion of their journeys.

The interviews lasted on average an hour and a half and were recorded with a voice recorder; at least seven of the interviews reached and exceeded two hours. I subsequently transcribed the interviews in their entirety for analysis. In total, this equates to approximately 12 hours of audio recordings (10 interviews of

³⁰ The respondents' names have been replaced by pseudonyms. Using internet search engines, I tried to identify names that originate in the country in question, depending on which country the participant was from.

³¹ See attached copy of interview questionnaire in English and in French, in Appendix.

90 minutes on average) and over 100 pages of transcribed raw data. One of the challenges I encountered with the qualitative method, besides the difficulty of recruitment, is working with the raw and un-categorized data. I had collected hours of conversation that I had to break down into themes and build a theoretical framework around. Therefore, I subsequently undertook the task of organizing, coding and analyzing the collected data. The first step of my analysis consisted of identifying some general themes and patterns, as well as highlighting outstanding experiences in the accounts. Some of the themes that I identified in analyzing the data were experiences that I classified under social inclusion, social exclusion, descriptions of everyday life, realities of having to face lengthy wait times for status and the ensuing “in-betweenness”. Also, I flagged any element in their narratives that pertained to the immigration and refugee determination system, and descriptions of Montréal and how they experienced and perceived the city space. Slowly, common themes and patterns emerged, allowing me to integrate the refugee narratives that shape the first three chapters.

Qualitative research describes the examined phenomenon in the original language of participants, which I consider important to preserve. Including this type of data further humanizes the conditions experienced, rather than engaging solely with theory. Going into the interview process, much like any new journey, I never knew what to expect and tried to minimize my own expectations in order to mitigate the influence of my own personal experiences and biases. Scholars have already acknowledged the multidimensional and unpredictable nature of qualitative research (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2005;

Strauss & Corbin, 1990). What relevant findings, if any, would these interviews yield? In a brief amount of time, I had to instil enough comfort and trust for the respondents to be willing to share their experiences. Reminding them of past painful events and far from smooth re-settlement experiences made some of the respondents visibly vulnerable. I was exposed to narratives that were full of suffering, pain, and disillusionment, but also hope, survival, and proactive stances. Many times, I would stop the tape recorder if the interviewee became overemotional and needed a moment to collect him or herself, only to re-start once they were ready to embark again on their at times surreal stories. In meeting the respondents, it was interesting to observe how some of the interviewees had successfully overcome the precarious situation they once experienced as refugee claimants. On the other hand, others I interviewed were still reeling from the lost time, limited resources, and psychological wounds caused by a delay in obtaining status, years after their cases had been processed. Given the length and the depth of the interviews, as well as the challenges encountered during recruitment, the number of interviews conducted was necessarily limited. As Anna Schmidt (2007) states: “qualitative research based on intensive interaction with often a smaller number of people may be better for identifying problems or patterns *in situ*, clarify or propose causal chains, and be more exploratory” (p.85).

The research methodology used here aims to provide a space where individuals who belong to marginalized populations, such as migrants, can express their everyday conditions and realities (High, 2007; C. Montgomery & al., 2009; Racine, Truchon, & Hage, 2008; Schaffer & Smith, 2004). More

specifically, in terms of research conducted on refugees, O'Neill & Harindranath (2006) have developed a case for theory building based on lived experience using biographical materials, both narrative and visual. Based on research conducted with Bosnian and Afghan refugees in London, UK, the authors argue for the importance of taking a biographical approach to social justice in order to challenge the dominant knowledge/power axis entrenched in current governance policy and media representations relating to forced migration. They write:

“Research methodologies that create spaces for the voices and images of the subaltern - refugees and asylum seekers - through narrative methods can serve not only to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes and hegemonic practices, but can produce critical texts that may mobilize and create ‘real’ change” (p.45). Their work has been transformative for the communities that they have been involved with on three levels: first, by documenting life stories as testimony to suffering and forced displacement. Second, producing art, particularly using auto/biographical visual forms and texts, such as poetry, photography, creative writing, and painting allow refugees to re-present the “unsayable” and their lived experiences. Finally, on practical grounds, combining visual and textual elements supports and fosters the processes of intervention and transformation for both the producers/creators and audiences. The refugees’ work was presented throughout neighbourhood venues, where locals were invited to attend and share food and music, thereby creating “affective change (compassion), ‘inter-cultural bridging’ (cosmopolitanism); and practical steps towards redistribution and recognition” (p.47).

In approaching research subjects, interacting with respondents and conducting actual interviews, I was conscious of my own subject position as a researcher. Having immigrated to Canada with my family in the late 1980s and experienced dislocation, I could relate to a certain extent to what it means to leave one place for another. However, I was also fully aware that the plight of refugees was entirely different from landing in Canada as a permanent resident, or at the time, a “landed immigrant”. Even though persecution or forced displacement was never at the root of my own re-location, nevertheless, I remain sensitive to refugees. As a grandchild of Armenian Genocide survivors, by extension, my experience of relocation is a result of my grandparents’ forced deportation from their homes, which led them to refugee camps in neighbouring countries before they could start a new life. As a result, I am unable to overlook the generational impact of forced migration as it has shaped my life living in the diaspora. It has given me a sense of understanding towards individuals who have been forced to leave their homes, often after suffering important violations of their rights as humans.

For the purpose of this project, I draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s (1996) work on “understanding,” to guide my narrative collection method, in the way that I chose to hear the voices of those who are socially repressed:

Attempting to situate oneself in the place the interviewee occupies in the social space in order to understand them as necessarily what they are... [T]o take their part...is not to effect that ‘projection of oneself into the other’ of which the phenomenologists speak. It is to give oneself a general and genetic comprehension of who the person is, based on the

(theoretical or practical) command of the social conditions of existence and the social mechanisms which exert their effects on the whole ensemble of the category to which the person belongs. (p. 22-23)

Many of the collected stories speak for themselves and therefore I took the liberty of integrating longer excerpts, as the content proved to be revelatory and expressed in a language that came directly from the refugee claimants. This is not to say that the narratives are unmediated. The mere fact that I have organized the narratives based on my theoretical framework and was unable to include everything that was said undeniably brings in my own subjective choices, which can be seen in the general structure chosen for this dissertation. Before providing an overview of this project, I will consider some of the main facets of the research that has previously been conducted on refugees residing in Montréal.

Previous research on refugees in Montréal

The social, legal, psychological, cultural and economic factors that influence the experiences of refugees, namely based on the determination system, are numerous. Some of these studies were conducted in Montréal. Marie Lacroix (2004) has examined the social construction of refugees based on empirical research. She conducted interviews with eight male refugee claimants from various parts of Africa in order to understand how refugee policy shapes refugee claimant subjectivity or “refugeeness”. In considering the major realms of life—i.e., work, family, and state—she argues that understanding refugee claimant subjectivity is in large part delineated by Canadian refugee policy. From a legal perspective, the complexity of determining “refugeehood” has also been

examined by a number of other researchers. Rousseau, Crépeau, et al. (2002) have studied forty cases that had been rejected by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB)³² between 1999 and 2000 using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The authors discovered numerous issues affecting the role and behaviour of all actors involved in the refugee determination process, from evaluating evidence, assessing credibility, and conducting hearings, to issues of handling trauma and strong emotional reactions, poor knowledge of the political context, as well as cultural misunderstanding or insensitivity. The authors point out that in many of examined cases, the legal, psychological and cultural dimensions combined have a negative impact upon Immigration Board Members' ability to evaluate credibility and upon the overall way in which hearings are conducted.

In terms of other important refugee participatory research, a project started in 2005 called "Family Novel" headed by Catherine G. Montgomery (2009) conducted work with thirty newly established families in Montréal. The idea was to have refugee and immigrant families write a book about their migrant life trajectories, allowing families to communicate together and build a sense of continuity between their past and current lives in a new country following traumatic experiences and events. Forced migration, in particular, is seen as a series of ruptures, particularly traumatizing for children if the circumstances of departure were marked by war, enrolment as child soldiers, sexual assault, massacres, and famine. Such rupture is exacerbated if the integration process in

³² The Immigration Refugee Board (IRB) members are the individuals appointed by the government who make decisions on refugee claimants' cases.

the country of arrival is hostile and difficult. Montgomery et al. (2011) therefore propose the “Family Novel” as an important tool for making interventions in migrant children’s lives, particularly for training purposes within social work.

It is impossible to overlook the psychological and psychiatric implications of the refugee condition. Cecile Rousseau’s clinical work based mostly in Montréal pertains to refugee children and adolescents from South East Asia, Central America and Somalia. Rousseau has conducted significant research on mental health interventions for minors who have witnessed organized violence, analyzing, for instance, the positive and negative impacts of school-based intervention programs for children who have lived in war zones (Persson & Rousseau, 2009). Rousseau and her team have also conducted research involving refugee health care and the precarious conditions faced by refugees. Based on a pilot study conducted with health professionals in Montréal, Rousseau’s research has emphasized the priority of assess public health consequences and long-term costs associated with problems in access to health care due to migratory status (C. Rousseau et al., 2002). Similar research on access to social and health services for those who hold precarious status, particularly for women, has also been conducted in Montréal (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2005). From an economic and social work viewpoint, research has been conducted on immigrant workers, including refugees, to document their struggles and analyze them within the context of neoliberal globalization and the international and national labour markets, based on interviews conducted with migrants residing in Montréal (Choudry, 2009). Revelatory work has also been conducted following advocacy and protest

movements surrounding refugees, such as research documenting the “No One Is Illegal March”, when refugees without status and their allies walked from Montréal to Ottawa to demand status from the government (Racine et al., 2008).

As this brief description of some of the existing literature demonstrates, my project draws on research from a number of different fields and is highly interdisciplinary in nature. I base my research on sources from sociology, social work, urban studies, policy studies, refugee studies, cultural studies, immigration studies, documentary theatre, and literature on alternative citizenship, as well as research methods based on qualitative research and narrative inquiry. I build a theoretical framework around the narratives I collected, drawing on various disciplines and bodies of literature. As a result, I am committed to a highly interdisciplinary approach throughout the project that bridges the social sciences and humanities, interwoven with narratives, and based on everyday life theory. I assign particular importance to refugee voices, as I integrate the narratives that I collected, as well as the narratives found in Montréal-based theatrical texts related to refugees. This approach of examining the phenomenon grounded in the actual words and language used by refugee claimants themselves, whether in theatrical representations or actual interviews, not only humanizes refugee claimants’ experiences, but also provides detailed accounts of what occurs on the ground and the impact waiting for status has on refugee claimants.

Project roadmap

In Chapter One, I argue that social exclusion for refugee claimants in Montréal is characterized by *systemic exclusion*: a significant degree of social exclusion emerges as refugee claimants navigate a complex web of refugee policy and bureaucratic systems,³³ often with minimal support. I isolate the manifestations of social exclusion based on the material (goods, services) and non-material conditions (xenophobia, racism) that influence the everyday lives of refugee claimants. After outlining the steps required for making a refugee claim in Canada, I highlight the system's strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, however, my focus in Chapter One is underlining which regulations of the refugee determination system and its associated administrative decisions contribute to the exclusion of refugee claimants. This exclusion is pronounced within the material realm of refugee claimants' lives. They experience difficulties accessing their basic rights, such as securing their status as refugees, finding a job, pursuing their education and obtaining adequate medical attention. I argue that much of these barriers are at the ground level, meaning at the administrative levels of the system. As I identify the roots of refugee claimants' everyday experiences as recounted by the claimants themselves, I trace these experiences back to federal and provincial refugee policy based on primary research within government documents. I demonstrate how refugee claimants encounter administrative red tape-finding themselves reduced to "big files"- as well as meeting obstacles in accessing the

³³ See appendix depicting the steps in how to make a refugee claim in Canada (Dauvergne C. et al., 2006).

basic rights that refugee claimants are entitled to under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, as the collected interviews revealed, refugee claimants are not always granted the rights which they are entitled to automatically or with great ease.

The second portion of the chapter focuses on non-material conditions, as I introduce social exclusion on a *symbolic* level. By non-material conditions of social exclusion, I am referring specifically to instances of xenophobia experienced by refugee claimants that surface during everyday interpersonal exchanges. As a result, social exclusion functions not only within bureaucratic and administrative systems, but also can manifest itself in discourses, ideologies, and behavior unfolding during everyday encounters. Carrying diverse cultures, races, religions, facing language barriers, holding different family names and even speaking with uncommon accents leave refugee claimants marginalized, as many have been treated with hostility, making them feel inferior, foreign and as if they do not belong in the city.

In addition to manifestations of social exclusion based on the refugee narratives my inquiries lead to in this chapter, I look at examples of official Canadian refugee policy and exclusionary practices during the twentieth century, particularly during the Second World War. I argue that, since Canada is a country built on immigration as a white settler colony with long-standing immigration policies favoring White Protestants of British origin, such historic exclusionary immigration practices related to refugees are embedded in racist and xenophobic discourses. Such historical insights are therefore crucial to consider when

examining some of the current policies and public perceptions associated with refugees, both negative and positive. Ultimately, by tracing everyday experiences of material social exclusion to federal and provincial policy systems, and by demonstrating how xenophobia emerges in overt and implicit ways in claimants' lives, I argue that the social exclusions of refugee claimants in Montréal unfolds on both systemic and symbolic levels.

In Chapter Two, I demonstrate how social exclusion and inclusion unfold simultaneously and overlap in the everyday lives of refugee claimants, as they wait for their status to be determined. In this chapter, I challenge the focus on marginalization and the stereotypes commonly associated with refugee claimants, labeling them as passive and abusers of the system. Based on collected refugee narratives, I propose a closer look at the critical period during which refugee claimants residing in Montréal wait for their status to be determined. I demonstrate how this temporal and spatial “in-betweenness” experienced by claimants can frequently become a moment and site that engenders social inclusion, as claimants become proactive and take on legitimate political and social actions. I argue that such pathways of agency and engagement produce informal and alternative modes and practices of citizenship. By establishing their “right to the city” (to borrow from Henri Lefebvre, Kofman, & Lebas, 1996), their social and political involvement in their communities, I argue that refugee claimants create instances of inclusivity that institute their agency, civic engagement and belonging in the city, thereby generating modes and practices of informal citizenship.

The interviews reveal how time is suspended for refugee claimants, as they wait for the outcome of their cases; some are even spatially confined, living in church sanctuary in order to avoid deportation. Nevertheless, I contend that asylum seekers do not always passively wait. Instead, these “non-citizens” manage to create pockets of inclusivity and belonging to the community, as well as moments where they carve out their own agency on their own terms despite major obstacles. Very often, with strong social networks of support in place, refugees experience instances of leisure, reprieve, and community involvement through volunteering in the community. Such legitimate social acts help break the uncertainty and isolation that accompanies the process of claiming refugee status. Moreover, these occasions of social participation and conviviality are combined with moments of political mobilization in the city; I address some of the workings of the refugee activism networks in Montréal. Although regarded by some as disruptive, occupying the space of immigration offices or street space in front of these buildings during protests, represent types of actions which can be viewed as tactics that help asylum seekers lay their own claim to the city.

In sum, I describe some of the political and social roles taken on by refugee claimants in Montréal and how movements of conviviality and activism allow them to carve out their own agency and create a sense of belonging within the city. In doing so, I highlight the individual and collective contributions made by refugee claimants, as well as their participation in community life, a less explored facet within experiences of urban refugee re-settlement. Such an

approach destabilizes some common misconceptions about refugee claimants that label them as passive or as abusers of the system.

Chapter Three addresses the everyday movement and presence of refugee claimants in the city based on theories of everyday life in the city. First, I acknowledge the existential condition of the immigrant as defined by Abdelmalek Sayad (1999, 2004). His concept of the “double absence” which immigrants may face views them as being absent from both the place of origin and the place of arrival. Although Sayad’s concept is foundational in understanding migration, I invert his notion and introduce what I refer to as “double presence”. Besides acknowledging absence, this approach highlights the presence of migrants in their new dwelling place. In order to make my argument, I first reflect on the migratory stage of departure to reveal some key elements tied to narratives of forced departure. Particularly, how do the circumstances and experiences of departure extend to the everyday lives of refugee claimants once they begin the re-settling process? What impact do their departures have on them once re-settled? Moreover, how do my research respondents frame and articulate their memories of their places of origin? The narratives revealed three main themes related to departure. First, an unwillingness to leave their countries of origin; second, the comparisons they draw between the difficult conditions in their cities or regions of origin and the relative calm found in Montréal; and third, one of the major challenges accompanying departure, a lack of documentation necessary for crossing international borders.

In the second portion of this chapter, I argue for “double presence”, as I examine how physical presence and refugees’ movement throughout urban space allows refugee claimants to create room for themselves in the city. I trace the ways in which refugee claimants navigate and narrate the city on their own terms, with a particular emphasis on the act of walking, as theorized by Michel de Certeau (1984). I consider the practice of walking in the city to be of particular significance, as pedestrian movements offer new and creative possibilities for refugee claimants in terms of shaping their perceptions, besides being an unconventional way of claiming both agency and their place in the city. My contention is that through the act of walking and by narrating how they circulate in the city, refugee claimants re-write their routes, thereby re-affirming their presence in the city. This advances the possibility of what I describe as a “double presence”, firstly in terms of their actual physical presence in the city, as well as their movement throughout urban space, and secondly due to the experiences of carrying memories and a place of origin with them as they live in their new dwelling place. Such an approach does contrast with the emigration process which Sayad astutely observes as an occurrence of “double absence”. Rather than focus solely on absence in experiences of re-settlement, I deem it necessary to examine the opportunities refugee claimants take to re-affirm their presence in the city, which are seldom addressed in studies of urban refugee re-settlement. My approach centered on the “everyday” and on activities considered trivial, such as walking, allowing recognition of a less explored type of presence in the city as experienced by refugee claimants. Furthermore, this challenges the reliance on

notions of absence and exclusion that are commonly associated with the refugee predicament.

The fourth chapter shifts away from my collected interviews and considers refugee testimonies found in urban cultural productions, specifically in theatrical texts based on refugee and immigrant narratives in the city. Through a textual analysis of two Canadian plays, written in French, *Montréal La Blanche* (2004) based on actual migrant narratives and *Bashir Lazhar* (2004, 2011) based on research on previous refugee cases, I reflect on how these theatrical texts offer alternative voices that represent experiences of social inclusion and exclusion, as well as “in-betweenness” associated with the complexity of the refugee condition in Montréal. Surprisingly, very little has been written about these scripts. Such texts are significant interventions in urban cultural production as they allow for less exposed migrant voices to be heard on stage. Furthermore, they provide opportunities for open dialogue around refugees, as presentations were typically followed by a discussion. The choice of theatre as a form of urban cultural production is based on the characteristics and repercussions of theatre as an art form in the Montréal’s multicultural arena and as an artistic and social mediator of culture and politics in the city. Incorporating elements of documentary theatre as a genre, these plays offer an important space where realities related to refugees, as expressed by migrants themselves, are presented. I conducted an analysis of the main protagonists presented in these theatrical texts. As many common themes and existential nuances associated with displacement are brought up in these theatrical texts, one of the most significant aspects found in the plays is, in my

view, the instances of social inclusion carried out by the characters in both scripts. The characters in both plays express and enact a willingness to belong and participate in their local and national communities, by taking on proactive social and political roles. As such, the strict focus on refugee marginalization is shifted away from the common stereotypes, as new openings and ways to see refugees emerge through these two scripts.

Finally, the conclusion will highlight some of the contributions this dissertation makes to various fields of knowledge, as well as summarizing the main findings. I am drawn to what is not always readily spoken or blatant. There are countless untold stories of forced migration and urban re-settlement floating around the city, as the primary concern of such city dwellers is daily survival. What follows in this dissertation is far from a comprehensive account of experiences of refugee urban re-settlement. However, it hopefully provides the groundwork for inquiries about the inclusive instances refugee claimants frequently create, and presents openings for alternative and informal modes of citizenship carried out by this segment of the population. My dissertation supports the idea that refugee claimants as an active presence in Montréal cannot be overlooked. In framing this research through a highly interdisciplinary lens, I consider the emerging tensions between social exclusion and inclusion experienced by refugee claimants residing in Montréal, based on their own narratives. In addition to examining some of the administrative impediments, hostility, the social and existential realities that refugee claimants confront, I also highlight the contributions refugee claimants make to city life, as instances of

inclusivity often created on their own terms. At the very least, I hope that the following chapters offer characterizations of refugee claimants that go beyond the usual prejudices, stereotypes, and labels commonly associated with individuals forcefully displaced from their homes.

Chapter 1

I. Social exclusion in everyday life: Regulating and relegating refugee claimants

“When I came to Canada as a refugee claimant 12 years ago, I felt stripped of my identity. For the longest while I considered myself an immigrant and not part of the Canadian or Québécois society. I came into a land where I did not know how to speak the language. For the first few months when I was going through the immigration process, I always had this big file with all my papers and identification in it. I felt boxed in, like being a refugee claimant was all that I was and felt inferior to everyone else around me. I felt that I did not belong” (Grace. M, 2012, student essay).

Introduction

This paragraph vividly captures some of the subjectivities and difficulties experienced by refugee claimants on an everyday basis. They navigate a complex web of bureaucratic systems, traversing the various levels of the Canadian refugee determination process, often with insufficient support. Phrases like “stripped of my identity”, being “boxed in” and “not belong[ing]” point to some of the problematic characteristics of the refugee determination system, and to claimants’ experiences of exclusion and confinement to the margins of the city. The words cited above are extracted from a student’s paper (with her full permission) which was assigned in the context of a CEGEP¹ Humanities course I taught in 2012 entitled “Understanding Migration: Fallacies and Facts.”² This particular

¹ CEGEP is the Québec junior college system and the name of post-secondary collegiate institutions throughout the province. The acronym stands for *Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel*, or in English “General and Vocational college”.

² The aim of this Humanities course which I developed was to investigate a number of the influential claims about immigrants, refugees, and migration in general. By critically assessing the

Anglophone CEGEP, located at the North-West end of Montréal has a highly plural student population. At the beginning of the semester, in an effort to sensitize the class to the realities of migration and connect them to the topic, I asked students to write a short reflexive paper about the impact of migration on their and their families' lives. The majority of the students, recent immigrants themselves, had directly experienced some form of migration and were acutely conscious of the changes that this type of movement causes in terms of dependence, generational impact, freedom, class, desires, and habits. Others, who were second or third generation immigrants revealed that they were not always aware of their parents or grandparents' migration experiences to Canada, and therefore were encouraged to interview them for the purpose of this short assignment. On the other hand, students whose families had been in Canada for several generations often related their experiences of moving from one province to another, or one city to another, defining these moves as being life-altering. They also discussed their impressions of living in a multicultural city such as Montréal. It was interesting to see the latter group of students become aware of the changes that international migration may involve, when confronted with new languages, customs, and surroundings. In fact, a French-Canadian student observed that when she moved from Québec City to Montréal for the first time, she experienced a complete cultural shock. Given her experience, she acknowledged that immigrants or refugees who arrive in Montréal from other

images and texts that appear in mass media related to migration, one of the objectives was to gain insight into how we shape our knowledge related to issues of migration, and the sources we turn to when it comes to understanding different types of migration.

countries may experience similar, if not greater cultural shocks. Ultimately, the idea behind the assignment was to have students pause and reflect about migration and its repercussions for individuals in both the sending country and the receiving country, given the multicultural environment we live in on a daily basis.

The student whose words are cited above fled from Zimbabwe in 2000 as a result of political instability, government forces carrying out intimidation, human rights abuses and economic hardship. This excerpt from her short paper describes what it means to be processed by a system that entails numerous bureaucratic barriers. She concentrated particularly on the affective impact of this system. In a sense, the “big file” she refers to comes to personify her during the process, and resonates with Lacroix’s (2004) idea that “the papers become the material expression of subjectivity: their ‘file’ is who they are in the eyes of the bureaucracy” (p.161). Nevertheless, refugees take important personal and financial risks when they seek asylum in Canada and navigate the immigration system’s intricacies in order to secure status. They do this with the hopes of starting a new life following severe unrest and persecution.

Policy documents and immigration forms tend to be impassive. Procedures are rigid, as immigration constantly categorizes and classifies individuals. Contrary to the rigidity of such systems, human movement is fluid, constantly in flux and triggered by a number of factors that pull or push³ individuals across

³ Castles and Miller (2003) write about the “push and pull” migratory process in their book “The Age of Migration”. The push factors of migration are seen as the factors that propel individuals to leave their country of origin, reasons such as war, political repression, economic woes, and ecological catastrophes. The pull factors, on the other hand, are the reasons that attract individuals to another country, such as employment opportunities, political stability, and availability of land

borders. Immigration bureaucracy is often a maze that refugee claimants are required to navigate, while disoriented by sometimes traumatic displacement. Moreover, many claimants do not speak the official languages fluently and are sometimes ill-guided by fraudulent lawyers through what is already a complex system marked by a series of administrative obstacles. In the meantime, budgets are approved and laws are adopted. Governments struggle with the need to control movement and borders, as well as to fulfill their humanitarian obligations. There is a fine balance to strike. Regardless of their approach, governments spend funds and resources on securing borders in part to appease fear and panic in their countries' populations, who are already suspicious of "outsiders". But what about the lives behind these adopted policies? Who are the individuals who have fled dire situations, and what are their stories and migratory trajectories? Once in Canada, how do they experience exclusion on an everyday basis, due in part to the system and policies in place? A law related to immigration, particularly one that takes a stricter stance towards refugee claimants is likely to make headlines on local and national levels, but the likelihood of hearing how these decisions impact human lives is relatively low. I am therefore interested in exploring the everyday experiences of social exclusion on the ground as a result of refugee policy on the one hand, and instances of xenophobia that refugee claimants experience during everyday interactions on the other.

(p.19-20). Castles and Miller however critique this model as being "individualistic and ahistorical" (p.20) as it does not take into account migratory movements that arise from prior, often historical links, existing between sending and receiving countries based on colonisation, political influence, trade, or cultural ties. For instance, the reason why there is considerable Algerian migration to France (and not to Germany) is due to the French colonial presence in Algeria (p.21).

As stated in the Introduction, this dissertation considers social exclusion in lockstep with social inclusion, particularly in the Chapter Two, *Instances of Refugee Inclusion: Spatial and Temporal Dimensions of Everyday “In-betweenness,”* in which I examine the more nuanced role of social inclusion. However, in this first chapter, I isolate social exclusion and address it theoretically on its own, due to the real structural and institutional barriers that exist in refugee claimants’ lives. How does social exclusion manifest itself in refugee claimants’ everyday experience within bureaucratic and policy systems and procedures? Grounded in the interviews I have conducted for the purpose of this project, one of the objectives of this chapter is to illustrate the labyrinth of policy experience and bureaucracy that refugee claimants confront once they apply for status. In doing so, I highlight how the roots of refugee claimants’ everyday experience can be *traced* back to “policy”, an elusive term that I examine more closely further on in the chapter.

In attempting to qualify the social exclusion of refugee claimants, one important question to consider is, what rights are refugees entitled to as they wait for status, and how do refugees access these rights? The Citizenship and Immigration Canada website stipulates that as refugees “you have certain rights and have access to Canadian services while your claim for refugee protection is being considered. *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* protects all people in Canada.”⁴ Concretely speaking however, how does this access to rights unfold? As I analyzed the collected research respondent interviews, a number of

⁴ See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Refugee claims in Canada — Refugee rights*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-rights.asp>

recurring themes emerged. These themes may be viewed as ongoing key sources of objections and points of contention that were brought up by the respondents, even well after they had been granted permanent residency or citizenship. What were some of the obstacles encountered during the refugee determination process that had a direct impact on their lives? In analysing the collected data, the following are the four major issues that surfaced in several of the narratives: 1) securing status, 2) securing employment, 3) securing education and 4) accessing health care. After organizing refugee claimant narratives in a way that corresponds to these four domains, I then trace their experiences back to the policy scheme to see where barriers in the “system” may arise.

The notion of “security” can be extrapolated from the four domains I have identified above. Security can be understood as a state of safety and certainty. From an etymological point of view, the word security derives from the Latin term *cura*, meaning care (Hoad & Oxford University Press 1993), suggesting that the assurance of security is intertwined with the assurance of care – an idea that strongly resonates with refuge. While waiting for status, refugee claimants can be denied security, as their ability to secure protection, employment (which is necessary if refugees wish to secure adequate housing and material goods), and education and health, at times, are obstructed, due to their lack of status, due to missing documents, as well because of misguided policy. I argue that certain administrative systems related to refugee policy are set up so they interfere with and even impede security and care for refugee claimants, thereby compromising the very idea of refuge and undermining the notion of “refugee,” a person who is

in need of protection. As Cleveland, Aiken and Crépeau (2007) emphasize, it is important to note that under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, “non-citizens are guaranteed most of the same rights as citizens, particularly the right to equality and the right to a fair and just treatment if their life, liberty or personal security are at stake”. This statement has particular significance considering that refugee claimants encounter a number of barriers as they wait for status. During extended wait periods, they are often denied employment opportunities and face limited access to a number of services and health care.

In this chapter I begin by defining the term “social exclusion.” I examine this concept in its broader sense within social and urban studies and how the term was initially used and later developed. Next, I consider the manifestations of social exclusion in the everyday lives of refugee claimants, as they navigate the challenges of securing basic rights, and material needs. I also consider how the notion of social exclusion can apply to refugees and immigrants within Québec and Canada. I then draw on the interviews I collected to identify experiences of social exclusion based on the four specific domains of securing status, employment, education, and health.

After establishing everyday instances of material social exclusion stemming from the immigration system and procedures, I then turn to xenophobia—in other words, to non-material forms of social exclusion. More specifically, I examine some of the interpersonal experiences of social exclusion that emerge in the collected refugee narratives. In describing some of the challenges claimants faced throughout their everyday lives while living without

status, the respondents brought up experiences of racism. They were stigmatized and made to feel “foreign”, besides having difficulties linked to language barriers and having different accents. I argue that these xenophobic acts and exchanges, which consist of encountering anti-refugee and anti-immigrant ideologies and behaviours, have a bearing on refugees’ social exclusion. In fact, these non-material aspects can, in some measure, be informed by popular public discourses. Media and political discourses that problematize refugee claimants contribute to refugee marginalization. Considering that social exclusion of refugees is in part influenced by refugee policy, I highlight some historic exclusionary practices in Canadian immigration policy during the 20th century, particularly during the Second World War. I argue that, over time, such policies have fueled anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiments that still prevail today, as the government embraces an increasingly harsh immigration policy, besides imposing certain draconian measures on refugees. Although I provide a brief glimpse into contemporary and historical immigration policy in this chapter, I remain primarily interested in the everyday exclusion of refugee claimants on the ground.

Defining social exclusion

There are a myriad debates and definitions surrounding social inclusion and exclusion, from scholars asking philosophical questions about exclusion, to policy makers wondering what types of interventions should be made to ensure social inclusion. The notion of social exclusion first emerged in European social welfare circles. The term itself was popularized by French social theorist René Lenoir (Davies, 2005, p. 4). The concept of social exclusion deriving from French

social thought, it is primarily concerned with the relationship between members of society and the nation-state (Beall, 2002, p. 44). Lenoir's deliberations in *Les exclus: un français sur dix* (1974) shows another side of an opulent France, which he refers to as «l'autre France», where one out of ten French people is perceived as an "exclu", "other", or an outcast, disconnected from mainstream society, not only due to poverty but also to poor health and geographic isolation (Davies, 2005, p.4). He traces this back to the post-war transition from rural and agrarian societies to the development of urban areas in France. Lenoir (1974) describes "the others" who were historically disregarded by the social contract of the French Republic as persons who were inept, marginal or asocial due to a physical or mental weakness, psychological behavior, or lack of training. They were unable to fend for themselves, required constant assistance and, furthermore, were perceived as a threat to society (Lenoir, p. 10).

Lenoir argues that those individuals who are "marginalized from formal labour markets and welfare benefits experienced a rupture of the social bond that constituted the undergirding of both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship" (Beall, 2002, p.45). He contends that intervention and prevention can help alleviate problems caused by the *exclus*, proposing that the city is the ideal space for prevention to unfold, as it is a rich space – both in terms of providing refuge and as a place of exchange between humans and ideas (ibid, p.41). His solution, in line with social democratic remedies during the 1970s, amounted to increasing public investment and redistribution, but also empowering "les exclus" through

civil and democratic renewal measures to re-engage these individuals with the mainstream (Davies, p.4, 2005).

Interestingly, in his discussion of which groups are excluded, Lenoir makes reference to migrants living in France. He isolates French Muslims as another vulnerable group. He cites French statistics from 1973 demonstrating Algerian migrants' dependence on the State for housing and social assistance. He maintains that the children of Algerian migrants feel rejected both by the French community and by other Algerian migrants, leading them to be excluded. As a consequence, they pose a threat of revolt. Lenoir describes the marginality of North Africans in French society, and concludes that all the required conditions are in place to increase the core of revolted and inept individuals (1974, p.16). His disconcerting statement written in the 1970s has particular resonance if we consider the civil unrest that took place in the suburbs of Paris in 2005 and 2007.⁵ "Les émeutes des banlieues" (the riots in the suburbs) in both instances were triggered by the deaths of youth involving the police, as well as increased frustration in certain neighborhoods, where disfranchised youth are seen as immigrants by the population, despite being born in France. Some mainstream media outlets focused on the destructive and delinquent forces involved in the riots, as opposed to probing the complex issues and leaning away from negative and sensational media coverage.

⁵ See In Depth - France Riots: Understanding the Violence. (2007, November 28). Retrieved from http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/paris_riots/

Urban outcasts

There is a large body of literature on the social exclusion of urban immigrants and refugees that only addresses their marginalization. However, it is important to realize that these inhabitants actively partake in civic and city life and are involved in creating their own inclusivity, as this dissertation argues. Nevertheless, the social exclusion of migrants, especially in economic terms remains at the forefront. Refugees are perceived as an excluded population in the city, because they do not hold official citizenship and often may even have an ephemeral presence in the city. Refugee claimants are transient in nature after all; the threat of deportation constantly hovers over them until their case has been reviewed and a final decision has been made by immigration officials. In the meantime, refugees are generally perceived as overly dependent on the system and remain on the margins of the city due to their lack of status. The research on social exclusion of refugees is more extensive than that done on social inclusion, despite the fact that when examined, refugees actively contribute to city life, at times perhaps more than the average citizen.

In my efforts to discover how refugees are active agents in the city and how they manage to carve out their agency, it quickly became clear that revolt, as Lenoir presents it, is not the only option for those facing marginalization. The examples of positive and proactive actions taken by refugees throughout the interviews are ample and telling. They demonstrate that refugees are capable of managing their agency and in turn, rather than merely “draining” the system, they

are in fact contributing to the community, as the subsequent chapter argues. Through establishing social networks, acts of volunteerism, and political activism, refugees come to assert themselves and establish a place for themselves in the city. Thus, it is impossible and futile to dismiss refugee presence in the city, writing them off as a “here today, gone tomorrow” group of people, because while they are here, they have an everyday life, just like anyone else, complete with opportunity and hope, as well as deception and hardship.

It is easy and safe to place certain ethnic groups (those deemed “different”, who do not fit the embedded “ideal”) within the socially excluded category, reducing and limiting the existence of these groups to simple revolts, much as Lenoir frames Algerians in France during the 1970s. Even today, similar reductive and narrow discourses continue to circulate in representations of certain migrant groups by local media.⁶ In fact, over the past few decades, media have helped shape public perception of ethnic and migrant communities abroad as well as in Canada (Karim, 1993),⁷ by perpetuating certain myths, making automatic

⁶ The way Tamil migrants are portrayed by some media is narrow and perpetuates stigma. When a vessel carrying 490 migrants arrived on the shores of British Colombia in August 2010, Public Safety minister Vic Toews was quick to state that those on board were “suspected human smugglers and terrorists.” See Tamil migrants to be investigated: Toews. (2010, August 13). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2010/08/13/bc-tamil-ship-migrants-esquimalt.html>

Such statements, along with allegations of Tamil migrants being bogus refugees, particularly in Op-Ed pieces published in more right-leaning media, can reinforce the automatic link between Tamils and crime, as opposed to presenting a more broad and in-depth analysis. See Levant, E. (2010, August 22).

Tamils playing us for fools. *Toronto Sun*. Retrieved from <http://www.torontosun.com/comment/columnists/2010/08/20/15091486.html>. A more comprehensive approach would entail assessing the socio-political situation in Sri Lanka at the time. Also, we must highlight the importance of each case being heard, which is one of the strengths of Canada’s system of refugee determination, as each refugee on board the vessel has a right to individual refugee determination.

⁷ Karim Karim (1993) writes about how dominant, oppositional, alternative, and populist discourses come to compete with each other through their respective uses of ethnocultural terminology when developing inclusive or exclusive symbolic constructions of Canadian society.

assumptions, and by replaying images that characterize the idea of revolt. With sensationalist images often presented by certain media without adequate context, migrant and racial revolt has commonly been seen as the only outcome or option of marginalized individuals in cities. In reality, the situations surrounding these events are highly complex; they are part of a differentiated reality that cannot be reduced to looping television images of burning vehicles, police forces descending on “delinquent youth”, and shops being looted by visible minorities. The highly mediatized events of the L.A riots in 1992, the unrest in the Parisian *banlieues* in 2005 and 2007, the Montréal North riots in 2008 and the London riots in 2011 are often presented, by various mainstream media, as the violent outbursts of those who are socially excluded, who urgently need to be contained. Most mainstream media outlets view these issues and “outbursts” as one-dimensional instead of understanding that these events are in reality connected to the complex and intersecting racial, economic, and cultural realities and policies of a particular society. Furthermore, we must assess the immigration integration models and policies of the society in question in order to engage in meaningful dialogue around these issues.

In this vein, Loïc Wacquant (2008) argues that urban marginality “is not everywhere woven of the same cloth” (p. 1) as he compares the black ghetto of the United States and the working-class *banlieue* of France. His stance reinforces the inherent complexities of each city as Wacquant observes that “the *generic*

He points out that “marginalization of minority groups regularly takes place in Canadian newspapers.” Karim also suggests that more “polyvalent approaches” should be sought in order to avoid splitting major issues into the exclusive dichotomies of “English and French Canada,” “aboriginals and non-aboriginals,” and “visible minorities and non-visible minorities.”

mechanisms that produce it (urban marginality) like the *specific forms* it assumes, become fully intelligible once one takes caution to embed them in the historical matrix of class, state and space characteristic of each society at a given epoch” (p.2). Therefore to reduce the voices of those who are socially excluded to voices of violence and destruction amounts to blatant oversimplification and overlooks the “historical matrix” Wacquant identifies. This narrow conflation of social exclusion and violence is common within the urban context, where the co-existence of diverse populations can sometimes result in tensions. While examining what specifically causes refugees to be socially excluded, to consider social exclusion alone does not provide the full picture of refugees living in the city. Instead, through their everyday life and existence, instances of social inclusion emerge; however, such narratives are rarely emphasized by the media or brought to the public’s attention.

Social exclusion in Canada and Québec

Before addressing how social exclusion has surfaced within social debates in Québec and Canada, it is worth examining the evolution of the term in Europe, considering that the European Union had listed social exclusion as being one of their three main socio-economic research priorities in 1995 (McAll, 1995). The term social exclusion was eventually picked up by the European Commission, where social exclusion within political communities and discussions of state policy has commonly been associated with poverty. However, Third Way

governments,⁸ in particular, Tony Blair's New Labour Government in the United Kingdom, reformulated the definition of poverty in the 1990s, no longer defining it solely in terms of material deprivation, in its effort to combat social exclusion (Davies, 2005; Smith & Orsini, 2007, p. 2). Blair himself saw social exclusion as different from poverty, yet related to it. In the PM's words, people who are socially excluded "do not have the means, material and otherwise, to participate in social, economic, political and cultural life."⁹ These individuals may be cut off from the activities that define normal life for most Britons within the realms of work, school, and family life. They may lack means of transportation, adequate housing, even a telephone. In 1997, PM Blair launched a special "Social Exclusion Unit" which focused on poor housing estates, the problems of children who are expelled from school or are truant, and homelessness.¹⁰ Blair's New Labour Government in the UK included efforts to involve citizens in the policy-making process (Orsini & Smith, 2007, p.2). This policy has been described as "a sophisticated strategy for social justice/inclusion", with an emphasis on "common membership" and not just greater redistribution, but an aim to integrate "Thatcher's lost generation" back into the social mainstream (Davies, p. 22-23, 2005). Beyond poverty, another way of framing social exclusion is based on access and rights. Joint-Lambert (1995) sees social exclusion as referring to "the processes by which people are evicted from spaces they previously occupied or

⁸ The Third Way within UK politics has been framed as favouring growth, entrepreneurship, and wealth creation but also focusing on greater social justice, seeing the state as playing an important role in bringing this about. See UK Politics: What is the Third Way? (1999, September 27). Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/458626.stm>

⁹ See Tony Blair's Big Idea. (1997, December, 4). Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/108133>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

are deprived of rights or access in the first place” (In Beall, p. 44). More locally, Christopher McAll (1995) conducted empirical research on 100 individuals¹¹ who received financial assistance in Montréal between 1988 and 1994, arguing that those who fit the condition of socially excluded live ‘outside the city walls’. He integrates the idea of ‘territory’ and the fact that the collective appropriation of resources within a given territory is the basis of a number of social inequalities. Differential access to certain rights is imposed within that same territory (p.83), particularly if one belongs to a different group, either in terms of physical differences or cultural differences (p.84). For instance, his study reveals that black women, who represented 29% of his research sample, encountered discrimination when trying to find housing. McAll mentions the explicit signs of exclusion, which include doors being closed, lights being shut off (in particular when a black woman approaches to inquire about an apartment), and apartments that are suddenly no longer available for rent (p.88).

Much of the literature around social exclusion and inclusion in relation to cities treats each construct independently, while acknowledging the need for social inclusion to remedy and overcome social exclusion (Beall, 2002; Cass, Shove, & Urry, 2005; Lenoir, 1974). In their efforts to study ways to make Toronto a more inclusive city, Viswanathan et al. (2003) express concern about the conceptualization of social inclusion as a “linear progression” originating from a state of social exclusion and ending in one of inclusion. Viswanathan et al. argue that such a framework presents social inclusion as an outcome or a set of principles (p.2). The authors argue that “in order to go beyond the definitions of

¹¹ Of the 100 interviewed, immigrants represent 43%.

social inclusion and the barriers reinforcing social exclusion, the discourse on social inclusion needs to be *politicized*. Only then can there be possibilities for discussing how to fully address power differentials and hegemonic structures that reinforce exclusion” (p.6). Although the above literature reviews how naturalized citizens may experience social exclusion and points to ways to overcome this predicament, it is useful to examine such a framework in relation to refugee claimants, considering that most of them eventually become citizens.

When framing discussions of social exclusion of migrants in Canada, the literature also points to a heavy reliance on economic factors, namely the correlation between poverty and low employment rates, and race (Harvey, 2001; Richmond, 2002; Saloojee, 2003). Omidvar and Richmond (2005) document the growing exclusion faced by Canada’s newcomers, stressing the glaring contradiction between official inclusion policies and the reality of growing social exclusion of Canada’s newcomers in the economic sphere and in public life in general (p.1). In fact, recent government statistics from 2011 reveal that in Montréal, 47% of people on welfare were born outside of Canada¹². The situation faced by immigrants in terms of welfare seems to be deteriorating in Montréal in particular. The findings show that in January 2011, out of the 125 287 individuals who were on welfare, 59 228 were not born in Canada. Another study conducted in 2009 by the Immigration Ministry shows that 8 out of 10 immigrants who are on welfare hold post-secondary education. Therefore, a considerable number of

¹² See Aide sociale: la situation des immigrants se détériore à Montréal. (2011, April 14). Retrieved from <http://affaires.lapresse.ca/economie/quebec/201104/14/01-4389677-aide-sociale-la-situation-des-immigrants-se-deteriore-a-montreal.php>

immigrants on welfare are educated, but may encounter difficulties finding adequate employment which recognizes their credentials.

Omidvar and Richmond (2005) contend that for immigrants and refugees, “social inclusion requires the full and equal participation in their new country” (p.1). The authors state that for about 40 years following the Second World War, Canada was largely successful in promoting economic integration, which is considered critical to successful newcomer settlement. However, increasingly, Canada’s major cities house an emerging immigrant underclass, consisting mainly of visible minorities. During the last two decades, immigrants and refugees arriving in Canada have been experiencing “severe difficulties in the Canadian labour market” (Omidvar & Richmond, 2005, p.1). As a result, unemployment, underemployment, low wages, poverty and lost hope are a daily reality for many, even though recent immigrants are better educated and more skilled than their predecessors and the average Canadian. Furthermore, a substantial body of evidence indicates income discrimination against visible minority workers (both immigrant and Canadian-born), as well as gender-based salary discrimination for female immigrants (ibid, p.1). There is an important category of immigrants who are selected to settle in Canada on the basis of their qualification for certain occupations or their potential to invest. Ironically, however, once they seek employment in Canada, the qualifications that allowed their admissions are not recognized by employers or professional orders. Low earnings and underutilization of skills were recurring themes throughout the interviews I

conducted, as employers do not recognize foreign education and experience (Reitz, 2001).

Given such socio-economic trends among immigrants, recent scholarship tends to focus mainly on the social exclusion of migrants, predominantly from an economic perspective (Gradstein & Schiff, 2006; Johnston, Vasey, & Markovic, 2009; Mingione, 2004; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006). In his book *Canada's Economic Apartheid: The Social Exclusion of Racialized Groups in the New Century*, Galabuzi (2006) contends that there is a growing racialization of the gap between rich and poor, as he challenges some of the common myths about the economic performance of racialized groups in Canada. This trend is even noticeable in Montréal, where for instance, Montréal's Haitian community is strongly divided in economic terms between the families of professionals who arrived in the 1960s and 1970s and more recent refugee arrivals with low levels of education, who are among the city's underprivileged residents (Germain & Rose, 2000, p. 235).

For individuals claiming refugee status in particular, the years of limbo are often at the root of social exclusion. Many obstacles arise as they seek to secure their status, to find adequate employment and training programs, and to access education, as well as social and health services.

Everyday exclusion and policy

As Marie Lacroix (2004) states, individuals who flee persecution are “not only restricted in their movements and possibility of resettlement, they are also caught up in practices which put them in a state of legal limbo for possibly many

years” (p.147). I approach her idea of “understanding refugeeeness” framed through the lens of social exclusion and inclusion.¹³ Here, in particular, I examine aspects of social exclusion faced by refugee claimants while they wait for status, as they navigate through the intricacies of the Canadian and Québec refugee determination systems and gain access to certain services.

Before elaborating any further on instances of social exclusion, it is important to outline what is meant by the elusive term “policy”. What are the systems in place that guide policy decisions? The government establishes priorities and procedures to achieve certain goals and they do so through making decisions, thus setting public policy. In defining public policy Howlett and Ramesh (2009) examine three definitions. The first by Thomas Dye amounts to “anything a government chooses to do or not to do” (p.6). Seemingly a simple definition, it nonetheless points to the government as the main agent involved in public policy, boiling policy down to the choices made by the government. William Jenkins’s definition is more detailed. He explains policy as “a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where decisions, should, in principle, be within the power of those actors to achieve” (p.6). This definition explicitly points to public policy as a process

¹³ By integrating the notions of social exclusion and inclusion into my theoretical framework, my approach differs from Lacroix’s take on refugeeeness, as she explores refugee subjectivity through empirical research based on three specific spheres of life: work, family, and status.

which involves a number of steps, in other words, a policy cycle that Howlett and Ramesh describe in their book.¹⁴

Furthermore, when public policy is discussed, it usually stems from an issue or issues in society that require attention, such as areas within crime, health care, the environment, or immigration. James Anderson's definition of public policy highlights the connection between government action and the perception of the existence of a problem or concern requiring action. He writes that public policy is "a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern" (p.7). Therefore, when we speak of "policy" more broadly, it involves political actors, instruments (such as tax law, immigration law, regulations, criminal law, etc.) and a series of decisions. In line with this dissertation's focus on refugee claimants, who are the actors involved in determining and executing immigration policy? At what levels are the decisions that have an impact on refugee claimants' everyday lives made?

While talking to my research respondents, it quickly became apparent that even though refugee policy unfolds on several levels, the claimants' everyday encounters with exclusion occurred at the ground levels of policy. By ground levels of policy, I am referring to the levels where administrative decisions play out and bureaucratic barriers are set, thereby having a direct impact on the everyday experiences of refugee claimants, at times positively, and at other times negatively.

¹⁴ In writing about public policy, the authors break down the policy-making process. The five stages in the policy cycle are 1. agenda-setting (problem recognition), 2. policy formulation (proposal of solution), 3. decision-making (choice of solution), 4. policy implementation (putting solution into effect), 5. policy evaluation (monitoring results) (p.11-12).

The policy scheme

There are several levels of governance involved in policy decisions and execution, carried out on the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government within the Canadian political landscape. Here, as a point of departure, I briefly consider the policy system on the federal level. At the top of the scheme is the Governor General (GG) whose role is symbolic. Nonetheless, he or she does grant royal assent to the laws and decisions that are made¹⁵ at the House of Commons (elected by voters) and the Senate (appointed on the Prime Minister's recommendation), which are the highest legislative levels. These laws and decisions are then executed by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, which represent the executive branch.¹⁶ Besides the executive and legislative branches, the third branch of Canada's system of government is the judiciary, which consists of the Supreme Court of Canada, to secure the rights and freedoms of Canadians.¹⁷ To break it down further, below the GG comes the executive level which consists of the Canadian Government, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Ministers. The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration Canada is also at this level, represented by the Minister. Under this Ministry, the legislative level can be found. This level promulgates policy instruments such as the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. This is followed by the Rules and Regulations level,

¹⁵ For instance, on June 28, 2012, Bill C-31 received Royal Assent and became law. See Canadian Council of Refugees. (2012). Canada rolls back refugee protection: Bill c-31 receives Royal Assent [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://ccrweb.ca/en/bulletin/12/06/29>

¹⁶ See pages 28-29 in Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2009). *Study Guide Discover Canada: Rights and Responsibilities- Your Canadian Citizenship Guide* "How Canadians Govern Themselves" [Electronic version]. Retrieved from Government of Canada http://www.canada.com/pdf/discover_canada_eng_37.pdf

¹⁷ Ibid

where various decisions are made, including ways in which rules can be changed, replaced, and revised. Finally at the last level, the administrative mechanisms can be found. This is where the rules, regulations, and their applications are carried out on a day to day basis, provincially or federally. My interest lies primarily in this lower administrative, everyday level. Not only would looking at every level of governance be too large a scope to consider, but also it is at this ground level that refugee claimants have direct interaction with administrative decisions that dictate various obstacles and exclusionary realities.

What are some of the bureaucratic and administrative obstacles that emerge, as expressed in these narratives? The following portion of this chapter addresses the instances of everyday exclusion unfolding at the administrative levels, as narrated by the research respondents. Based on primary research within government documents, and through investigative work I conducted, my aim is to trace the experiences the respondents recounted to the various aspects and levels of the refugee policy system. I examine four domains in particular, in accordance with the central themes that emerged in many of the narratives. The four domains are: first, securing status, second, securing employment, third securing education, and finally accessing health care given refugees' precarious status.

Before proceeding to the steps required to make a refugee claim in Canada and to an examination of refugee narratives, I consider Sassen's framing of immigration with regards to policy. She identifies immigration as the second major institution for membership in the modern nation-state, after citizenship. Framed as "alienage", she sees the immigrant or the "alien" constructed in law,

and through policy, as a partial subject (2006, p. 293). Therefore, what does it mean for one's sense of full personhood to be excluded when there are systems set in place, such as the refugee determination processes?

Making a refugee claim in Canada

Before proceeding with more detailed accounts of exclusion, however, I must outline the steps required to make a refugee claim in Canada. This will highlight the aspects of the refugee determination system that contribute to a heightened degree of exclusion based on the respondents experiences explored throughout this chapter. Catherine Dauvergne & al. (2006) have studied gender biases in the Canadian refugee determination system, particularly investigating the changes brought in by the 2002 Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) following the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. They highlight “the layers of vulnerability”, such as racialization, poverty, age, health, and sexual identity, that overlap and intersect when looking at aspects of the process that affect men and women differently. Besides issues pertaining to gender, the authors' central emphasis in studying the process of making a refugee claim in Canada, relies on the process's “length and variability”. In fact, the refugee determination process's “length and variability” certainly do have an important and direct impact on the claimants' everyday life experiences, as the collected interviews reveal.

First, how do refugees make a claim? There are two ways of making a claim upon arriving in Canada. Individuals can make a claim when they first enter

Canada, at any point of entry (at the border, an airport, or a seaport).

Alternatively, they can make a claim at a Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) office after entering the country. The next step is an eligibility screening interview with a Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), or a CIC official, either immediately or at a return appointment. At this point, some claimants may be subject to immigration detention, particularly if their identity papers are missing or if they pose a threat to national security.¹⁸ If the officer determines that the claim is eligible, the officer will send it to the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB). If the officer does not make a decision within three working days, the claim is automatically referred to the IRB for consideration.¹⁹ The IRB is an independent, quasi-judicial body that decides on refugee claimant cases after conducting hearings.²⁰ During this time, a very small number of individuals are detained²¹ as they wait for their hearing, despite research demonstrating that even short term detention has a negative impact on refugee claimants' mental health (Cleveland, Rousseau & Kronick, 2012). After this referral, claimants have 28 days to file a form detailing

¹⁸ As part of their enforcement of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), officers of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) have the authority to arrest permanent residents and foreign nationals who have, or who may have, breached the IRP Act. According to the Canada Border Services Agency, individuals can be detained if they pose a danger to the public, if their identity is in question or if there is reason to believe that they will not appear for immigration proceedings. See the Canada Border Services Agency. (2012). *Arrests and Detentions*. Retrieved from CBSA <http://www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/media/facts-faits/007-eng.html>

¹⁹ See Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. (2012). *Process for Making a Claim for Refugee Protection*. Retrieved from IRB <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/brdcom/references/procedures/Pages/ProcessClaOct.aspx>

²⁰ The IRB is an independent decision making body and therefore does not fall directly under the Federal policy scheme I described. It can be viewed as an entity located to the side of the policy scheme, because it represents a quasi-judicial independent administrative tribunal. See Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. (2012). *About the Board*. Retrieved from <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/brdcom/abau/Pages/Index.aspx>

²¹ See footnote number 18 for reasons of detainment and on who has the authority to detain migrants.

their claim for refugee status, also known as the PIF (Personal Information Form), although the recently adopted Bill C-31 has considerably shortened this time frame, rendering refugees more vulnerable to rejection and deportation.²² Once the Immigration and Refugee Board receives this form from the CIC or CBSA and a security clearance is made, a hearing date is set (Dauvergne & al. 2006).

The refugee determination hearing is the critical part of the process. Across the country, hearings take place in IRB offices located in Montréal, Toronto, Ottawa, Vancouver and Calgary, or by video conference. The decisions are usually made orally at the closing of the hearing, or in writing, after the hearing. The refugees who are successful in their claims can move on to apply for permanent residence and family reunion if they have family members who are not in Canada. The individuals who were unsuccessful—whose claims have been rejected—still have three options. First, if the claimants are told to leave Canada, they may apply to stay under a process called the “pre-removal risk assessment.” In this case, an officer reviews documents related to the case, as well as any further evidence that demonstrates that the claimant’s safety and lives are at risk upon their return to their country of origin. A second option if the claimant has

²² Ever since Bill C-31 was introduced and received Royal Assent in June 2012, legal experts and refugee advocacy organizations have been expressing concerns about the proposed changes which include: impossibly tight timelines for preparation of refugee hearings and for processing refugee claims. Sufficient time to prepare for the process is crucial especially when life or death decisions are involved. Refugees who have experienced grave trauma, such as torture, war or sexual assault are particularly vulnerable under the new system, as the CCR states. See Canadian Council of Refugees. (2012). Canada rolls back refugee protection: Bill c-31 receives Royal Assent [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://ccrweb.ca/en/bulletin/12/06/29>

The 28 day time line to provide the PIF will now be replaced by a more simplified form called the Basis of Claim (BOC) document that refugees making a claim at a port of entry will have 15 days to provide at the eligibility interview with the CIC or CBSA. See The Canadian Bar Association. (2012). Bill C-31: Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act. Retrieved from <http://www.cba.org/CBA/submissions/pdf/12-27-eng.pdf>

been rejected is to apply to the Federal Court of Canada for judicial review. This entails having a lawyer ask the Federal Court of Canada to review the decision made on the case. Judicial review, however, is not an appeal and often turns out to be a lengthy and costly process.²³ Interestingly, even though the process of making an appeal following a rejection has been included in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, successive governments have failed to institute the Refugee Appeal Division²⁴ (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010, p. 441). The third option is to appeal on humanitarian and compassionate grounds (H&C). The government states that in some exceptional circumstances, people are allowed to become permanent residents on these grounds.²⁵

It is also essential to highlight the fact that the Québec and federal governments share responsibilities with respect to immigration.²⁶ Each year,

²³ The Federal Court's web page outlines the procedures and fees to pay for Judicial Review. See The Federal Court of Canada. (2012). "How to file an application for Judicial review" Retrieved from http://cas-ncr-nter03.cas-satj.gc.ca/portal/page/portal/fc_cf_en/ApplicationJR

²⁴ According to the CIC, the Refugee Appeal Division would give most claimants a chance to prove that the Refugee Protection Division's decision was wrong in fact or law or both, and let new evidence be introduced that was not reasonably available at the time of the Refugee Protection Division process. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012). *Refugee Appeal Division*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/reform-rad.asp> Currently, the government is in the process of implementing The Refugee Appeal Division. It will come into force with relevant provision of the new legislation (the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act). However, there is currently no date set for the RAD coming into force. See Immigration and Refugee Board. (2013). *Refugee Appeal Division, FAQs*. Retrieved from IRB <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/reform/Pages/rac31sr-radsar.aspx>

²⁵ For information on the three options see Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Refugee claims in Canada—Options for refused applicants*. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/inside/refusals.asp>

²⁶ From the Quiet Revolution on, Québec started to take an interest in the role of immigration, when leaders such as Jean Lesage and René Lévesque realized the potential impact immigration could have on the economic and cultural development of the province. Québec wanted to select its immigrants independently of the procedures relied upon by the federal government at the time. With the Immigration Act of 1976 in particular, Québec increased its requests to the federal government Section 109 in particular allows for federal consultation with provinces to facilitate immigrants' integration into Canadian society, but also permits the minister to establish

Québec, along with the Government of Canada, determines the number of refugees and persons in similar situations to be admitted, and the source countries of those refugees. Once they are selected, they will be admitted into Quebec and the Quebec government will take charge of them (government-assisted refugees).²⁷ The Québec refugee selection process is such that, in order to be “selected as a government-assisted refugee by Québec, a person must be considered by Canada to be a Convention Refugee Abroad, who has not resettled permanently in the country [from which] he or she is seeking asylum.”²⁸ The provincial government considers a number of factors in assessing applications including: the refugee claimant’s personal qualities (flexibility, social skills, vitality, initiative, perseverance, level-headedness,²⁹ self-confidence, maturity and motivation), language proficiency, education levels, the presence of accompanying dependent children, a relationship with a Québec resident who is either the spouse (including de facto spouse) or a relative in the first or second degree, and any work experience, remunerated or not. The process also takes into account claimants’ previous experiences in their country of origin or in the country of first asylum, as well as their current responsibilities in their communities.³⁰

agreements with any province to facilitate the drawing up, coordinating, and implementation of immigration policies (Knowles, 2007, p. 218).

²⁷ See Immigration Québec (2012). Sharing of responsibilities between the Federal and provincial governments. Retrieved from Immigration Québec <http://www.immigration-Québec.gouv.qc.ca/en/immigrate-settle/refugees-other/humanitarian-immigration/sharing-responsibilities.html>

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ No explanation is provided as to how “level-headedness” is measured or assessed.

³⁰ Ibid

Refugee rights

With the landmark *Singh v Minister of Employment and Immigration* decision in 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms applied to refugees. In particular, the Supreme Court looked at Section 7, “Right to life, Liberty and Security.” Even if refugees seeking protection are not citizens or have not entered the country legally, the Court acknowledged that they are human beings and as such are entitled to life, liberty and security of the person. Like many other Charter provisions, Section 7 has broader applications as it “guarantees fundamental justice to ‘everyone,’ not only Canadian citizens. Persons not legally in Canada, participants in immigration proceedings, and individuals making refugee claims may all benefit from the application of Section 7.”³¹

Until 1976, the selection of refugees in Canada was on an ad hoc basis. It was the 1976 Immigration Act that instituted, for the first time, a refugee determination process for inland claimants. However, the system in place was far from ideal, because the claimants made their applications only on paper, without the opportunity for an oral hearing (Lacroix, 2004, p.150). The Singh case is referred to as a landmark Supreme Court decision because of the important impact it had on Canada’s refugee determination system. It meant that all refugee claimants must be granted a full oral hearing before the Immigration and Refugee

³¹ The “application” of section 7 is detailed by the Centre for Constitutional Studies at the University of Alberta. See University of Alberta. (2012). Section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Retrieved from <http://www.law.ualberta.ca/centres/ccs/issues/section7ofthecharterofrightsandfreedoms.php>

Board (Knowles, 2007, p. 226). Furthermore, as previously stated, under the *Singh v Minister of Employment and Immigration* decision, “refugee claimants must be granted the same social and legal protections accorded to Canadian citizens under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms” (ibid). The case involved seven appellants, six of whom were from India, where they had suffered persecution due to their political involvement and beliefs. Six claimants had the last name Singh and the seventh claimant was from Guyana and was persecuted on racial, religious and political grounds. After the Minister of Employment and Immigration and the Immigration Appeal Board both denied their claims, an appeal was brought before the Supreme Court of Canada. The main issue that the Supreme Court addressed was whether the refugee determination process at the time was invalid because it did not necessarily provide the claimant with an oral hearing. The appellants argued that this process violated Section 7 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Section 2(e) of the Canadian Bill of Rights. Knowles points out that although the claimants should be provided with the opportunity to have their cases heard, administratively speaking, these procedures added to the costs of processing refugees and promoted delays (p.226). Additionally, some “raised the question of whether it was possible to manage an immigration program where non-citizens were given the same rights as Canadian citizens” (p.226). However as the narratives I have collected from status claimants demonstrate, basic rights are not always granted to refugee claimants, let alone all the same rights as citizens, and if they are, they come with a considerable amount of struggle.

In terms of representation during the process, claimants can seek legal aid. They can represent themselves as detailed in the *Claimant's Guide*.³² Some counsel will be *pro bono*, while others will require that refugees pay them. The representative must be a lawyer (a member of a provincial law society or of the Chambre des Notaires du Québec) or a licensed immigration consultant (a member of the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants).³³ In seeking legal counsel, many of the respondents described paying large lawyer fees that added to the economic and emotional strain of waiting for status.

The following sections consider how social exclusion manifests within the four domains I have identified: securing status, securing employment, securing education and securing health care, all based on the respondents' narratives.

Securing status

The moment refugee claimants set foot on Canadian soil there is a temporary sense of relief and security, as they have fled life-threatening situations. However, when they begin the process of claiming refugee status, there can be a significant degree of instability in their lives on several fronts. In order for the possibility of settling in Canada to become a reality, a positive answer is needed from the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). Given the nature of this process, and the fact that it is mandatory, the social construction of refugee claimant subjectivity is in large part defined by Canadian refugee policy (Lacroix,

³² See Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. (2009). *Claimant's Guide, Refugee Protection Division, Information for claimants*. Retrieved from IRB <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/tribunal/rpdspr/ClaDem/Pages/ClaimGuideDem.aspx>

³³ Ibid

2004). According to Lacroix's research, which is also based on interviews, the legal limbo created by the process has an impact on who the refugee claimants once were, who they are and who they will become.

As I conducted the interviews for this project, it quickly became evident that waiting for status was one of the most painful aspects of the refugee determination process. The waiting periods are drawn out, over years, leaving the prospect of establishing a new life up in the air for extended stretches of time. Out of the ten respondents I interviewed, only one individual, originally from Pakistan, did not encounter any significant difficulty or delay in securing refugee status. In fact, his file was expedited due to the fact that he was a Christian priest being persecuted in Pakistan. For most refugee claimants, however, the delays linked to the determination system and the uncertainty connected to the outcome, make for a "disempowering process" (Lacroix, p.161). Navigating the labyrinth of legal and administrative systems can be a daunting task, especially for refugee claimants who may lack sufficient language skills and have inadequate knowledge of the systems. This process often takes place with minimal guidance or even complete misguidance by fraudulent lawyers or community members who are ill-informed about the current immigration process.

When I asked Ella how her overall experience has been in Montréal so far, having had enough distance from the determination process she replied:

It's been a bit difficult, since I was a refugee claimant and for a long time I tried to present my case, which wasn't accepted initially. And it took a long time, a change of lawyers, you know, presenting papers and everything else, it really hasn't been nice.

(Ella from Zimbabwe, 45 year old, widowed, social worker by profession, arrived in Montréal on November 10, 2000. During the time of the interview, she was unemployed and with limited physical mobility due to chronic rheumatism. Status at the time of interview: permanent resident)

She had not envisioned the degree of difficulty involved in making a refugee claim in Canada, given the persecution she had fled, and she struggled a considerable amount throughout the process. Ella's husband was shot and killed in Zimbabwe due to political strife in the country.³⁴ She decided to pursue her husband's killers, and as a result, her personal safety was seriously compromised. She claimed refugee status upon arriving in Canada via London along with her son. Due to insufficient funds, she left her daughter in London under the care of a church organization. During the interview conducted with Ella, she had been separated from her daughter for eight years.

My husband died when I was 35 years old and I have been separated from my daughter for...eight years....because of protocol...you know my children are separated.....and sometimes it's really.....it's sad just to think that they'll never know each other...I mean if they cannot bond or if they couldn't bond when they were young...right now my daughter is 24 and my son is 16....it's not easy...I would have loved for my children to bond...

The "protocol" Ella refers to can be interpreted as policy. In this case, specifically, the protocol may denote the regulations surrounding the process of "family reunification." Ensuring success within this immigration category is one of the major obstacles that many refugee claimants encounter. Needless to say, being separated from immediate family members puts additional stress on the claimants, as they lack the presence and support of members of their loved ones, who at

³⁴ For more on the ongoing unrest and the unprecedented mass exodus and creation of the diaspora see Crush, J. S., & Tevera, D. S. (2010).

times are still in conflict zones and face persecution in their countries of origin. A number of migrant advocacy groups, including the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), a non-profit group committed to the protection of refugee rights, have long lobbied the Canadian government in order to reduce the waiting time for the reunification of refugee and immigrant families. Such families are often separated for prolonged periods or indefinitely, “due to policies and practices that block or delay reunification.”³⁵ The CCR states that refugees in particular are vulnerable to family separation, as they are forced to flee without their spouses or their children.

As much as Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) realizes the importance of reuniting families, the ministry is also cognisant of the important backlogs in this category of immigration. In fact, as of November 2011, CIC put a halt on all new applications to sponsor parents and grandparents for reunification due to the elevated backlogs.³⁶ However, the scenario did change the following year. In response to inquiries from the general public as to why this category of immigration was stopped, the CIC stated that it planned to increase the number of applications in 2012 to 25 000, which they claim is the highest rate for this category in the last two decades.³⁷

³⁵ See Canadian Council for Refugees. (2012). Family Reunification. Retrieved from <http://ccrweb.ca/en/family-reunification>.

³⁶ See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Family Sponsorship*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/sponsor/index.asp>

³⁷ See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Canada welcomes largest number of parents and grandparents in almost twenty years*. [News Release]. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/releases/2012/2012-11-05.asp>

Despite the traumatic events that Ella experienced in her home country, she encountered considerable difficulty securing status as a refugee. She recounts the painful reality of having her claim initially rejected by Immigration officials. The first refusal in 2001 was followed by a deportation order in 2002. After a church pastor invited Ella and her son to take sanctuary in his church basement in Little Burgundy,³⁸ her lawyer also intervened to draw attention to their case. Ella's case was rejected because it was not deemed "credible." When I asked Ella if she had experienced any hostility from an individual or an institution while she was a refugee claimant, she said that the government's stance vis-à-vis her status fit within the realm of hostility for her:

Like a hostile situation...when you cannot access something because of your status...I mean the government was actually hostile to us, when they say that my story was not credible...to me, it was really hostility....

This "lack of credibility" stems from the decision made by an Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) member, who must decide whether or not refugee claimants have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home countries. In his book *Refugee Sandwich* Peter Showler (2006), a refugee lawyer and former IRB member, writes about hearing and deciding refugee claims made in Canada, stating that his book is about "storytelling: true stories, false stories, true and false stories. It is about the possibility and impossibility of relating and assessing the refugee experience within a judicial and bureaucratic context" (p.xvii). Having participated in hundreds of refugee hearings, he states that even though there have been a number of improvements to the process as well as to the training of board

³⁸ Little Burgundy is the informal name of a Montréal neighborhood located at the south west part of the island.

members, there are moments in every hearing where the “profound gap between the realities of the claimant and the Board member suddenly becomes apparent” (p.xiv). According to Showler, the best lawyers and board members try to find ways to bridge those gaps. When a claim is rejected, the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) does provide a written Notice of Decision and an explanation of reasons why the claim was rejected.³⁹ Regardless of why Ella’s case was not deemed “credible,”⁴⁰ it is important to realize that as Showler emphasizes, “the vast chasm of potential miscommunication lies between the claimant and the decisionmaker” (p.xvi). The hearings can be nerve-wracking when the claimants’ lives are on the line, with the fear of removal constantly in their minds. Even the most genuine claimants feel extremely vulnerable “due to their inability to understand the refugee claim process and their fear of being returned to persecution (p.xiv)”. Besides the very high stakes, the fear is also exacerbated in the hearing room where the questions may not always be comprehensible due to language, different cultural perspectives and false assumptions made by the questioner. Often, claimants are traumatized, inarticulate or simply incapable of remembering certain details.

³⁹ See Immigration Refugee Board. (2013). Claimant’s Guide – If your claim is rejected. Retrieved from IRB http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/tribunal/rpdspr/ClaDem/Pages/ClaimGuideDem12.aspx#_Toc340245832

⁴⁰ Although I did try asking Ella why exactly her case was rejected, she did not provide much detail. Rather, she preferred recounting the aftermath of the rejection, namely the urgency of having to take sanctuary. I chose not to probe more than I already had, feeling the sensitive nature of the matter, as she had already described the circumstances of her husband’s murder, as well as the violence she endured once she decided to pursue those responsible for her husband’s killing. In terms of the actual rejection, Ella did explain that even though she does not expect that the IRB accept everyone, she could not comprehend why they still did not want to “legalize” her (Ella’s own word), given Canada’s ministerial decision recognizing that there was a problem in Zimbabwe.

In Ella's case, she speaks English fluently, had strong legal representation, is articulate, and had lost her husband in political unrest in Zimbabwe – a political situation that was highly mediatized. At times however, as Showler states, some board members may only have partial knowledge of refugee law, some “objective knowledge about the claimants’ country, and often, some experience with prior claims from that country” (p.xvi). The board member is also in possession of a Personal Information Form (PIF), which like any form, tends to reduce the claimants’ life histories to “dry, objective facts that may or may not capture their reasons for fearing persecution” (p.xvi).

Even though Canada's refugee determination system is hailed as a “model” throughout the world, and despite the fact that a perfect system for processing refugees is highly unlikely, there are some notable weaknesses in the Canadian refugee determination system. Namely, the fact that only one board member makes the decision is in itself highly problematic, as that person may hold certain personal biases, and also the lack of deliberations may oversimplify the complex situations that arise in refugee cases. In a government document entitled “Claimant's Guide” prepared by the Refugee Protection Division, the text explains the process and that the “hearings normally take place before one IRB member who has received special training in refugee protection matters” (p.15). Nevertheless, many board members have been singled out for personal biases against certain countries of origin.⁴¹ Furthermore, another aspect of the system

⁴¹ In Karen Cho's (2008) documentary *Seeking Refuge*, the exemplification of personal bias found in IRB board members is blatant. Two Palestinian brothers who were living in Lebanon applied for refugee status. Both brothers had similar experiences. At the time the film was shot, one

that invites criticism is the fact that IRB board members are politically appointed individuals. Additionally, administrative constraints, like the pressure to complete a hearing within half a day could also lead to hasty decisions (p.xvi).

Insofar as they can be ascertained, the steps in claiming refugee status are outlined earlier in this chapter yet, naturally, not all cases advance smoothly. Ella faced lengthy waits, exacerbated not only by the process itself, but also likely due to the considerable backlog of cases.⁴² Fortunately, Ella and her son spent only three days in sanctuary before the Canadian government realised the serious political situation in Zimbabwe and finally imposed a moratorium on all deportations to that country. However, after the deportation order was lifted, Ella lived in limbo for another five years. During those five years, besides living with the challenges of a being a single parent, she was unable to pursue her career despite being in her thirties. Unable to find the peace of mind of establishing a life here, she also struggled as the mother of a child suffering from depression following forced displacement and difficulty adjusting to a school where he was being bullied. Ella describes her experiences as follows:

brother had been accepted as a refugee, while the other had not and was still waiting for status 8 years later. The IRB member in question has been accused of having a bias against Palestinians. The system can be quite arbitrary, as documented by Peter Showler (2006) in *Refugee Sandwich*. Moreover, in 2011, the same day the *Toronto Star* broke a story on the various acceptance rates by refugee board members, the Federal Court judge issued a decision chastising an adjudicator who had not granted asylum to anyone in three years. See Keung, N. (2011, March 8). Refugee board member with zero acceptance rate chastised. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <http://www.thestar.com/news/investigations/immigration/article/950726--refugee-board-member-with-zero-acceptance-rate-chastised>

⁴² As part of Canada's "Balanced Refugee Reform" program, in April 2012, CIC introduced the Backlog Reduction Plan. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Backlog Reduction Plan*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/reform-backlog.asp>

I was just here... I never went back for any other hearing or for any court thing or for anything...It was just quiet. It was only Rick⁴³ who was talking to them I think... and you can imagine for 5 years....he was doing that...five full years...having accepting that there is a problem in Zimbabwe, having acknowledged that there is a problem and that we shouldn't be deported and they put in a moratorium (...). But there is still some people who don't have their status...

(...)⁴⁴

You know, I don't expect them actually to accept everyone... of course...but there are cases, I mean, they said okay, they agreed that we have a problem... They agreed that I have a problem, and they don't... they don't accept...they still...don't accept me, they still don't want to legalize me...

Ultimately, Ella was allowed to stay and was granted permanent residence in Canada after six years in limbo, including a stay in a church to avoid deportation.

Considerable delays have been documented and can be attributed to the system, which has an impact on refugees finding meaningful and fulfilling employment (Renaud & Gingras, 1998). Employment is necessary to securing socio-economic stability and even successful integration; this will be the next domain examined.

Securing employment

According to information from Citizenship and Immigration Canada, refugee claimants have “certain rights and may have access to Canadian services”⁴⁵ while their claim for refugee protection is being considered. The statement is followed by the stipulation that all people in Canada are protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* which was determined

⁴³ Rick Goldman is a prominent refugee lawyer and activist in Montréal.

⁴⁴ Ellipses are represented by the (...) which indicates that one or more entire transcribed sentences have been omitted.

⁴⁵ See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Know your Rights. Education – Employment*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-rights.asp>

following the landmark Singh Decision. In fact, the CIC states that refugee claimants are able to apply for employment authorization to work “in some cases.”⁴⁶ Refugee claimants are to apply for work permits in order to work legally in Canada. However, this policy statement does not necessarily correspond to the realities on the ground, where those claimants who apply for work permits encounter a number of difficulties and barriers in securing the permit and employment, even if they meet the eligibility criteria. The procedure for obtaining authorization to work legally in Canada, requires that refugee claimants apply to the CIC for a work permit, after filling out a personal information form for the IRB and upon completing a medical exam. If the work permit is approved, then the claimant can apply for a social insurance number and card, which are also needed in order to work in Canada.⁴⁸ All non-permanent residents are required to purchase a work permit for \$150,⁴⁹ which needs to be renewed either every six months or one year. Janet Dench of the Canadian Council for Refugees has previously expressed concern about refugees who lose their jobs waiting for their

⁴⁶ For example, the language used in documents explaining the rights of refugees can be ambiguous at times. The CIC states that claimants can apply for a work permit only in some cases. The following statement is unclear and can leave the reader slightly perplexed: “Usually, only people who cannot live without public assistance are usually eligible for employment authorization.” My interpretation of this statement is that claimants are only eligible for employment authorization if they are not receiving public assistance. However, the slightly awkward formulation of the sentence can cause confusion, especially for claimants who are in the middle of the process of making a claim, as they navigate various bureaucratic mazes, besides dealing with stressful and new situations, often with insufficient guidance. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Know your Rights. Education – Employment*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-rights.asp>

⁴⁸ See Communauté en ligne pour jeunes nouveaux arrivants. (2009). Comment effectuer ma demande de permis de travail à titre de demandeur d’asile? Retrieved from <http://www.nouveauxjeunes.ca/immigration/r%C3%A9fugi%C3%A9/comment-effectuer-ma-demande-de-permis-de-travail-%C3%A0-titre-de-demandeur-d%E2%80%99asile>

⁴⁹ The extension or the initial work permit costs 150\$ per person. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Guide 5553 - Applying to Change Conditions or Extend Your Stay in Canada – Worker, Paying Fees*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/guides/5553ETOC.asp#5553E6>

permit to be renewed. In fact, the CCR has been lobbying the CIC for the automatic issuance of a work permit, without the claimants having to continually apply upon completing their medical exam.⁵⁰

Even once claimants successfully obtain a permit after paying the fees, securing employment is not an easy feat due to their status or lack thereof. Their (non)status as claimants is overtly indicated on their social insurance cards, a document required for a job. The SIN number for refugee claimants begins with the number nine, which immediately reveals the fact that they are non-citizens, potentially viewed by employers as belonging to the “here today, gone tomorrow” category. Besides these obstacles, there are other issues that arise in refugee claimants’ quest to find a job. In writing about migrant rights in Montréal, Choudry et al. (2009) have identified a number of socio-economic barriers to social rights, which include immigration status and fear, lack of Canadian employment experience, insufficient knowledge of rights, racial and ethnic discrimination, language barriers, insecure employment and economic situation and lack of legal representation (p.50-55). Nevertheless, working can offer some respite while claimants wait for status and breaks their isolation, despite the fact that many claimants are underpaid and overqualified for their jobs.

Whereas applying for and renewing work permits occurs at the federal level, it is essential to point out that at the provincial level, refugee claimants are provided with assistance in finding employment. In fact the Québec Ministry of

⁵⁰ See Canadian Council for Refugees. (2007). Automatic Issuance of Work Permits. [Resolution number 11]. Retrieved from <http://ccrweb.ca/en/res/automatic-issuance-work-permits>

Emploi et Solidarité Sociale has a specialized centre where they offer “Services for refugee protection claimants”. Once claimants prove their eligibility⁵¹ by applying to the centre, they can require “last-resort financial assistance”, as the centre helps claimants to look for jobs, to re-enter the job market or to stay employed in order to “facilitate [their] integration”, according to the centre’s information.⁵²

When Ella lacked status for a prolonged period of time, she faced considerable difficulty in securing employment. In fact, this is one of the main points that emerged in almost all the respondent’s narratives—the difficulty of finding employment given their lack of status. Ella said the following with regards to finding employment with a social insurance card—which began with the telling number nine—and the hassles involved with renewing her work permit:

It’s a stigma really because we have a 9-1-4 world...the social insurance number is 9....You are stuck with that...Everybody knows you are a refugee...a temporary somebody...and our children, cannot go to college after high school...because they have to pay international fees....and who can afford that and you have to buy the work permit...sometimes...it’s \$150 for 6 months...I never got the one year one...I got the 6 months one....other people were lucky because they used to get the one year one...you pay taxes, you don’t get any rebate...there is no child taxes, no help....nothing....

Similarly, Nadia tells how the social insurance number can pose problems in terms of finding employment, besides the existing fees and delays in obtaining working permits. Nadia describes her experience:

⁵¹ Two pieces of identification are required: The first is the Refugee Protection Claimant Document, IMM 1442 and the second piece is the Interim Federal Health Program document. See Québec Emploi et Solidarité Sociale. (2012). *Services for refugee protection claimants*. Retrieved from Québec Emploi et Solidarité Sociale http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/services-a-la-clientele/centre-specialise-des-demandeurs-dasile/asile_en.asp

⁵² Ibid

Si tu postules pour un emploi, il faut que tu aies un permis de travail. Et ça c'est à chaque six mois, je ne sais pas maintenant les frais c'est combien, mais à l'époque c'était \$150, qu'il faut payer à chaque 6 mois par personne, à chaque 6 mois et ce n'est pas sûre que tu vas l'avoir. Parce que tu vas déposer, comme un des sans-statuts qu'on connaît, bon maintenant il est régularisé, mais une fois il a demandé son permis de travail, et quant il l'a reçue, il lui restait deux mois pour valider son permis de travail. Donc dans deux mois, il fallait qu'il demande une autre. Donc il a payé \$150 pour 2 mois, et un autre \$150 pour 6 mois. C'est des petites subtilités qui font que....et ils ne travaillent pas à \$15 dollar l'heure les sans-statuts, s'ils ne sont pas au Bien-Aide Sociale, ils travaillent à salaire minimum ou moins que le minimum.

(Nadia, a 23 year old woman from Algeria, works 2 jobs while pursuing an accounting certificate at the university level. Arrived in Montréal on January 22, 1996. Status at the time of interview: Canadian citizen.)

Given that many of the jobs available to them pay minimum wage or less, refugee claimants often have to work more than one job. Donna, from Venezuela, who was employed as an early child educator in Caracas, encountered significant barriers in securing employment due to her lack of status and language skills. In order to ensure a subsistence-level income for her and her family, she worked two jobs.

Quand nous n'avons pas de statut...si vous cherchez un travail, c'est très très très difficile parce que la première chose qu'ils te demandent c'est le statut et la langue. Si vous pouvez bien s'exprimer...moi, parce que avant j'ai trouvé un monsieur chilien qui fait le ménage dans des buildings à Westmount ...j'ai travaillé longtemps là...et moi j'ai deux travaux, parce que moi je n'arrive pas pour tout ça. Et dans le temps j'ai dit okay, je vais aller à l'école ou je vais travailler...c'est pour donner toute à mes enfants...si je vais à l'école, qu'est-ce que je peux faire... j'ai pas le choix, j'ai dit okay...je vais travailler quand même, n'importe quoi, mais je dois travailler...et le temps qu'on attend...c'est tellement dure...c'est vraiment difficile pour renouveler tous les papiers, la maladie, aller à l'hôpital, c'est...c'est...terrible. C'est vraiment difficile...

(Donna, 52 years old, is a college educated teacher from Venezuela. Divorced, single mom now remarried. Arrived in Montréal on May 21st, 1996. Status during time of interview: Canadian citizen)

Ella who was educated as a social worker in Zimbabwe recounts the following about managing a low-paying job with the task of supporting a child. Moreover, her son was diagnosed with depression following their forced displacement from Zimbabwe:

I used to work...I used to go to work at...the warehouse... because there is nowhere else....one, language is a problem...and the other thing is...even if you have a qualification, nobody will accept you...even if you want to better yourself, or get a qualification, you have to pay...but how do I pay...I have a child and with the minimum wage that we get....ever since I came here I've never been paid more than 10 dollars an hour...so it was very difficult...and my hours, I couldn't even do any overtime or anything...remember I brought in a child, who couldn't be left alone at night for a long time...my hours were like...he goes to school, I go to work...I take him to school first, I make sure he has left the house to go to school and I'm home whenever he comes back...so my hours were like maybe 7 or 8 hours...anything more than that which means he's alone...and I didn't want that, I couldn't do that...I had to help him with his homework...and whatever... so it was really difficult...it was really difficult.

Unlike Donna, Ella was not able to take on more than one job, even though she needed additional income to support her child. She had to adjust her work schedule to avoid long periods of absence from the household, because her son was in need of further attention and support.

Other respondents also encountered considerable difficulty in securing a job. After a number of odd jobs, including working “under the table” for six months, Raffi, a claimant from Lebanon decided to take matters in his own hands, as he felt underpaid.

So after 6 months [had] pass [ed], you know what, I'm working hard, and I felt like I'm underpaid. So one day, I was really pissed off and based on what I'm hearing left and right, nobody is getting a working permit or whatever, so I wake up, tell my mom, I'm going to the government. I go there and I tell them I want to see a counselor. And then, a woman comes, a very very elegant lady comes out...I tell her look... “Regardez Madame, j'ai

trouvé un emploi et puis je n'ai pas besoin de l'aide du gouvernement, parce que je suis jeune, je veux travailler, je ne veux pas être paresseux comme ça, rester à la maison, and get the money...you know because a lot of people, they used to take advantage. And she was really impressed with what I said, she told me, have a seat and we will call you shortly. She calls me back and I got the working permit. I was the happiest.

(Raffi, age 37, is from Lebanon, and holds a high school diploma and business certificates. He is a graphic designer, currently an entrepreneur in the printing business. He is married. He arrived in Montréal on October 1st, 1989. Status during time of interview: Canadian citizen)

Pierre is an engineer from Congo Brazaville who waited seven years for his status to be determined. During that period of time, he was separated from his wife and five children. In terms of his everyday life during that waiting period, he explains the challenges of finding employment as a non-status individual in the following terms:

Disons quasiment les 6 premiers mois, étaient beaucoup centrés sur les développements de notre dossier de réfugié, parce que dépendamment de l'acceptation ou non, et bien, beaucoup d'aspects de nos vies étaient remis en cause. Parce que étant réfugié, en tant que revendicateur de statut de réfugié, on court le risque d'être expulsé du Canada. Si les agents d'immigration jugent le dossier non consistant, ils peuvent avancer les procédures pour être déporter du Canada. Donc en même temps, parallèlement à ça, il fallait qu'on vive, qu'on trouve un emploi rapidement. Assez vite, j'ai commencé à travailler, à l'époque, bon au départ, en tant que réfugié on est assez limité, les emplois permanents sont quasiment inaccessibles, parce que l'une des premières choses que les employeurs regardent lorsqu'on cherche un emploi, c'est premièrement, ce n'est pas tellement tout l'arrière plan professionnelle qu'on a eu avant d'arriver ici, ils regardent d'abord notre statut. Le fait d'être revendicateur de statut de réfugié, de ne pas être accepté comme résident permanent ou citoyen canadien, ça nous ferme la porte à tous les emplois, digne de ce nom. Donc on était obligé de travailler comme... dans desalors qu'on a une formation universitaire, bien qu'on parlait bien la langue, bien qu'on ...donc généralement on est obligé de travailler dans des manufactures, dans des endroits pas trop adaptés à nos qualifications professionnelles.

(Pierre, 50 years old, is married with 5 children. He is college educated engineer from Congo Brazzaville, and arrived in Montréal on February 3rd, 2001. Status at time of interview: permanent resident)

Pierre worked several underpaid jobs, for which he was overqualified, including packaging perfumes. At times he would conduct data entry on the computer, as one of his employers soon realised that he had capabilities other than filling boxes. When he first arrived in Canada, he was also employed in the textile sector, once again conducting triage of the clothing and packaging it in boxes. He explains:

Et puis tout ça il fallait le faire en attendant de trouver quelque chose de mieux en attendant que la situation, les dossiers d'immigration puissent être finalisés.

These narrative excerpts reveal some of the challenges experienced by refugee claimants seeking to secure employment. Needless to say, working while waiting for status is not only important for self-esteem, but also helps to ease isolation, and to ensure a certain amount of income. Despite the fact that both the federal and provincial governments provide mechanisms and a degree of support to encourage refugee claimants, the respondents interviewed encountered difficulties in obtaining and in retaining employment. Some inconveniences include having to pay and then wait for work permits to be renewed, as well as navigating bureaucratic mazes in order to ensure eligibility and submit the correct paperwork. Language barriers are another set of obstacles, as well as managing family life and employment, often more than one job, due to low wages and unrecognized previous credentials. It is important to note that the interviewees often spoke of “doors closed”, and “limited opportunities”, pointing to the significant barriers and difficulties refugee claimants encountered in securing employment.

Securing education

The CIC states that refugee claimants also have the right to apply for student authorization to attend school while waiting for a decision on their claim.⁵³ Minor children, are automatically eligible to attend school when they arrive in Canada. Even though access to education is a fundamental right and covered under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a number of barriers emerge as refugee claimants try to access education, whether in terms of actually enrolling in post-secondary education or in securing financial assistance. For instance, Omidvar and Richmond (2003) point out that, “Convention refugees who are waiting for landing, are not eligible for student loans” (p.18). The policy does stipulate that refugee claimants be able to access education. However, the obstacles encountered on a bureaucratic level are considerable, even for individuals who have had a positive outcome in terms of their status decision, as the following example demonstrates.

Nadia’s family fled Algeria during the 1990s, in the wake of the civil war. It took nine years for their status to be determined after a whirlwind of legal and political struggles. When I asked Nadia if she encountered any type of hostility either from an institution or an individual, she told me without hesitation that hostility emerged when a number of obstacles prevented her from pursuing her post-secondary education. Nadia recalls when she turned 18 and had just completed high school; she wanted to attend CEGEP and was denied. Prior to that

⁵³ See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Know your Rights. Education – Employment*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-rights.asp>

period, her parents had received most of the rejections and negative answers related to their status. Nadia lost almost two years of study because she did not possess a piece of paper from the federal government confirming that she was a permanent resident. As opposed to some of the cases in the previous cases in the section on securing employment, where claimants did not hold status, here, Nadia, the claimant in question had already been accepted as a refugee and permanent resident. Nevertheless, she was held back from attending CEGEP due to bureaucratic protocol.

The issue that caused the delay in her pursuit of her education was a broken link between the two-tiered immigration system, meaning the provincial and federal levels. She applied to several CEGEPS, but was asked to submit her IMM 1000, the CIC's Record of Landing which is a federal piece of paper. Although she had been accepted as a permanent resident by the Québec Immigration system, and was no longer a non-status individual, she was required to have the permanent residence card. However, she had not yet received the card from the federal government. No card meant she could not attend CEGEP. Nadia could register for her courses, however, the moment they would ask for the IMM 1000, her registration was no longer valid, which was an extremely frustrating experience for her. Interestingly enough, in March 2003, before she even submitted an application for CEGEP, Nadia and her family had their interview with Immigration Québec, and she explicitly inquired about whether she would encounter any trouble applying to CEGEP now that she had been accepted by Québec Immigration. The Québec Immigration official reassured her that

CEGEPs were provincial institutions, “a Québécois institution”, and that they had nothing to do with federal immigration. The agent stated that, since she had already been accepted by Québec, she could attend CEGEP.

Et je voulais tellement entrer au cégep en plus on m'a tellement donnée cette volonté de continuer les études et là non, pas de cégep. Pourtant j'étais sûre que je pouvais rentrer...alors avant que je demande de rentrer au cégep, le mois de Mars 2003, on est passé par l'entrevue de l'immigration Québec. Et là, l'agent...bon, c'est là qu'on a su okay qu'on a été accepté par Québec, et là pendant cette entrevue-là, j'ai mentionné au Monsieur, j'ai demandé est-ce que vue que je vais être accepté maintenant, est-ce que ça va m'empêcher de rentrer au cégep. Il me dit non, parce que le cégep c'est une institution qui est provinciale, c'est Québécois donc, l'immigration fédérale n'a rien avoir. Vous êtes acceptés par le Québec donc, vous avez droit au cégep. Okay, j'étais tellement contente, un soulagement. L'été passe, je suis acceptée par le cégep, tout va bien, j'ai payé les frais et tout, j'arrive ...Non...Pourquoi...parce que tu n'as pas la résidence, oui mais la résidence c'est fédérale. Non, vous avez besoin de l'IM 1000 pour avoir accès, sinon vous payez les frais d'un étudiant étranger.

If she decided to forgo the wait, her only option would have been to pay international student fees which were between 4000 and 6000 dollars. Paying these fees was out of the question, given her family's precarious economic situation and the hefty lawyer fees that they had dispensed in order to secure their status.

Nadia believed that the refusal was isolated to one CEGEP in particular, so she applied to another, and in the meantime lost an entire semester. *J'ai des ambitions, j'ai des projets, je veux faire des choses*, she said. Another institution allowed her to register, but when time came for classes to start, she was blocked from attending once again. For a third semester in a row, she faced the same

situation, she describes it in the following terms: *Troisième session, même histoire, pas acceptée... c'était la destruction, la destruction.*

She has suffered three rejections from CEGEP admissions due to her “status.” Having reached her limit, and lost a year and a half of study time, she decided to go back to immigration Québec, which initially had told her she wouldn't have any problems. She hoped that they would be able to provide an answer, or better yet, a solution, or even an authorization. Nadia recalls how the office did not even want to greet her mother and herself once they arrived because the officials of Immigration Québec immediately recognized them as activists with the *Comité d'Action des Sans Statut Algériens* (CASS),⁵⁴ as individuals who had once occupied their offices. However, she was determined to speak to someone and had decided to not leave until she spoke to a representative.

Alors on arrive et puis, premièrement ils ne voulaient pas nous accueillir. Ils voulaient rien savoir, l'Immigration Québec, parce qu'on était des militants de Comité d'Action des Sans-statut, ils nous connaissaient le visage, et ils ne voulaient plus rien savoir de nous. Alors, oui, on insiste, et puis on a commencé à être plus à l'aise quand il s'agissait de l'Immigration Québec parce qu'on a fait des manifestations, on a occupé le bureau d'Immigration Québec... On sentait une petite force, quand même, un petit pouvoir jusqu'à une certaine limite...enfin...alors on a exigé de voir quelqu'un. Il n'y avait pas question qu'on sorte du bureau sans voir quelqu'un.

Nadia, who was accompanied by her mother to the offices, describes how they both felt strong as they confronted the officials, having already expressed their agency in occupying Immigration offices along with other CASS activists. Nadia also points out that the arrangement of the physical office space is reductive vis-à-

⁵⁴ CASS is the French abbreviation for Action Committee of Non-status Algerians, which is a self-organized group of Algerian refugees in Montréal.

vis immigrants, as you are expected to lower your body in order to communicate through a window.

Et quand tu arrives à l'Immigration, c'est ce que je trouve de vulgaire, c'est que c'est tous des immigrants, et la salle d'attente, tu as des guichets, et la table elle est comme ça, pour que tu parles, tu dois te baisser. Ça je trouve ça tellement réducteur, prendre les gens pour des petits enfants. Il y un vitre, un petit trou, tu te baisses pour que tu parles, ça ce n'est pas bien...

After Nadia and her mother waited for some time, an official from the Department of International Students came to see them. This person's response to Nadia's ordeal was simply put, that most immigrants join the work force after their secondary education. This answer was not what Nadia anticipated from the Director of International Students, as she possessed a strong desire to pursue her education:

On arrive, on s'assoie, les bureaux, c'est le même bureau là où on a passé l'entrevue. Et j'ai raconté mon histoire et là j'étais ras le bol, donc c'était des larmes, frustrations et tout, et j'explique...J'ai tout, tout tout tout expliqué. Puis là, il met ses coudes sur la table comme ça, il dit... « Mais vous savez, la plupart des immigrants quand ils viennent, ils arrivent après leur secondaire 5, et ils vont sur le marché du travail. » Et là quand il m'a dit ça, je me suis dis okay, donc vous, vous êtes le directeur des étudiants étrangers ou je ne sais pas quoi, et tu penses vraiment qu'on a fait tout ça, on a quitté....tous ces sacrifices, pour arriver à travailler au salaire minimum, de faire mon secondaire 5. Je ne peux pas avoir d'ambitions. J'avais 19 ans à l'époque. À 19 ans, je dois m'arrêter parce que moi, je suis une immigrante, une ex-sans-statut, donc je vaux rien...

As her narrative demonstrates, the meeting with Immigration Québec turned out to be even more distressing, as she was literally discouraged from continuing her education. The only hope came from a group of students from two CEGEPs in Montréal who mobilized when they heard that Nadia was experiencing tremendous difficulty in accessing education. The students organized campaigns in order to put pressure on the government to take action, by sending faxes and

emails titled “Laissez Nadia rentrer au CEGEP!” They had a letter signed by the Minister of Education at the time, but even that did not yield any concrete action for her case. Finally in 2005, during the winter semester, she was able to start attending CEGEP, two years after finishing high school in 2003. During another meeting with Immigration officials in 2005, Nadia was finally able to pick up the piece of paperwork required for registration.

Securing health

A number of researchers in Canada and Québec have written about the policy and social barriers faced by migrants trying to access health and social services (R. Omidvar & Richmond, 2003; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2005; Rousseau et al., 2008). Caulford and Vali (2006) have documented how migrants struggle to access health care in Canada, experiencing long delays, complications and even rejection of medically necessary treatment. Many of the respondents I interviewed also reported experiencing trouble accessing health care, given their precarious status.

Access to health care for refugee claimants has become increasingly complex. Not only are there the two-tiered levels of government that set regulations (federal and provincial), the process is further complicated by limited access based on whether or not an individual is from a Designated Country of Origin (DCO).⁵⁵ According to the *Régie de l'assurance maladie Québec*

⁵⁵ If a claimant is not from a DCO and is waiting for their case to be processed, they are covered by the federal and provincial programs. If they are from a DCO but made a claim before December 15, 2012, they are covered as well. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Interim Federal Health Program: Summary of Benefits*. Retrieved from

(RAMQ), refugee claimants are not eligible for the provincial Health Insurance Plan. The RAMQ states that these individuals may benefit from the Interim Federal Health program (IFHP).⁵⁶ The IFHP provides temporary health-care coverage to approximately 128,000 refugees.⁵⁷ Over the summer of 2012 however, the Conservative federal government introduced changes that cut a number of health services for refugee claimants. The medical community across Canada vocally denounced these cuts to refugee health and held protests calling them “disastrous.”⁵⁸ The benefits, which previously included prescription drugs, vision and dental care, expired on June 30, 2012. Instead, the now-limited coverage is divided into two categories: emergencies and care required to treat a disease or condition that could be a public health concern. Dr. Mark Tyndall, the head of infectious diseases at the Ottawa hospital, condemned the decision and made the following statement: “We are launching into an uncontrolled, disastrous, human health experience by arbitrarily denying life-saving medical care to some of the most vulnerable and traumatized people in the whole world. And for what? Further isolation and suffering, the spread of infectious diseases, increased wait

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/summary-ifhp.asp>. DCOs are countries that do not normally produce refugees. According to the CIC, they are countries where human rights are respected and that offer state protection. The IRB has been receiving a higher number of cases to process from such countries and therefore has the authority to determine DCOs under the Balanced Refugee Reform Act (BRRA), which received Royal assent in June 2010. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Backgrounder — Designated Countries of Origin*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-02-16i.asp>

⁵⁶ See Régie de l'assurance maladie Québec. (2012). *Health Insurance, Eligibility*. Retrieved from Régie de l'assurance maladie Québec <http://www.ramq.gouv.qc.ca/en/citizens/health-insurance/registration/Pages/eligibility.aspx>

⁵⁷ See Federal cuts to refugee health care draw protests. (2012, June 18). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/interactives/refugee-healthcare/index.html>

⁵⁸ See The Canadian Press. (2012, June 18). Doctors protest 'disastrous' cuts to refugee health. CBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/story/2012/06/18/pol-cp-refugee-health-cuts-doctors.html>

times at our hospital emergency departments. Canada is way better than this.⁵⁹”

Citizenship and Immigration Canada Minister Jason Kenney, however, claims to be revamping the program to ensure “equity and fairness in health benefits.”⁶⁰

The interviews I conducted took place well before the recent changes in the Interim health program. Interestingly, the respondents found that access was limited even before this new refugee legislation came into effect, leaving one to ponder the viability of the new law. Nadia notes that access to health care was not straightforward for her and her family, and that it required payment. She is thankful that she and her family did not become seriously ill during the almost decade long wait for status.

Je remercie Dieu jour et nuit pour moi et ma famille pour ne pas avoir eu des problèmes de santé, parce que si on avait eu un problème de santé, ça aurait été grave, vraiment grave, parce que tu n’as aucune couverture, aucune couverture, tu n’as aucune couverture. Si tu vas voir le médecin, tu as une grosse feuille là comme ça, qui est notre assurance maladie, mais elle est très réduite. Il n’y a pas presque aucune couverture. Donc tu as le gros papier, et là chaque fois que tu y vas, elle te demande ta carte d’assurance maladie. Tu dis attends une minute, tu sors la grosse feuille et c’est une couverture que tu n’as pas Et là tout de suite, ils savent que tu si prends les soins, tu vas payer.

When I asked Ella if she had difficulty accessing certain services in order to fulfill basic living needs, she said housing was difficult to secure, as well as health services.

I mean when you are refugee claimant... you don’t have a Medicare card... so, there are things you have to pay for, at the forefront. And you can use that brown health paper, but it doesn’t cover everything...those are some resources that we couldn’t access...

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid

It is important to highlight that there are doctors who do provide health care to uninsured immigrants and refugees, seeing as the system contains several delays and does not provide basic coverage for some refugees. For instance, the *Médecins du Monde* medical clinic for migrants, which opened in Montréal only in 2011, meets the health care needs of asylum seekers who are not covered by the provincial health care insurance (RAMQ). When volunteers of *Médecins du Monde* did their rounds in the streets of Montréal, they realized there was a new clientele that needed medical attention besides Aboriginals, drug addicts, sex workers and the homeless: migrants with precarious statuses. Over the last year, the clinic has had 148 migrant patients, who were seen by volunteer doctors. Another 571 migrants consulted nurses at the clinic, as well as 184 who benefited from the services the clinic offered for migrants (Nicoud, 2012). Given the recent cuts to Federal government programs that used to cover refugee claimants' basic health care needs, the *Médecins du monde* migrant clinic expects to see even more patients in the years to come. Securing and accessing health care and services is challenging for refugee claimants and the recent cuts by the government, only translate to increased barriers for claimants. Their vulnerability as refugee claimants is compounded by a potential need for medical and psychological attention.⁶²

⁶² During a presentation given on March 7, 2013, concerning the impact of the federal cuts at the CSSS Bordeaux-Cartierville Saint-Laurent, researcher Janet Cleveland provided an overview of the new coverage system. She discussed a number of specific cases in which refugee claimants in Québec who had serious health issues encountered difficulty in accessing adequate health care, even if they were entitled to the care (it is, however, important to note that Québec provides more coverage to claimants than other provinces). Cleveland outlined how some clinics refuse to give necessary care or run diagnostic tests and demand payment. A degree of confusion exists at the administrative levels surrounding the recent cuts. As a result, the billing process is complex, slow

Even though other provinces are compensating for the federal cuts to various degrees, Quebec is the only province that has decided to compensate for the federal cuts for all refugees without distinction. In fact, Quebec currently has a program that covers medication as well as medical and hospital care for all refugee claimants, including refused claimants and claimants from Designated Countries of Origin.⁶³ Furthermore, the complexity of this two-level coverage system (federal and provincial) lessens the concrete impact of Quebec's compensatory measures, especially because treating physicians carry the brunt of deciphering the system, which discourage many to take on the task. As a result, many patients are refused care to which they are entitled, while others are charged fees for services that are supposed to be covered. Lengthy administrative procedures and much confusion still exist around the system that ultimately penalizes patients already in a vulnerable state.

Having considered different dimensions of social exclusion faced by refugee claimants in Montréal based on securing status, employment, education, and health care, the following section examines non-material social exclusion that is pervasive in refugees' everyday lives and is expressed through xenophobic and racist statements and attitudes.

and ambiguous, there are delays in renewing the IFHP certificates and overall negative attitudes exist towards claimants (Cleveland, 2013).

⁶³ These are countries that the government of Canada deems to be safe and where it is less likely for people to be persecuted compared to other countries. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2013). *Designated countries of origin*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/reform-safe.asp>. However, this list provides ample ground for discriminating against individuals who face persecution based on where they live, for instance in a country such as Mexico, which is part of the list.

II. Xenophobia and everyday exclusion

The ways in which difference is articulated in Canadian society is a contentious topic. Even though Canada embraces globalization and idealizes cultural diversity, expressions of xenophobia and racial marginalization persist throughout the country, suggesting a continuing political and cultural attachment to the concept of a white settler society (Abu-Laban, 1998, Galabuzi 2006, Thobani 2011). In this vein, social exclusion functions not only through bureaucratic and administrative mechanisms, as demonstrated in the previous sections, but can also manifest itself through ideologies, discourses, attitudes, and behaviours unfolding during everyday encounters lived by many immigrants, particularly refugees. The type of non-material social exclusion that refugee claimants may encounter is expressed in a wide variety of forms—from politicians linking certain ethnic groups to crime, to media depictions that overlook urban realities and complexities, to the biases of individual citizens. However, in examining various expressions of xenophobia, it is imperative to realize that notions of who “belongs” to the nation and who does not, stem in part from a long line of political and socio-historical events within Canada. These events have helped shape public perceptions, as well as public policy around issues of immigration. After discussing how racial and ethnic “otherness” is produced in Canada, namely through immigration, the final section of this chapter examines some of the exclusionary practices associated with Canadian refugee policies during the 20th century, and particularly in connection with World War II.

Race and nation

Writing about “exalted subjects,” Sunera Thobani (2011) has developed a theoretical framework that clarifies the complex relationship between national and racial subject formation in Canada, building on work of previous scholars like Himani Bannerji, Sherene Razack, and Eva Mackey. In what she calls the “exaltation process,” Thobani delineates the political process “that constitutes the national subject as belonging to a higher order of humanity” (p.248). Using the triangulated relationship between whites, Aboriginal populations and immigrants organized through the institution of citizenship, as well as the judicial order, she historicizes such exaltations and highlights “the racialization processes that sustain national-formation” (p.248).

The recent racialization and marginalization of immigrants, labelled a “new wave of xenophobia in Canada” by Habiba Zaman (2010) has been analyzed by recent literature examining the intersections between immigrants, particularly women immigrants, and race/racism in Canada (Agnew, 2009; Choudry, 2009; Das Gupta, 2009; Dossa, 2009). Such texts reveal racialization as a process embedded in the labour market and in socio-economic-legal-political sectors. Similar to Thobani’s argument regarding national formation, in writing about migration, racialization and nation-formation, Sara Ahmed argues that “an immigrant as a ‘stranger’ plays a crucial role in how national subjects experience and configure the national community’s borders” (2000, p. 3).

Based on Ahmed's statement, one can therefore extrapolate that the immigrant or outsider has been used to define and delineate those who belong, versus those who are confined to the margins of society. Anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiments are not a new phenomenon in Canadian society: they date back to historical immigration policies that excluded "non-preferred races" from entry into Canada up until the mid-twentieth century (Thobani, 2011, p.15). In addition to overtly racist immigration policies, over the recent decades a number of politicians, media commentators, immigration specialists, and some of the general public have scapegoated immigrants and refugees for various fiscal and social problems existing in the country. During the 1990s, with the growth of anti-immigrant sentiments in Canada, a number of programs that included immigrants were called into question. Multiculturalism was attacked for having "undermined national cohesion and for strengthening the political clout of special interest groups" (Thobani, 2011, p.180). The immigration program was treated with scorn for having permitted social services to become overburdened and for allowing the system to be abused on a wide-scale basis (ibid). Moreover, the refugee program was also questioned and attacked for allegedly allowing economic migrants and bogus claimants to stand as political refugees (Mackey, cited in Thobani, p.332). Given this climate, it is not surprising that xenophobic tendencies surfaced and still permeate Canada's ever-changing urban and rural landscapes.

Lisa Jakubowski (1997) has argued that growing public anxiety about the consequences of cultural tolerance was closely tied to a resentment of the economic and social pressures said to be the result of increased immigration. She

concluded that the large national deficit and shrinking state funds for social programs, such as welfare, health care, and education, made immigrants a handy scapegoat for cutbacks to social services. She writes: “The immigrant was socially constructed to be one who was abusive to, and a burden on Canada and its resources in state policy” (p. 64).

According to Thobani (2011), the Immigration Policy Review that took place in 1994 is one example of a state mechanism that formalized this scapegoating. In order to engage Canadians in an “open” and “honest” discussion about immigration and the vision of the nation, these extensive consultations included a number of “working groups” which addressed various questions concerning immigration policy, resulting in a published report entitled: “Into the 21st Century: A Strategy for Immigration and Citizenship.”⁶⁴ With an important deficit crisis in the background during the 1990s, the majority of the issues raised during the Immigration Policy Review were “specific questions about the cost of immigration and linked ‘increased’ demands on social programs with immigration” (Thobani, p.185).⁶⁵ Canada’s social security system was under scrutiny to determine whether the generosity and openness of the system was being abused, during a time when federal programs had to be limited or cut,

⁶⁴ The CIC conducts annual consultations with provincial governments and other “stakeholders.” See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2013). *Backgrounder — 2013 Immigration Levels Planning: Public and Stakeholder Consultations*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-07-31.asp>

⁶⁵ Example of issues delineated include: “Have recent immigration and economic trends created needs which current programming and resources cannot meet?”; “Should newcomers receive materials explaining the rights and responsibilities of consuming public services?”; “How far are Canadians prepared to go to ensure their generosity and openness are not abused?” (Thobani, p, 185).

including subsidies to the provinces.⁶⁶ However, Thobani (2011) critiques the public debate raised by the Immigration Policy Review. She argues that instead of trying to discuss the impact of immigration on the nation, the consultations managed to present immigrants as a “challenge to the very social and cultural viability of the nation” (p.191). Rather than overcoming the nation’s internal inequalities, the Review fuelled “race-based anxieties and antipathies” by appealing to a “shared racial identity⁶⁷ that was pivotal to the construction of a unified national interest” (p.190). Thobani explains that the Review cast immigrants as largely responsible for the economic and social problems of the nation, allowing the state to cast Canadians as its true subjects and citizens, despite the fact that Canada is built on immigration and faces an increasing heterogeneity among the population. As such, the approach adopted throughout these consultations simply reinforced an “us” versus “them” rhetoric and “made no attempt to recognize, or account for, the unequal access of Aboriginal peoples or of immigrants to social security (p.187-88), thereby instilling a function of exclusion within the discourse⁶⁸. Even though the consultations did not necessarily appease the overwhelming anti-immigrant sentiments at the time, Thobani does point out how not all the consultation participants agreed with the anti-immigrant sentiments, however many statements pointing to the positive aspects of immigration were denied entry into final submissions (p. 201). Based

⁶⁶ See Egan, L, & Palmer, R. (2011, November 21). The lesson from Canada on cutting deficits. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/the-lesson-from-canada-on-cutting-deficits/article4252006/?page=all>

⁶⁷ Read White racial identity.

⁶⁸ In studying the Foucauldian concept of discourse, Sara Miller has observed that “perhaps the most important structure of discourse is less its constituent parts but rather the function of exclusion (As cited in Thobani, p. 188).

on the outcome of the Review, three objectives were set in order to renew social programs: “helping Canadians to get and keep jobs; supporting those most vulnerable, especially children living in poverty; and ensuring affordability” (Hicks, 2008, p.9). In sum, the questions raised by the Review identified a wide range of financial, social, and political problems, linking a number of these issues directly with immigration, and stressed the need to protect the existing programs (and the Canadians these were intended to really serve) (Thobani, p 186). Some of the recommendations of the Review included reducing family class immigration and increasing control over access of sponsored immigrants to social programs (p.202). As Keith Banting (2010) points out, while the federal government does not control access to health and social assistance for immigrants (which are provincial responsibilities), it can control admissions criteria (p. 807). Other recommendations included increasing recruitment of independent class immigrants and immigrants speaking English and French or from original source countries in Europe because they were more likely to be compatible with the nation. Nevertheless, Banting (2010) observes how throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, study after study concluded that immigrants to Canada were less reliant on income transfers than the native born population making it difficult for critics to maintain “a dominant political narrative of gloom about the economic and social costs of immigration” (Banting, 2010, p. 808) .

More recently in Québec, the rhetoric associated with the reasonable accommodations debate in 2007 and the *Bouchard-Taylor Consultation*

*Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences*⁶⁹

introduced an additional layer of anti-immigrant sentiment: anti-Muslim sentiment. Many have criticized this public debate for constructing the white Québécois as the norm and providing a platform for xenophobia (in part sanctioned by the state) under the pretense of an open, honest and democratic public discussion (Choudry, Mahrouse, & Shragge 2008). In an editorial entitled *Neither Reasonable Nor Accommodating* (2008) the aforementioned authors argue that these public debates put immigrants in a position where they would face increased social exclusion. They write: "Québec wants its distinct culture and identity recognized. Immigrants are seen to be the biggest threats to this project, and are constructed as perpetual outsiders rather than as integral to Québec

⁶⁹ The Reasonable Accommodation debates took place across the province of Québec between 2007 and 2008, called for by the provincial government after a number of high profile incidents involving clashes or controversies between members of minority groups, in particular religious minorities, and the members of the highly secularized French-speaking majority. It is important to mention that during the "Quiet Revolution" of the 1960s in Québec, the French-speaking majority had overthrown the restraints of its earlier conservative Catholic culture, creating a social climate where religion in general was rejected. In January 2007, the debate on "reasonable accommodation" heightened when the City Council of Hérouxville, Québec, passed a resolution stating the town's "Normes de vie" or "Standards", included controversial prohibitions such as not allowing covering one's face, except on Halloween, and prohibiting the "killing women by lapidation or burning them alive in public places, burning them with acid, excising them, infibulating them or treating them as slaves". Even if these standards have no legal effect, minority groups, such as the Canadian Islamic Congress and the Canadian Muslim Forum, felt they reinforced misinformed minority stereotypes and threatened to bring a Human Rights Complaint. As a response to the heated debate, Québec Premier Jean Charest announced the creation of a special commission, headed by prominent academics Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor. The mandate of the Bouchard-Taylor commission was to conduct extensive public consultations throughout the urban and rural regions of the province on the issue of reasonable accommodation. See Sheppard, M.A. (2008, May 22). Report of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on Reasonable Accommodation of Minorities. *Slaw: Canada's online legal magazine*. Retrieved from <http://www.slaw.ca/2008/05/22/report-of-the-bouchard-taylor-commission-on-reasonable-accommodation-of-minorities/> and Wall, M. (January, 16, 2008). The Québec debate on reasonable accommodation. Centre of Constitutional Studies. University of Alberta Law. Retrieved from <http://www.law.ualberta.ca/centres/ccs/news/?id=15>. The authors of the 300 page report, Bouchard and Taylor concluded that "The foundations of collective life in Québec are not in a critical situation". They highlighted that the government needs to play a better role in establishing guidelines of "interculturalism", stating that "What we are facing, instead, is the need to adapt". See Let's move on, says Québec accommodation commission. (2008, May 22). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/Montréal/story/2008/05/22/qc-accommodation.html>

society. This commission is painted as a model of open dialogue and democracy. Yet, it reinforces hierarchies and exclusions rather than addressing them” (p.17).

Even more recently, the tendency to associate “foreigners” with crime has permeated Canadian public and political discourses. In July 2012, following a shooting in Toronto at a community barbeque, in which two people were killed and 22 were injured, Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Minister Jason Kenney sparked outrage after he stigmatized the Caribbean Canadian community by linking gun violence with foreigners. The Minister published the following tweet on his Twitter account “I agree w/ Mayor Ford: foreign gangsters should be deported w/out delay. That's why we've introduced ‘Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act.’”⁷⁰ Besides promoting a piece of policy introduced by the Conservative government, the Minister attaches gun violence to foreigners, particularly Caribbean Canadians. This tweet is just one of many examples that illustrate how social exclusion is not only enforced through legal mechanisms and policy, but also through non-material values, such as statements and ideologies. By stigmatizing foreigners, particularly the Canadian Caribbean community, the minister perpetuates xenophobia and makes an explicit association between crime and foreigners, regardless of whether the Caribbean Canadians in question were actually recent immigrants, or were born in Canada, perhaps to families that have been in the country for many years. A tendency to associate crime with immigrants in Toronto is not novel. Criminalizing individuals of West Indian descent, as well as other racialized groups, such as members of the Somali

⁷⁰ On Twitter @kenneyjason Jason Kenney, Immigration Minister published July 20, 2012.

community was widespread in Toronto during the 1990s, as Valverde and Pratt (2002) have documented. Instead of learning and trying to rectify past errors, the same rhetoric and discourses re-emerge and continue to circulate, in this case through politicians' social media accounts.

Fragments of everyday xenophobia in Montréal

Having given some context for xenophobia within Canada and Québec, I am interested in how xenophobia unfolds in everyday life at urban and ground levels for refugee claimants in Montréal. In a number of interviews, the respondents described their encounters with xenophobia and hostility in Montréal. Such incidents occurred either at the border during the process of claiming status, with bureaucratic barriers at immigration offices, with potential employers once somewhat settled in the city, or with various customer service agents, other citizens, and even friends.

When Ella escaped Zimbabwe, a country colonized by the British, she spoke English fluently, but did not speak French. When I asked her to describe her process of adapting to Montréal, she brought up the discrimination she experienced when she was initially unable to communicate in French. Interestingly, in reading official Québec government documents, I came across information stating that in government offices, refugee claimants can be served in the language of their choice if they do not speak French.⁷¹ Ella, as opposed to

⁷¹ In looking at the Québec government's *Emploi et Solidarité Social* website under the Services for refugee protection claimants page, the "To serve you better" section addresses language. It states the following: "In accordance with the Ministère's language policy, employees will speak to you in French. If you do not understand French, you may be served in another language spoken by

many other claimants, speaks at least one official Canadian language. Being excluded due to complete lack or insufficient knowledge of the Canadian official languages is a common occurrence in everyday life, from grocery store exchanges to more formal exchanges with government officials.

Language was just something else...it was really...it was difficult...well, I've been called names for not speaking French...

Many refugee claimants who arrive to Canada find themselves in pure survival mode, their main concern being obtaining formal status. Their migrating to Canada was not always based on choice, and instead, their arrival was a matter of escaping death and persecution. In other words, Ella ultimately did not have a choice. She expresses her frustration with her lack of French language skills in the following terms.

I didn't come to learn here, to learn anything, I'm a refugee, a proper one, I came here to be safe....I might want to learn something but...my problems and my troubles are bigger than wanting to fit in...

Unfortunately, individuals who speak other languages or have different life experiences, or even accents from other countries are not always included in the collective “we”; instead they find themselves socially, culturally and economically isolated. Even if they are integrated within various realms, such characteristics can still categorize someone as a “foreigner” or “immigrant”. Ella explains how the discrimination is not always explicitly voiced and instead is expressed in more subtle ways:

the employees on site." See Emploi et Solidarité Social Québec.(2012). *Centre spécialisé des demandeurs d'asile, des garants défaillants et des parrainés*. Retrieved from Emploi et Solidarité Social Québec <http://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/services-a-la-clientele/centre-specialise-des-demandeurs-dasile/>

...to answer how safe did I feel and how did I cope with the resentment, I mean I've been called names...I've been called names, I've been told to go back from where I came from...I've been told I have an accent...I've been told....that I'm black...I've been told that I'm fat...oh.. I've been told everything....but it's not as painful as the reason why I came here....not that painful, is the reason why I came here...I came here because I ran away from a situation and right now what is killing me is wanting to be part of what's happening in my country....I really do....want to be part of it... You can feel the resentment sometimes...but maybe somebody has no guts of really saying, voicing it out...because they don't know what they will meet, what will come from you...but even not voicing it sometimes,...you can feel it, yes...you can feel it...that bothers me...it really gets into you... and especially in my situation when you know that you wish you could just go on top of a roof and tell them that "guys, I didn't want to go there, I didn't want to be here...and understand me, I don't want anything from you but there is an enemy behind me who wants to eat me..." and for me to survive, for my children to have a mother, because they have me and me alone in this world, if I die....the thing is....my wish is...I better die with them....and that's the reason I took them with me...yes...I want to scream and tell them that Nooo...I can live under a bridge, I don't mind, as long as I'm not in Zimbabwe...

When I asked Hussein, a university educated businessman from Mauritius who converted to Christianity from Islam, if he encountered any obstacles in finding employment due to his status as a refugee. His response was that in his case, his difficulties were not due to his status, but rather to his Muslim name (despite having converted to Christianity). He was shocked when one employer explicitly told him they hire based on ethnic background, only confirming the discrimination he had suffered for having a name that was neither English nor French. He explains:

Le statut de réfugié pour moi, dans mon cas personnel, n'a pas était un obstacle pour un emploi. Mon nom est plutôt un obstacle. J'ai remarqué que, je porte le nom musulman, mais je ne suis pas musulman. Mais il y a beaucoup d'emplois, j'ai compris que, après les évènements du 11 septembre, on ne prenait pas vraiment les musulmans, ça j'avais constaté ça. Le seul emploi que j'ai eu dans une compagnie très bien, très correcte,

c'est seulement parce que le superviseur il a était avisé déjà par la personne qui m'avait référé que lui (Hussein) n'est pas musulman, malgré son nom. Mais il y avait un emploi, que j'avais postulé aussi, on m'avait demandé si j'étais citoyen canadien. Là, je n'étais pas encore citoyen canadien, mais j'avais dit à la dame que, ce n'est pas autorisé de demander, elle me dit non, c'est le contraire, parce que nous, on sélectionne par rapport à la nationalité. Ben là, je n'avais pas de réponse pour elle.

(Hussein is a 42 year old from Mauritius. He is a university educated businessman, and a single parent of two children. He arrived in Montréal on February 10, 2001. Status during time of interview: Canadian citizen)

McAll (1995) writes about the importance of community, and related to it, the feelings of belonging, shared values and language, which form a community, as a system of networks (real or imagined). However, within the idea of community, barriers to interaction with minorities or foreigners can emerge. Such barriers lead to the “fermeture” (p. 84), the closing of one community vis-à-vis another, which seems to happen when claimants are perceived to be “other” due to their skin color, names, language skills, or accents, as demonstrated through their narratives.

After September 11 in particular, xenophobia was prominently expressed towards Arabs and Muslims, even towards non-Muslim Arabs. Umar , a lawyer from Pakistan who was persecuted there for his political opinions recalls one negative experience as a refugee claimant in Montréal when he was harassed for being “looking Muslim”. He had the following to say about the incident:

I think I have never had a problem... But once after 9/11, we were sitting in a park and just women, they came and they start yelling...that was the first time...and we said nothing...it's old ladies....

(Umar is a 62 year old man from Pakistan; he is university educated, a lawyer by profession. He arrived in Montréal on June 15, 1993. Status during time of interview: Canadian citizen)

These incidents demonstrated that beyond bureaucratic and policy systems, there is a non-material dimension of exclusion brought on by certain misconceptions, and fear of the other and the unknown that refugees represent in a white settler colony. Although Canada may have a humanitarian approach in welcoming and accommodating refugee claimants, there are still negative public attitudes that emerge on a personal and day-to-day basis. The next section considers the historical examples of exclusion that emerge in Canadian refugee policies during the Second World War and later.

III. Canadian refugee policy and exclusionary practices during 20th century

In surveying some of the exclusionary practices linked to immigration policies in Canada throughout the first half of the 20th century, particularly with regards to refugees, it becomes evident that admission policies have not always been centered on humanitarian concerns. Instead, many of these practices are related to ideals of nation building, economics, racial considerations, the exercise of power and the pursuit of special interests. This section highlights certain aspects of Canadian immigration policy, specifically concerning the admittance, treatment, and resettlement of refugees in Canada, particularly during and post-Second World War. The aim is to illuminate the systemic exclusion entrenched in Canadian immigration policy throughout a portion of the 20th century history and to highlight the importance of addressing this history when examining current refugee exclusion.

It has long been documented that Canada is a white settler colony, with Canadian immigration policy favouring “white Protestants, namely of British origin” (Abu Laban, 1998, p.71). This partiality is not without consequence, as it entails differential treatment of groups and individuals who do not necessarily fit the ideal model. In fact, not only has the entry of certain races and ethnic groups into Canada been limited over the past century, but also, many have encountered significant racism and have faced difficulty in terms of successful economic and social integration. Given this chapter’s theme of social exclusion, my objective in this section is therefore to underline some exclusionary immigration practices related to refugees during and after World War II. Even though we cannot overlook the countless positive contributions and policies that have been introduced to protect refugee rights over the years⁷² here, we must highlight some historic examples of immigration policies and practices vis-à-vis refugees. Embedded in racist and xenophobic discourses, such practices and policies can shed light on contemporary expressions of xenophobia experienced by refugee claimants.

Yasmine Abu-Laban (1998) identifies two central issues pertaining to immigration in Canada. Taking into account that Canada developed as a white settler colony, the first issue has to do with cultural considerations of religion and race/ethnicity; in other words, the exclusion of certain cultural and racial groups.

⁷² When Canada did finally decide to allow large numbers of refugees to enter the country, it was primarily driven by economic interests. More specifically, the admissions were destined to fulfill the needs of the country’s growing economy (Knowles, p.167) during the post-war years. Later on, Canada admitted 40 000 Hungarian refugees from 1956-1957. The way in which Canada responded to Hungarian refugees “represents one brief period of glory” (Ibid, p.173). Also, a number of Palestinian refugees were accepted during the year 1948.

The second issue is fulfilling immediate labour needs (p.71). In fact, historically, race and labour have been closely intertwined within Canadian immigration's exclusionary practices. One historic example of exclusionary immigration is John A. Macdonald's national policy, which was linked to westward expansion and the building of the Canadian railway. Between the years 1880 and 1884 male Chinese labourers were recruited to carry out the most dangerous labour in constructing the Canadian Pacific Railway. They were poorly remunerated for their extremely hazardous work (Abu Laban, p.71). Following the completion of the railway in 1885, the federal government launched the Chinese Immigration Act, which included the introduction of a 'head tax' system. With this policy, Chinese migrants were forced to pay high fees to bring their families to Canada. After being exploited for their labour, this policy caused profound emotional and financial consequences for Chinese communities in Canada and in China. Families were separated, due to the fact that the Chinese labourers' wives and children were prevented from entering Canada (Abu Laban, p.72). By 1903, the head tax had risen to \$500 (Kelley & Trebilcock, 2010, p. 155). Such state endorsed practices and policies to restrict the settlement of certain groups were not limited only to the Chinese. Other historic policies aimed to discourage the permanent settlement of racialized immigrants such as Japanese and South Asian families (Das Gupta, 1995).

Besides the introduction of a head tax during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, until the legislation was finally banned in 1923 (Abu Laban, p.71), the internment of immigrants of different racial backgrounds was a common policy

practice. During the Second World War, Kelley and Trebilcock note that “internment was carried out excessively and arbitrarily” (p.259). The number of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Canadians who were asked to leave their homes along the British Columbia coast was more than 22 000 (ibid). Japanese Canadians experienced significant difficulties. Following the attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, the Canadian government ordered that fishing boats operated by Japanese Canadians be impounded and that all “alien” Japanese register with the RCMP. Many were sent to detention camps in the remote interior of British Colombia, as a “process that saw a visible minority uprooted from their B.C. homes, stripped of their property, and dispersed around Canada” (p.153). Kelley and Trebilcock state that “the war ignited deep prejudices against those of Japanese ancestry” (p.259). Although such policies came into effect during a time of war, they only exacerbated fear and suspicion towards those who were deemed “outsiders” despite being established, and, at times, born in Canada.

Another deliberate act of exclusion based on race was the refusal to admit Jewish refugees during World War II. When the S.S. St-Louis ship carrying Jews fleeing the war was sent back in 1939 after its arrival to Canadian shores, the incident led many of the passengers to die in Nazi death camps. Kelley and Trebilcock note that in this case, “the refusal to admit Jewish refugees was largely rooted in bigotry” (p.259). However, the decision to refuse these refugees was not made overnight. In fact, Canada’s indifference towards the refugee plight was made clear a year earlier. In 1938, the Franklin Roosevelt’s government in the United States called the Evian Conference, which gathered thirty nations to

address the worsening refugee situation in Europe. Canada reluctantly participated but, like many other countries at the time, was not willing to lower immigration barriers and accept Jewish refugees (Knowles, 2007, p. 144). Such decisions had dire consequences for those aboard the S.S. St-Louis. Moreover, during the 1930s, anti-semitism was pronounced in the province of Québec, where “French-Canadian nationalism, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, and the impact of the Great Depression” (Knowles, p.145) led to the exclusion of Jews from clubs and organizations. Jewish businesses were boycotted and public movements that lobbied against the admission of Jewish immigrants spread (Trebilcock, p. 263). However, certain organizations and individuals were invested in the protection of refugee rights. The Canadian National Committee on Refugees (CNCR), chaired by Canada’s first woman Senator, Cairine Wilson, lobbied for the rights of refugees, even as the organization was met by resistance from PM Mackenzie King. Nevertheless, the CNCR made important strides in resettling refugee families and individuals, as well as promoting public awareness of the refugee cause and assisting anti-Nazi Europeans who were interned in Canadian prison camps (Knowles, p. 148).

While some immigration officers here and abroad wanted to help Jewish refugees, some members of the government were overtly racist. F.C. Blair, a minister from the Prairies, had the power to grant special immigration permits for Jewish applicants, but rarely did so, because he thought that immigration should be discouraged whenever and however possible. Moreover, he was known to dislike Jews and equated the term “refugee” with “Jew”. As Knowles highlights,

refugees who sought safety in Canada, therefore, faced a “formidable bureaucratic obstacle in the person of this long-serving civil servant” (p.146). Thus, not only were actual policies racist during the first part of the 20th century, civil servants in prominent positions of power often had racist attitudes towards certain groups.

At the beginning of the 1940s, a group of refugees referred to as the so-called “accidental immigrants” arrived in Canada. The group consisted of approximately 2500 “enemy aliens”, Austrian and German nationals, many highly educated Jews, residents of the Great Britain during the war. Perceived as security threats, these individuals were interned in Britain, and later brought to Québec in 1940, where they were imprisoned once more (Knowles, p.150). Immigration authorities were surprised to see that many were young teenagers, university students, rabbis and priests. Nevertheless, these enemy aliens were placed in camps resembling maximum prison facilities. The British eventually realized their mistake. By 1945, Canada re-categorized these once-prisoners as “Interned Refugees (Friendly Aliens) from the United Kingdom and invited them to become Canadian citizens (Knowles, p. 150).

Not all the ships carrying refugees suffered a fate similar to that of the S.S. St-Louis. More recent arrivals of ships carrying asylum seekers have had various outcomes. For instance, in August of 2010, a Sun Sea vessel carrying 492 Tamil asylum seekers arrived on British Colombia’s shores. Some argued that potential terrorists could be on board, and said the ship should be turned back, as migrants should not be let in through the “back door” of the immigration system (Newark, 2011). Others, advocates of refugee rights, who also recalled the tragic fate of

refugees onboard the S.S. St-Louis, argued that before the government took any drastic action, each refugee's case should be heard (Waldman and Macklin, 2011). Ultimately, the Tamil migrants on board were allowed to dock, were given medical care and then the Canadian Border Security Agency proceeded to process their individual cases, recommending only 15 of the refugee claims be dismissed.⁷³

As these few examples show, like a number of western countries, Canada has a history of racialized immigration policies. In the introduction of "*Strangers at our gates*": *Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-2006*, Valerie Knowles (2007) states that "racism frequently plays a role in the Canadian immigration story" (p.9). Initially, immigration policies were racist, rejecting the admission of the non-preferred race. Then, after the middle of the 20th century, more subtle biases emerged, such as the point-based immigration system, which discriminates in favour of Anglophone and Francophone migrants from the "developed" world. As Abu Laban points out, post-1967, Canadian immigration policy was distinctive due to the removal of formal racism. Nevertheless, biases relating to gender, race/ethnicity and class still structure supposedly neutral & universal immigration policy.⁷⁴

⁷³ Of the 492 migrants, 15 had been involved in war crimes, terrorism or human smuggling, according to government officials who want them deported from Canada. As for the others, 307 people have been released and 136 remain in custody, including 11 refugee claimants whose positive release decisions from the board were overturned by a federal court. Among the 136, 12 are women." See The Canadian Press. (2011, January 21). CBSA recommends dismissing 15 Tamil refugee claims. CTV News. Retrieved from <http://www.ctvnews.ca/cbsa-recommends-dismissing-15-tamil-refugee-claims-1.598828>.

⁷⁴ Abu-Laban argues that Canada's preference for immigrants who provide economic benefit has differentially advantaged would-be immigrants in terms of class, gender, and geographic location, race/ethnicity. The evaluation criteria are socially constructed & reflect prevailing political,

The objective here was not to conduct an exhaustive survey and history of Canadian immigration policy containing racist practices or undertones. Rather, exclusionary immigration policy is a backdrop for my primary focus on everyday social exclusion experienced by refugees claiming status in Canada. In highlighting some key instances when refugees and immigrants have been excluded by official policy, throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly around the period of the Second World War, I demonstrated how immigration policies and even individuals in power had a profound impact on the individuals who were subjected to these racist laws and confronted by xenophobic individuals making these problematic decisions. These historic examples shed light on the importance of balanced, fair and efficient refugee policy, with humanitarian concerns at the forefront.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to map experiences of social exclusion lived by refugee claimants in Montréal based on the narratives I collected. The narratives demonstrated the social exclusion encountered in securing status, employment, education, and health care as the claimants navigate the mazes of policy systems

economic power structures according to the author. The indicators of worth include education, skills, work experience, knowledge of official languages, and age). The supposedly universal system is flawed according to Abu-Laban as it contains certain prejudices and biases. For instance, women and the poor are disadvantaged with regards to education, therefore the system favours men. Moreover, differential access, meaning the existence of more Canadian immigration posts in Europe and United States, makes it difficult for individuals from the South and less developed countries to apply to become immigrants. Also, application processing times are faster for individuals applying from developed countries. Finally, the personal discretion of immigration officers also determines who ultimately can apply (See Abu-Laban, pages 75-78). Furthermore, the immigration points system is mathematically measurable, where applicants must obtain 67 out of 100. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Application for permanent residence: Federal skilled worker class (IMM 7000)*. Retrieved from CIC <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/guides/EG7TOC.asp#eg72>

and administrative obstacles. The difficulties in these four domains included years of waiting for status, and inadequate support to understand how to access certain rights and services due to long and poorly explained procedures. In terms of employment, the stigma of carrying a Social Insurance Card revealing refugees' "temporary" status, and the hassle of applying, waiting and then renewing work permits, create important delays in finding and holding on to employment, which is often underpaid compared to the qualifications refugee claimants may possess. Even holding status does not mean the end of social exclusion. Despite being accepted as a refugee, the lacking a piece of paper that is supposedly a mere formality blocks entry into post-secondary education. Access to health care has become even more precarious in light of the recent Interim Federal Health Program cuts. Furthermore, the interviews revealed some non-material aspects of social exclusion that emerged through everyday encounters as the refugee claimants faced hostility and xenophobia, for having a different accent, skin colour, or last name. By tracing everyday experiences of material social exclusion to the federal and provincial policy systems in place and by highlighting how xenophobia emerges in overt and implicit ways in claimants' lives, I contend that the social exclusion of refugee claimants in Montréal unfolds on both systemic and symbolic levels.

As refugees flee persecution and begin new lives, uncertainty and marginalization are omnipresent, as they traverse the obstacles of refugee policy and encounter hostilities with the label and reality of "non-citizen". As Lacroix (2004) rightfully observes, once these individuals decide to leave their countries

and become refugees, they immediately become “someone *other* than who they were previously” (p.164). From that point on they have little control; “refugee claimant subjectivity is imposed on them, one fraught with contradictions and confusion, a direct impact of Canadian refugee policy” (Lacroix, p.164). Although the reality of social exclusion is hard to escape in the lives of refugee claimants, the xenophobia, loss of control, and potential social and economic marginalization often unfolds simultaneously with instances of social inclusion and belonging in the city. The interviews with the respondents revealed that while refugees were waiting for status, they managed to carve out agency, despite the limitations that accompanied their lack of official status. As social exclusion and inclusion collide, this tension brings out a productive “in-betweenness” that is seldom explored and that will be the next chapter’s primary focus.

Chapter 2

I. Instances of refugee inclusion: Spatial and temporal dimensions of everyday “in-betweenness”

“A normative ideal of urban citizenship [...] in which there is no closure to the multicultural urban and political project; that is, no permanent state of integration and harmony towards which we are moving, but an always contested engagement and continually redefined notion of the common good and shared destiny of the citizens of the city” (Sandercock, 2003, p. 151).

Introduction

Refugee claimants residing in Montréal face a complex predicament. They must contend with complex refugee determination systems, and their lives are often marked by circumstances of social, racial, and economic marginalization. However, their lives are also defined by instances where refugee claimants manifest their belonging¹ in the city, create meaning in their lives and carve out agency as non-citizens. While we may think of social inclusion and exclusion as binary categories, a closer examination reveals that they are in fact overlapping, fluid, and dynamic boundaries and positions.²

In this chapter, I challenge the focus on marginalization and the stereotypes commonly associated with refugee claimants. Based on the collected

¹ According to Ong (2003), many American historians have pointed out that the notion of *belonging* (in terms of citizenship status) in the United States has from the beginning been defined in part by unofficial social meanings and criteria. Ong writes that “for minorities and disadvantaged populations, the lived meanings of citizenship are completely entangled with such systems of exclusion, selection, and judgment” (p.70). Similarly in Canada, even when one is granted citizenship or “born into a citizenship,” whether or not they “belong” is questionable.

² I borrow the language of “overlap” and “fluidity” from Isin (2002) who explains that the logics of alterity or otherness within the context of citizenship are “overlapping, fluid, contingent, dynamic and reversible boundaries and positions, where agents engage in solidaristic strategies such as recognition and affiliation, agonistic strategies such as domination and authorization, or alienating strategies such as disbarment across various positions *within* social space” (p.30).

refugee narratives, I propose a closer look at the critical period during which refugee claimants in Montréal wait for their status to be determined. This chapter argues that the spatial and temporal “in-betweenness”³ experienced by claimants can become a moment and site that engenders social inclusion, as claimants become proactive and take on legitimate political and social actions. I argue that such pathways of agency and engagement produce informal and alternative modes and practices of citizenship.

I examine instances of inclusivity carried out by refugee claimants in this chapter, first, by considering the *sans-papiers* movement in France as an example of non-citizen engagement within city space. This movement began in the late 1990s and still exists today across the globe. The *sans-papiers*’s occupation of a Parisian church in 1996 is a central event, considered to be the birth of this movement. Although such actions may be perceived as disruptive, when we examine the movement’s *raison-d’être* and the protests its members have engaged in it becomes evident that individuals labeled undocumented and illegal were able to assert their presence and even to make bold political statements.

I will then address Sassen’s (2006) notion of the “informal citizen”, which she defines as a citizen who is unauthorized and yet recognized; for instance, undocumented migrants who are long-term residents and partake in community life similar to the ways in which citizens do. I also integrate Isin’s idea of “being political” in relation to refugee claimants’ everyday practices as a way to approach citizenship as alterity or as otherness. “Being political” is based on the

³ I put quotation marks around “in-betweenness” throughout the dissertation, as this term is used in a specific manner for the purpose of my project.

premise that refugee claimants do not hold citizenship as defined by the dominant groups. These dominant groups articulate their identity as citizens and constitute strangers and outsiders as those who lack the properties treated as essential for citizenship (Isin, p.ix). I argue that such modes of alternative citizenship can apply to refugee claimants who take up practices within society that create inclusivity, civic engagement, and a sense of belonging usually reserved for individuals who carry citizenship as an official status.

An important portion of the chapter analyzes such instances of inclusivity emerging in the everyday lives of refugee claimants, as revealed through the interview excerpts. After examining existing literature on the notion of “liminality” and refugees, in the context of camps, I elaborate on my definition of “in-betweenness” in the context of re-settled urban refugee claimants. “Liminality” generally has negative undertones associated with social exclusion, but I propose a more nuanced approach with my notion of “in-betweenness” as a more constructive moment and site for refugee inclusivity. I then integrate excerpts from interviews to demonstrate how everyday life practices, from leisure to more political activities, allow refugee claimants to claim space and a “right to the city”, to borrow Lefebvre’s terminology (1996). I examine specific temporal and spatial aspects of refugee “in-betweenness” where social inclusion and exclusion co-exist and overlap. I use the term “suspended temporality” to describe the anticipated and unanticipated impacts of time and lengthy waits for status on the lives of refugee claimants. I also consider the spatial dimensions of living in limbo to be significant, as in some cases refugee claimants find themselves

confined to sanctuary in church basements. Moreover, I explain why I chose to anchor my study of refugee claimants in the examination of the “everyday,” namely on Lefebvre’s and de Certeau’s theorizations on everyday life for citizens, and ways in which city space and citizen practices can be appropriated by non-citizens.

Finally, this chapter also underlines refugee activism in Montréal. I describe some of the political roles taken on by refugee claimants and how movements of conviviality and activism mobilize around refugees and their cause in the city. As this chapter overview indicates, I therefore choose to emphasize the realm of social inclusion – a less explored facet of urban refugee re-settlement – as a productive and positive site of analysis, particularly in terms of refugee claimants’ social and political presence in the city and the contributions that they make.

I would be remiss to address these questions without considering the elements that define the refugee condition, such as the temporal and spatial limitations associated with urban refugee re-settlement. Given that the notion of time (departures, deadlines), waiting times (in detention, or for status, or for family reunification), and timelines (vicissitudes and life chronologies) constitute the refugee experience, how does temporality manifest itself in refugees’ everyday experiences of social exclusion, but *also* inclusion in the city? When time is suspended for refugees, particularly as they wait for their status to be determined, how do they carve out agency and meaning under temporal conditions typically not conducive to such possibilities? And in terms of refugees’

reduced mobility (both social and physical) and access to services and benefits in the city, how do questions of spatiality surface in relation to exclusion and inclusion? What roles do refugee claimants take on when they find themselves spatially restricted, or even confined, for instance during detention or while living in sanctuary to evade deportation?

Refugee presence in the city is undeniable. It is therefore crucial to acknowledge some of the contributions refugees make to civic and community life, particularly when considering the unpredictability and insecurity that asylum seekers face on a daily basis. The interviews revealed that whether individually or collectively, refugees become social actors involved with and volunteering for the local community. Additionally, claimants also engage in political activity surrounding refugee and immigrant advocacy. Despite these realities, there are still negative generalizations about refugees portraying them as passive individuals who depend on and drain the system, and whose cases for asylum may in fact be dubious.⁴

⁴ Public perception often conflates refugees fleeing persecution from those fleeing economic instability. Following his decision during the summer of 2009 to impose visa restrictions on Czechs and Mexicans in order to stem a rising flow of claimants, Immigration Minister Jason Kenney said the following: "It's not lost on economic migrants who want to jump the queue that we have a system that's fairly easy to abuse. And where people can settle in Canada, sometimes for several years, with a mixture of a work permit and/or social benefits, and if they're determined to, they can game our system and abuse our generosity," See Clark, C. (2009, July 15). Minister calls for overhaul of Canada's refugee system. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/minister-calls-for-overhaul-of-canadas-refugee-system/article1218679/>

Economic migrants are defined as persons who move to another country to take up a job or improve their economic future (as defined by the CCR Glossary of Terms). The term is used appropriately when applied for people whose motivations are entirely economic. Yet, it is important to realize that migrants' motivations are often complex and not immediately obvious. In Mexico for instance, corruption as well as drug cartel violence may be deemed economic strife, yet the violence and number of murders are on the rise. See Archibold, R. (2009, March 22). Mexican Drug Cartel Violence Spills Over, Alarming U.S. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/23/us/23border.html>

Disrupting the norm

Within social science research, the refugee experience is frequently oversimplified. Refugee experiences are not comprehensively examined, but rather the research focuses exclusively on precarious conditions and social exclusion, namely in terms of poverty (Miles & Thränhardt, 1995; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006; McAll, 1995; Ley & Smith, 2000; Goldring et al, 2006). Even though it is impossible to overlook the economic factors related to social exclusion, this approach alone does not offer a comprehensive and accurate understanding of refugees' experiences in their new urban dwelling place.

Despite the fact that refugees are devoid of citizenship in the legal sense, their civic involvement, which *de facto* makes them, much like citizen, active participants in society, is too often neglected. And even if their place in society is acknowledged, it is misconstrued time and again. Refugees are frequently perceived as bogus claimants, opportunists who abuse and live off the system. Pratt and Valverde (2002) highlight this when they write about a moral campaign against refugee applicants and immigrants that involved portraying Somali residents in Toronto (once deserving victims) as “masters of confusion”, whose intention was to take advantage of Canada’s refugee and social welfare systems. Refugee claimants are also often presented as threats to national security and creating general unease. Didier Bigo (2002) addresses the securitization of migration and asks why migration is so persistently framed in relation to terrorism, crime, unemployment, and religious zealotry (p. 64). According to Bigo, the securitization of migration is a “transversal political technology, used as

a mode of governmentality by diverse institutions to play with the unease, or to encourage it if it does not yet exist” (p.65). Claims tainted by xenophobic undertones are also commonly made when referring to specific groups of refugee claimants. Aiwha Ong (2003) describes how Cambodian refugees negotiated a new culture and an array of U.S institutions upon their arrival to the American West coast. She stresses that Southeast Asian refugees are among the most invisible groups in the North American consciousness (p. xvi). Ong also points out that while Cambodian refugees have a historical and cultural trajectory radically different from other Americans, there are “remarkable continuities and similarities with the experience of stigmatization and regulation experienced by generations of poor African Americans and immigrants from Latin America as well as those from Asia” (p.xvii).

Mostly regarded as passive, unproductive and even suspect individuals, interestingly, when a refugee does take a proactive stance, it is often framed as “disruptive” in nature. Such acts interrupt the order determined by the immigration and refugee determination systems, as well as by society in general. For instance, asylum seekers taking sanctuary in places of worship, never without a solid network of local supporters, are considered to be violating the law.⁵

⁵ In January 2008, the Public Safety Minister at the time, Stockwell Day declared that even though paralyzed refugee claimant Laibar Singh was offered sanctuary at a Sikh Temple in Surrey, B.C., his status means nothing under Canadian law. Day stated that "when people are ... defying a removal order -- whether they are taking refuge in a place of worship or whether they are taking refuge in a mall -- they are in defiance of the rule of law." See "Sanctuary means nothing in Canadian law": Day. (2008, January 11). *The National Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalpost.com/news/canada/story.html?id=231725>
Singh, who arrived to Canada in 2003 with a forged passport, claimed that he was being persecuted by police in Punjab. He later was left paralyzed from a spinal infection while working in Canada. His supporters in British Columbia claimed that if deported, Singh would face death, either through torture or inadequate medical care. Those supporting Singh have thwarted his

The “sans-papiers”

The most internationally notable example of the conflation of refugee agency with disruptive dissent is the *sans papiers* movement which originated in France. In 1996, more than 300 *sans papiers* from Africa occupied the Saint-Ambroise church in Paris to demand resident status. This mobilization is often cited as the birth of the *sans-papiers* movement itself.⁶ Men, women and children together refused the label of “illegal” and decided to live openly and with dignity in France. The police eventually evicted the *sans papiers* from the Saint-Ambroise church by force—the clergy were complicit with this eviction. Although occupying the church was deemed disruptive and unwarranted by institutional powers and the public, this non-formal type of “action” is undeniably an act of political participation. The *sans papiers* rendered themselves political subjects who vocalized their rights, resisting state-imposed hegemony and rejecting conformity. As Ababacar Diop, a spokesman for the *sans papiers* movement in France explains: “we wanted to remind people that we existed and wished to be free of the illegality that French laws had thrust upon us.”⁷

Unequivocally, feelings of uneasiness tend to grow in segments of the population

deportation more than once. On December 11, 2007, the Canadian Border Services Agency was scheduled to deport Singh. However, more than 1000 supporters surrounded his taxi at Vancouver International Airport in protest, causing delays and blocking traffic. See Deportation order for Sikh man still in effect, says government. (2008, January 8). Retrieved from

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2008/01/09/singh-deportation.html>

A few months later, Singh was deported to India. See Laibar Singh speaks about life after Canada. (2009, July 20). Retrieved from

http://www.ctvbc.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20090720/bc_exit_strategy_singh_090720?hub=BritishColumbiaHome

⁶ See a chronology related to the *sans papiers* struggle in France at Vie Publique. (2013). Chronologie : histoire de l’immigration en dates. *La Direction de l’information Légale et Administrative*. Retrieved from <http://www.vie-publique.fr/politiques-publiques/politique-immigration/chronologie-immigration/>

⁷ See Diop, A. (1997, April 4). The struggle of the “sans-papiers”: realities and perspectives. Retrieved from <http://bok.net/pajol/sanspap/sptextes/ababacar2.en.html>

when non-status migrants— whose place and belonging in society are already questionable for many citizens— engage in provocative (yet proactive) acts that entail appropriating and occupying city/citizen space and rights. More recently, on October 10th 2009, thousands marched through the streets of the 18th arrondissement in Paris holding banners bearing slogans such as: “la régularisation de tous les sans-papiers.” The march began in front of a building that houses a large number of immigrants, a building which organizers re-named as “ministère de la régularisation globale de tous les sans-papiers.” The French media was quick to classify and profile those participating in the demonstration; it described the protesting procession as predominantly “male and black” (“Le cortège, très majoritairement masculin et noir, était précédé d'une banderole proclamant "Tous ensemble pour la régularisation de tous les sans-papiers"”).⁸ Amid the polemics surrounding immigrant and refugee resettlement and integration in contemporary France, the protests’ *raison-d’être* remains consistent with the motives that led to the origins of the movement in the late 1990s. Similar to the demands voiced more than a decade earlier at Saint-Ambroise, one of the organizers at the more recent demonstration pointed out that these *sans papiers* are in a precarious state, that they want to work, pay taxes, come out of the shadows.⁹ This statement is aligned with the will to break free from labels of

⁸ See *Manifestation pour la régularisation des sans-papiers à Paris*. (2009, Octobre, 10). Retrieved from http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2009/10/10/manifestation-pour-la-regularisation-des-sans-papiers-a-paris_1252355_3224.html

⁹ Organizer Mamadou Bramé stated that “Ces sans-papiers sont dans la précarité, ils veulent travailler, payer des impôts, sortir de l'ombre”. See *Manifestation pour la régularisation des sans-papiers à Paris*. (2009, Octobre, 10). Retrieved from http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2009/10/10/manifestation-pour-la-regularisation-des-sans-papiers-a-paris_1252355_3224.html

illegality in France and to emerge from the margins, the “shadows” of French society. In other words, for the *sans papiers*, rejecting social exclusion is still a prime objective. Whether or not they are members of the *sans papiers*, non-status migrants’ occupation of streets and churches, renaming buildings, and vocalizing refugee rights in city space, echo Henri Lefebvre’s notion of right to the city as “a practice and argument for claiming rights and appropriating social and physical spaces in the city” (Gilbert & Dikeç, 2008, p.252). For Lefebvre (1996), the right to the city is “like a cry and a demand.” In writing about strategies for urban reform, Lefebvre suggests that “only groups, social classes and class fractions capable of revolutionary initiative can take over and realize to fruition solutions to urban problems” (p.154). In this vein, I would argue that generating recognition and inclusiveness in the plural city becomes achievable when groups such as refugee claimants, undocumented migrants, and other individuals in precarious, marginal urban situations utilize “revolutionary initiatives” that include measures such as taking over space and rights by and large reserved for legal citizens. Lefebvre goes on to claim that “the first thing to do is to defeat currently dominant strategies and ideologies.” Although social justice groups such as the *sans papiers* or refugee claimants in Montréal certainly do not overturn the State, they make vital ground-level and grassroots interventions that can influence and instigate change. Such interventions may potentially lead to urban reform as outlined by Lefebvre. At the very least, as I argue, it may instill a sense of agency within refugee claimants who are not entitled to the city by virtue of their lack of official status. In fact, Lefebvre’s idea of right to the city is in large part based on

reformist ideals, a strategy he argues becomes “‘inevitably’ revolutionary, not by force of circumstance, but against the established order” (p. 154). Lefebvre describes such urban strategies with the city’s working class in mind. However, this idea of right to city as a rallying cry and demand is apt when discussing migrant appropriation of city space, as in the case of the *sans papiers* and refugee claimants. Regardless of whether their demands are heard or acknowledged by the established order, their demands persist within ever-shifting political, economic and social landscapes.

Proactive existence: “informal citizens”

Influenced by the events in France after May 1968, Lefebvre called for “a renegotiation of the urban as a space for the shared practice of citizenship” (Nadal-Melsió, 2008, p.167). This raises the question of how space is re-negotiated by individuals who do not possess citizenship. There is an interesting political tension in the implications of “right to the city” in relation to individuals who are not yet legal citizens or who do not have the “proper” papers. This tension can shed light on the position of asylum seekers in urban space. After all, for non-status individuals residing in the city, occupying and re-appropriating public space are means by which refugees engage in citizen-space as rights-bearing subjects and as proactive social actors. Gilbert and Dikeç (2008) point out that one way to expand on Lefebvre’s “right to the city” is to reflect on its implications in current debates on immigration and citizenship. The “right to the city,” or what Lefebvre also refers to as the right to urban life, should be understood in this project’s context as “a claim upon society (I would add upon

the city) rather than a simple claim to territorial affiliation,” (p.254) considering that refugees are not yet citizens in the legal, territorial, and classical sense.

As a point of departure in my discussion of how social inclusion in the city can emerge from liminality, I rely on Saskia Sassen’s (2006) notion of the “informal” citizen. She defines the “informal” citizen as one who is unauthorized, yet recognized; for instance, “undocumented immigrants who are long-term residents in a community and participate in it as citizens do” (p.294). Engin Isin’s ideas about what it means “to be” political are also useful for framing my discussion of refugee claimants’ social inclusion and self-determination. He views “being political” as a “means to constitute oneself simultaneously with and against others as an agent capable of judgment about what is just and unjust” (preface, 2002, p. x). In his investigation of citizenship as alterity, Isin argues that at the core, there lies a relational conception of group formation. By this he means that “solidaristic, agonistic, and alienating strategies and technologies constitute ways of being political insofar as they enable agents to take up positions via each other and articulate forms of sociation and identification” (p.29). Consequently, he states that these relationships are “not simply inclusionary or exclusionary but dialogical. Ways of becoming political, such as being citizens, strangers, outsiders and aliens, do not exist in themselves, but only in relation to each other” (Isin, p.29). Beyond the political and the governmental implying each other, Isin and Sassen’s conceptual and practical work allow me to explore how refugee claimants can emerge as political and social subjects. These subjects can demonstrate civic engagement, “social deservedness,” and “national loyalty,”

(p.294) which, as Sassen points out, often allows long-term undocumented migrants to gain legal residence in many countries.

The implications of “practice” and “status” vary from one theorist’s characterization of citizenship to the other. Here, given that refugee claimants do not hold official status, I focus on citizenship as practice. This approach strongly resonates with Saskia Sassen’s conception of an informal citizen. Once refugees are in fact admitted into a country, a number of societal stigmas begin to haunt them. Society tends to perceive refugees as queue-jumpers or those who cheat the welfare system, and this perception overshadows their positive engagement and participation in social, cultural or political life. However, Sassen (2006) highlights the interactions between legality and recognition when drawing a distinction between “informal citizens” and “formal citizens” (p.294). On the one hand, Sassen identifies a type of informal citizen who is unauthorized yet recognized, as might be the case for undocumented immigrants, who are long-term residents in a community and participate in it as citizens do. On the other hand, Sassen identifies a formal citizen, who is authorized yet not fully recognized, as might be the case for minoritized citizens and subjects engaging in political work, even though they do so not as “citizens” but as some other kind of subject, for example, as mothers. According to Sassen (2006) mothers, even if undocumented, take part in their communities’ daily practices. These tasks include raising a family, schooling the children, holding a job—and over time, these mothers can earn citizenship in just about all developed countries, including the United States (p.294).

Following Sassen's stipulation that informal citizens be recognized, whether or not refugees are in fact recognized as proactive social agents, we must still ask if their lack of status leaves open the possibility of recognition in Western society, where citizenship occupies such a coveted and fundamental place. And if they are recognized, by whom?

Liminality

Much has been written on the refugee experience as "liminal" (Chavez, 1998; Diken & Laustsen, 2005; Malkki, 1995). The refugee camp has long been the space that defines refugee liminality. As the refugee camp has increasingly become a "permanent" location, where the refugee's transient condition extends indefinitely, Bauman (2002) writes: "Refugee camps boast a new quality: a 'frozen transience', an on-going, lasting state of temporariness, a duration patched together of moments, none of which is lived through as an element of, and a contribution to, perpetuity" (p.114-15).

Similarly, a number of moments mark the beginning of a transition from one way of life to another and trigger one's finding oneself physically and psychologically "in-between." According to Chavez (1998), migrants experience what he refers to as a "territorial passage" (p.5) that occurs when migrants cross political borders, moving from one country into another.¹⁰ Chavez describes how the "territorial passage" can be divided into three important phases: *separation*,

¹⁰ Having conducted extensive ethnographic research on undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America living in San Diego, Chavez explores the transition which undocumented immigrants go through. He describes how they move from temporary migrants to settlers in the United States and how they remain "liminals," outsiders during their stay in the US, in terms of "securing employment, family formation, the establishment of credit, capital accumulation, competency in English, and so forth, allowing them to become settlers and feel part of the new society" (p.5).

from the known social group or society, *transition* (the “liminal” phase), and *incorporation* into the new social group or society (p.4-5). The length and the complications marking each phase naturally vary for each migrant. In this chapter, I am most concerned with the transition and incorporation phases of non-status individuals, and how social exclusion, and more particularly inclusion, takes shape in refugees’ everyday lives during these uncertain phases. I specifically address “separation” in Chapter Three in the discussion related to refugees’ experiences of “departure.”

One way to concretely conceptualize the spatial and temporal implications of refugee liminality is by borrowing Chavez’s description of economic migrants crossing the border. Liminality can be transposed to a specific space and time as described by Chavez; in this case, onto those migrants who risk illegally crossing the border from Mexico into the United States. He refers to an actual place, informally named the Soccer Field,¹¹ or the Cañon Zapata, and referred to as such on both the U.S. and Mexican sides. The Soccer Field is therefore known as being a place of geographic liminality (p.50), an ambiguous place between the United States and Mexico (though technically in the United States), used as a “staging area” where migrants gather and play soccer as they wait for the most opportune moment to attempt to migrate north. The migrants find themselves in an “in-

¹¹ According to Chavez, the Soccer Field “stands between the domestic and the foreign from the perspective of people on both sides of the border” (p.50). He states that for the migrants who congregate there on any given day, it is a threshold to a new society and a different life. He also points out that even though the migrants stand on U.S soil those on the Soccer Field are not treated as if they have officially entered the United States. People seem to understand implicitly that the Soccer Field is neutral ground, therefore, Border Patrol “watches what goes on in the Soccer Field, but makes little attempt to assert control over it” (p.50). Nevertheless, migrants are approached from time to time on the Field.

between” place, as they are geographically between two countries, as well as “in-between” time, and “in-between” two lives as they wait to cross.

However, liminality is not always a strictly restrictive or negative experience. In this project, I choose to identify that time and place where refugee claimants wait as “in-betweenness”. Contrary to liminality which is often associated with negative experiences of exclusion and precariousness, I argue that “in-betweenness” can instead become a site and moment of civic engagement and belonging to the community for refugees re-settling in urban environments. Contrary to the migrant workers who wait in the Soccer Field, who pause before continuing their difficult journeys to the United States, refugees who re-settle in the city and are forced to wait for their status do more than just wait. Unlike the narrow spatial and temporal confines of a strip of land between two countries, the demands of urban life are such that refugees inevitably put down roots in the city. One of my respondents told me that even when they are living within the restricted confines of sanctuary, refugees do this to “survive” the redundancy and unavoidable necessity of everyday urban life as they wait to obtain status for periods that may span years.

Therefore, refugees who wait in the city are not just passive recipients of care, but are active in finding help appropriate to their own priorities and objectives. Often, a considerable amount of social support and community mobilization takes shape around them. Besides requiring professional and community help for the purposes of their refugee cases, refugees are also propelled to take an active stance in the city to meet basic needs such as securing

housing, health care, and employment. One of the most striking aspects of the respondents' experiences was how refugees managed to contribute to the communities they were a part of while striving to simply survive and get by. In fact, "periods of liminality can presage new cultural formations and the renegotiation of community values and spaces" (Williams, 2006, p.876). Turner (1999) describes how, in the context of the refugee camp for instance, traditional hierarchies and understandings were questioned and challenged due to the new social circumstances.

By the same token, within the new social circumstance of urban existence, overlapping social inclusion and exclusion creates a sense of "in-betweeness" for uprooted refugees. However, this overlap also leads to the development of new social networks and formations. Alongside state and church sponsored support, advocacy and solidarity networks within the Montréal community play a pivotal role in fostering the social inclusion of refugees, particularly because the refugees themselves demonstrate involvement in and commitment to migrant rights. This underscores a clear link between location and social inclusion. In fact, Spicer (2008) points out that social networks are an important dimension of social inclusion based on a qualitative sociological study of asylum-seeker and refugee experiences in UK neighborhoods. Furthermore, Spicer argues that these social networks are closely linked to place, referring to the localized places of the home and immediate neighborhoods. Therefore, social bonds, bridges, and links form in these places. Furthermore, previous work on how newcomers access various social networks and community organizations has been addressed by Rose,

Carrasco, and Charbonneau (1998), as well as by Walton-Roberts (2008). These studies consider the dynamics in the formation of social capital through weak and strong ties. Much research has been conducted on social networks. The concept of “weak ties”, advanced by Granovetter (1973), refers to acquaintances rather than close family and friends, which are viewed as “strong ties.” Thus, “weak ties” allow individuals “to diversify their social network and serve as a getaway to an array of socio-economic and cultural resources beyond those generally available in the person’s ethnic or immigrant community.”¹²

The activist movement that surrounds refugee claimants and immigrants in Montréal is highlighted later in this chapter, as it is an important site of social inclusion for refugees. I now turn to how refugee claimants express their experiences of “in-betweenness” in everyday life on their own terms.

Leisure to alleviate the wait

While trying to establish a sense of normalcy and routine in their everyday lives, refugee claimants do not prioritize leisure when other basic living needs and the worry of securing status are first and foremost in their minds. I asked Ella what she did and where she went to have fun given the heavy burden of “in-betweenness” she carried as a single-mother waiting for status.

Ohhh!! Hahaha!! Fun! ... that’s foreign...fun is unheard of when you are a refugee...there are some people who have fun of course...and there are some who cannot have that fun...even if they wanted to...because of limited resources...or...you are busy doing some ...immigration paperwork...going

¹² See Rose, Carrasco, and Charbonneau, “The Role of Weak Ties,” and Walton-Roberts, “Weak Ties, Immigrant Women” for more on the dynamics behind strong and weak ties. Also see Karen J. Aroian, “Sources of Social Support and Conflict for Polish Immigrants,” *Qualitative Health Research* 2 (1992):178–207; Mark Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (1973): 1360–80; and Jacqueline Hagan, “Social Networks, Gender, and Immigrant Incorporation: Resources and Constraints,” *American Sociological Review* 63 (1998): 55–67.

to meetings, and you know...because you are busy...the whole week, weekends you want to rest and so...the fun part of it is really limited...

However, many respondents who were involved in local refugee advocacy and activism groups, including Ella, eventually found themselves becoming part of a community with local citizens and other refugee claimants. As much as all the respondents pointed out that “fun” is not always a priority during the immigration process, it is important to note that citizens and allies provide support and attempt to alleviate the tension felt by refugee claimants during critical waiting times.

To counter the “limited” fun, community and solidarity efforts around refugees tend to create opportunities for them to socialize in a more pleasurable, less stressful environment. Activities organized by advocacy and social justice groups include pot-luck dinners, music concerts, and movie screenings open to the community, thereby creating a bridge between citizens and potential citizens: that is, refugees. The nature of the activities and the involvement of refugees with the community create welcoming moments in the city. The convivial atmosphere during events centering on food and music allows the creation of a sense of normalcy and leisure. It also provides the opportunity to establish a sense of belonging, sociability and plain fun during an otherwise anxious and stressful waiting period.¹³ Pierre describes how opportunities to have fun and to relax were presented to them during his time as a volunteer for a community organization.

¹³ One example of such activities is a free Community Dinner/Movie Night that took place on July 13th, 2007. Organized by the Committee to Support Abdelkader Belaoui (Kader), the community was invited to a barbeque and then an open air screening of *L'Ange de Goudron* (Tar Angel, 2001), a film about an Algerian immigrant settling in Québec, in the presence of the filmmaker, Denis Chouinard. The Committee's webpage invites the community at large to eat, “play, catch

On était tellement préoccupé par nos problèmes de statut qu'on n'avait pas le temps de s'amuser. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'il fallait absolument vivre, il fallait travailler. Donc, quand je pouvais travailler les week-ends, je le faisais. Je faisais du bénévolat à Projet Genèse et là, on prenait quelquefois nos collations ensemble, après nos séances de travail. On pouvait rigoler, prendre un café, même faire des sorties ensemble, là c'était plus relaxant...

(Pierre, 50 years old, is married with 5 children. He is college educated engineer from Congo Brazzaville, and arrived in Montréal on February 3rd, 2001. Status at time of interview: permanent resident)

As such, local social networks are created; friendships and alliances are formed which cross cultural and religious divides. A sense of inclusivity is forged in the name of solidarity and support, involving refugees, citizens, and former refugees. Furthermore, refugees involved in activism linked to their own cause are somewhat released from uncertainty, and also granted a sense of empowerment amid institutional obstacles such as the immigration determination system, over which they have minimal control.

Being “in-between”¹⁴

“Liminality” is often used to describe refugees living in camps and more broadly has more negative undertones, associated with social exclusion. I propose a more nuanced approach by using the idea of “in-betweenness” as a more constructive moment and site for refugee inclusivity. Refugee claimants often use the term “in-between” when waiting for their status to be determined. Despite

up, meet Kader, discuss campaign update” during the event. See <http://www.soutienpourkader.net/en/past.php>. Last accessed Jan. 9, 2010. Kader himself is a highly mediatised and public figure within the Montréal sanctuary movement, who, until recently, was an immobilized Algerian refugee living in sanctuary. He was granted permanent residence status in October 2009, after nearly four years living in a church basement in order to avoid a deportation order. See The Canadian Press. (2009, October 26). Refugee Free after four years in church. Retrieved from CBC News Online <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2009/10/26/abdelkader-belaouni-free.html>

¹⁴ I borrow this expression from Ella, in response to my question asking what her overall experience as a refugee in Montréal has been like, she immediately replied: “It was in-between.”

enforced “in-betweenness,” refugees do succeed in forging meaningful lives in which they play pivotal roles in managing their agency. The ways in which refugee claimants overcome, circumvent, and even defy limitations and restrictions imposed on them due to immigration status help us understand the “in-between” condition of claimants in a more comprehensive manner. Beyond the assumption that refugee claimants are a “well of needs”, these individuals actually contribute to and partake in community and city life. Here, I frame “in-betweenness” based on both spatial and temporal dimensions. The narratives revealed some of the repercussions this “in-betweenness” had on refugee claimants’ everyday lives. However, it soon became evident that what is usually regarded as a period of stagnation, helped create constructive and productive possibilities that led to social inclusiveness, civic engagement, and belonging. In fact, “in-betweenness” brings a whole new array of social circumstances with it. The interviews demonstrated that inclusiveness may be created by community mobilization around refugee claimants, as well as their own implications on community life. In creating this inclusiveness, refugee claimants balance the anxiety and insecurity that cannot be dissociated from being a refugee claimant, with a sense of dignity and even at times leisure, in part due to activist movements in Montréal.

When asked whether her overall life experience as a refugee in Montréal was positive or negative, Ella’s immediate response was that “it was in-between...some that were positive, some that were negative [sic].” Elaborating

on the negatives, she recalls her case being rejected by Immigration officials, on the basis that her story “wasn’t credible” as a negative experience. She states:

It changed me completely...there is nothing else painful aswhen you know you are telling the truth and somebody says to you.....it’s not true...and you are trying to convince them.

Her case’s rejection had several personal and emotional implications. In her own words, it had a “negative impact,” to the point where everything she saw or heard seemed antagonistic for a long time, “because all my life in Montréal, everything has been a ‘No’”.

Recalling some of the positive aspects of her experience in Montréal, Ella describes the following:

We (her son and herself)¹⁵ have had social workers, doctors at the Montréal Children’s Hospital, lawyers, groups...Canadian Council for Refugees...the Sun Youth...we have had some help from the Salvation Army...we have had some positive things from those people and from those organizations who tried to really make our life a bit comfortable.

She also stated that she does not have many friends, because she “would look for friends who could help me...with my case...it has always been my case, my case, my case.”

How does one begin a new life with all odds against them, while negotiating what s/he left behind against her will? Isolation, ambivalence and “in-betweenness” are recurring themes that surface in refugee narratives when they

¹⁵ At the time of the interview, Ella had been separated from her daughter for eight years. She initially left her daughter back home she explains, because she was unable to purchase her an airplane ticket at the time. Later on, Ella’s daughter made her way to London, UK. Ella is pained by the thought that her son, who is 16 and her daughter, who is 24, are not able to bond because her daughter is unable to join them due to immigration obstacles. A recent study indicates that 80 per cent of refugee claimants arrive without their immediate families, 62 per cent are separated from their whole families, and 18 per cent are separated from some members of their families (spouse and/or children 19 years of age or younger) See Bertot & Mekki-Barrada 1999, p.3 in Lacroix, 2004, p.163)

are asked to describe how they survived the transition from citizen in one place to refugee or non-status individual in another. There is no doubt that life as a refugee is unique for each individual, and cannot easily be generalized. Nonetheless, there seems to be an unavoidable experience of spatial and temporal “in-betweenness” for refugees, regardless of where a refugee is waiting. Those seeking asylum wait indefinitely in limbo in camps, airport isolation cells, at border crossings, in detention centres, in temporary accommodations or in downtown basement apartments for decisions to be made on their behalf; decisions that will ultimately determine their fate. In fact, the predicament of being a refugee is most often defined by finding oneself in a state of “dislocation, powerlessness and discrimination” (Pierson, 2002, p.203). However, refugee claimants do find the means and tactics to survive, they successfully establish new social networks, and even find welcoming atmospheres in the unknown city.

Everyday life in the city

Before proceeding with refugee claimants’ temporal and spatial experiences of “in-betweenness”, I address the importance of everyday life to the project. Henri Lefebvre’s work reminds us that the everyday should not be taken granted for or ignored (Gardiner, 2000, p. 2). In fact, Lefebvre stresses that the everyday represents “the site where we enter into a dialectical relationship with the external natural and social worlds in the most immediate and profound sense, and it is here where essential human desires, powers and potentialities are initially formulated, developed and realized concretely” (ibid). Considering Lefebvre’s framing of the everyday as an important site where desire, power and potential are

formulated, I pay particular attention to the vocabulary reflecting affective resonances in the refugee narratives. After all, as Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift point out, the phenomenology of a city “cannot be known through theory and cognition alone” (as cited in Tonkiss, 2005, p.115). Fran Tonkiss (2005) also discusses the idea of subjectivity in the city and how individuals engage with urban space through perception, memory, and agency (p. 113). For Lefebvre (1991), city space can come alive as it is “tied to memory and folded through intimate sites. It is alive, it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or; square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action, and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time ... it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic” (p.39).

Undeniably, the mere fact that refugee claimants live in a prolonged state of “in-betweenness” adds layers of complexity to Michel de Certeau’s work. He is primarily concerned with how *ordinary* subjects or citizens make room for themselves in urban spaces, which he says are “overdetermined by maps, plans, rules, codes and schemes” (in Tonkiss 2005, p.114). How then are refugee claimants expected to make space for themselves in the city? Beyond the inherent over-determination of urban space as outlined by de Certeau, they face additional restrictions, and are often viewed as outsiders. They may face deportation orders and other hostile encounters. Unlike ordinary citizens, they do not have full access to all of the resources and privileges of the city. In this sense, the refugee claimants’ narratives become ‘spatial stories’ and testimonies to their efforts to make sense of urban spaces and create room for themselves in a city where, while

they may be able to circulate freely, it is as Jenny Burman observes, “without a sense of ownership and entitlement” (2006, p.285).

Michel de Certeau writes that “every story is a travel story – a spatial practice” (1984, p.115). According to him, ‘spatial stories’ are ways in which ordinary city dwellers make sense of urban spaces. Influenced by de Certeau’s work, Tonkiss points out that different social actors have different “spatial stories” to tell about their routes through the city (de Certeau, 1984 as cited in Tonkiss, p.113). The respondents in my research were asked to describe aspects of urban re-settlement including their first impressions of the city, the nature of their daily routines, their experiences of walking around the city, where they went for leisure and to socialize, which neighbourhoods they felt more comfortable in, who they turned to for front-line services, and if they were involved in refugee and immigration activism.

Other authors who have written on refugees’ and undocumented migrants’ everyday life practices have produced ethnographically informed work, but such work is often limited to the realm of social exclusion, or integration experiences (Candappa & Egharevba, 2003; Genova, 2002; Valenta, 2010).¹⁶ The everyday, subjective, pedestrian and inclusive aspects of the everyday are often overlooked,

¹⁶ De Genova (2002) looks at the everyday life of undocumented migrants through ethnographically informed work. He argues that it is insufficient to examine the “illegality” of undocumented migration only in terms of its consequences. Instead he writes that it is necessary also to produce historically informed accounts of the sociopolitical processes of “illegalization” themselves, which then characterize the legal production of migrant “illegality.” Based on biographical narratives as a tool in gathering qualitative data, Valenta (2010) focuses on refugees’ social integration once they arrive in receiving country and how post-resettlement social trajectories are linked to changes in identities. Candappa and Igbiginie (2003) examine the everyday lives of a sample of young refugees living in London, UK. Based on a study of refugee children’s social roles and social networks, they argue that there are gender differences between the social lives of refugee boys and girls, and between the lives of refugee children and those of their non-refugee peers.

especially for those like refugee claimants, who are vulnerable to urban marginalization.

One of the central axes within social urban theory surrounding subjectivity and the city is “the role of people’s everyday practice in making space in the city” (Tonkiss, 2005, p.113), I consider a few ‘spatial practices’ carried out while research participants were forced to wait for status, or at times refused to simply wait for periods anywhere between nine weeks and nine years. What are some of the moments of activism, reprieve, or just plain fun during these waiting periods? How do refugee claimants come to occupy space in the city through emancipatory ‘spatial practices’? After all, refugees without status not only face difficulty securing health care, housing, education, and employment, but are also disallowed from claiming a legitimate space in the city. Therefore, we can explore ways in which refugee claimants assert their presence in the city and occupy space in the realms of politics and leisure. This is an alternative to reproducing cycles of social exclusion commonly associated with refugee claimants.¹⁷

Suspended temporality: time and refugee “in-betweenness”

The respondents described their overall experience in Montréal during lengthy wait times. Some of their answers are a testament to the negative and at times devastating personal and financial tolls of indefinite waiting periods on refugee claimants. As time goes by, it is not uncommon that refugees encounter

¹⁷ As covered earlier in the dissertation, some authors who address migratory issues and social exclusion are David Ley and Heather Smith (2000; 2008); Robert Miles and Dietrich Thränhardt (1995); Jenny Phillimore and Lisa Goodson (2006); Christopher McAll (1995); Luin Goldring, Carolina Berinstein, and Judith Bernhard (2009).

periods of stagnation, during which their precarious state is made more so due to limited opportunities in education and employment. Pierre shared the following:

C'est vrai que pendant tout ce temps, on est en ballottage, le temps passe, on stagne, parce qu'on reste dans la même position. On n'avance pas : on ne peut pas étudier ni suivre une formation pour réajuster notre profession par rapport aux besoins du moment, d'ici. Et pourquoi ? Parce qu'on est réfugié, mais pas encore accepté, donc l'accès à l'université est quasiment fermé. Les formalités à suivre sont presque impossibles à remplir si on n'est pas encore accepté [comme réfugié].

Considering that everyday life can be defined as “a place where structure and agency are connected and localized in time and space” (Lefebvre & Goonewardena, 2008, p. 52), I consider both the temporal and spatial dimensions of refugee claimants' precarious, “in-between” existence as they take on counter-hegemonic subjectivities and strategies. I also consider how claimants make space for themselves in the city. This approach is productive in counterpointing the institutional and everyday barriers refugee claimants encounter as they face indefinite waits for status, daily uncertainty, xenophobia, and, as a result, are less likely to feel a sense of belonging in or entitlement to the city.

Nadia (23 years old) who fled Algeria indicates how the interminable nine year wait for status took a heavy emotional and financial toll on her and her family. This extreme case of what I call “suspended temporality” was marked by several institutional and legal obstacles, as well as deportation threats. In our interview, Nadia frequently mentioned struggling to make up for “lost time”, whether in terms of finances, life dreams or employment and educational opportunities.

However, political engagement through occupying city space is one way of voicing refugees' presence and rights. In fact, Nadia recognizes that the contributions of various refugee advocacy networks and organizations are what "saved our lives." She explained that if the migrants were going to occupy an Immigration office in order to speak to an immigration representative, members from these organizations were on the front lines, protecting those without status.

Furthermore, occupying immigration offices¹⁸ or street space while protesting represents a type of action which can be viewed as "tactics" which de Certeau (1984) distinguishes from "strategies."¹⁹ Thus, refugees taking on political roles represent a critical moment for these non-citizens; occupying city/citizen space is essential in the quest for self-determination and the struggle for basic rights. Although none of the interview questions directly addressed political involvement, the nature of the activities and actions refugees took defines them as political actors, as many became outspoken critics of the refugee determination system.

I argue that these initiatives of resistance, such as weekly protests, ultimately engender a sense of belonging and solidarity in the community. This action taken by refugee claimants along with citizen activists occupying the space

¹⁸ Even though occupying a state office is not an "everyday" occurrence per se, it belongs to a realm of everyday political struggle and engagement that a number of refugee claimants take on while they wait for status. While securing status becoming all-consuming in the everyday lives of claimants and considerably "weighs" on them as described by one of the claimants (Nadia), attending meetings with the Comité D'action des Sans-Status Algériens becomes an everyday way of life. A number of practices define this political involvement, one example of an exceptional "practice" being the occupation of state offices.

¹⁹ De Certeau sees strategies as ordering and disciplining processes (or here mechanisms of social exclusion) that make distinctions between normal and deviant (normal being citizens and deviant being refugees); while tactics refer to the embodied actions of those who seek to escape these processes, using space to their own advantage.

of the immigration authority resonates with Lefebvre's notion, of "right to the city." His theory aims to restructure the power relations which underlie urban space, as it transfers control from capital and the state to urban inhabitants—in this case, to non-status refugees. Lefebvre argued that the "right to the city" is the right to "urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of ... moments and places" (Lefebvre, Kofman, & Lebas, 1996, p. 179).

The weekly rhythm of non-status refugees' protests in front of the immigration offices where they voiced their demands was juxtaposed with an array of more ludic activities. Social events such as community dinners, concerts, plays, film screenings and other activities organized by grassroots activist and community groups reinforce the bond between citizens and non-status individuals and provide space and time to unwind, though still closely connected to the immigration and refugee cause.

As a result, refugees reconcile suspended time and political space as they participate in and contribute to social, community, and civic life. Through their own proactive (provocative for some) stance, they manage to carve out their own agency and create meaning in their lives despite being put on hold for indefinite periods of time. This positive effect of liminality echoes what Yasmine Hachimi Alaoui (2007)²⁰ calls *exil assumé*, when exiled persons consider themselves as "actor[s] in their own story" (p.10). Not only do they appropriate the political space in which they find themselves, they also take control of time, thus providing

²⁰ Alaoui does a comparative study on the social destinies of exiled Algerians in France and in Canada. She examines immigration and integration in both countries and describes the ways in which the exiled overcome social, economic and political obstacles.

meaning to the rupture they have suffered. She contrasts this type of exile with *exil subi*, the form in which those exiled consider themselves to be victims of a situation that they did not choose and who passively accept their fate. If disruptions to the hegemonic order within city space, such as the rhythm of weekly protests, can come to foster pathways of civic involvement, then leisurely distractions, such as simply walking around the city, are welcome in the refugee claimants' uncertain lives.

The personal narratives collected from asylum seekers in Montréal aptly demonstrated that these individuals who were forced to wait actually could not and, in some cases, simply refused to just wait. This contrasts with the migrants waiting on the Soccer field, as well as the prevalent and also contested assumption surrounding refugees who wait in camps, who are unable to escape their fate, and who are often characterized as bored (Diken & Lausten, 2005, p.3) and trapped in a “frozen transience” associated with refugee camps (Bauman, 2002).

Inter-generational impact of temporal “in-betweeness”

Interestingly, temporal indeterminacy can also lead to the acceleration of time. Prematurely taking on unanticipated responsibilities—for instance, a teenager taking care of children—can impact one's personal growth. Nadia describes how her parents' involvement in a refugee advocacy group left her to care for her two younger siblings. Along with the other household responsibilities these circumstances forced her to adopt, in retrospect, she describes herself as a teenager between the ages of 15 to 20, who instead led the life of a 30 year old, raising three children.

J'allais à l'école... ensuite rentrer à la maison, rester un peu avec les parents. Avant le lever du moratoire²¹, les parents ont commencé à assister aux réunions du Comité d'Action des Sans-Statut. À partir de là, on a commencé à sentir l'absence des parents à la maison. Donc il fallait cuisiner, s'occuper de mes sœurs – je suis la plus vieille –, et n'avoir aucun loisir... Je crois que j'avais seize ou dix-sept ans. Mes amis me disaient : « Ok on va à tel endroit, on va voir un film, est-ce que tu viens ? » Je disais toujours non. Je me trouvais un peu "plate", parce qu'à chaque fois c'était "Non", parce que mes parents ne peuvent pas, et moi je dois garder mes sœurs. Il y avait des amis plus proches de moi, ils savaient pourquoi je restais en retrait. Mais même s'ils savent et s'ils comprennent, à un moment donné, ça devient un peu nul, ils te mettent de côté. Donc ça c'était un peu difficile mais je comprends aussi. Maintenant, avec le recul, je peux dire que je n'ai pas vécu ce qu'une fille entre quinze et vingt ans aurait dû vivre. J'ai vécu [dans] la maison... En fait, j'ai vécu comme une femme de trente ans qui a trois enfants.

Normal teenage preoccupations were secondary in Nadia's life, and as a result, she maintained a different persona at school and at home. Not knowing what the outcome of their refugee claim would be, she could only dream of potential trips and career paths.

À l'école j'étais une personne, et une fois arrivée à la maison, j'étais une autre personne. Si j'y repense, je vois un peu comment c'était : à l'école, pendant la journée, de 8h30 à 15h30, c'était faire comme si j'étais comme tout le monde – j'étais comme tout le monde. Mes amis prévoyaient aller à New York, alors moi aussi j'irais l'année prochaine – mais je n'allais pas du tout le faire. Ils vont aller, je ne sais pas moi, la plus banale des banalités ; ils vont étudier dans tel domaine, à telle université... Moi aussi, je veux faire ça. Mais... j'espérais... je n'avais rien... Au fond, tu sais que tu ne vas pas y arriver justement parce que tu ne sais pas ce qui t'attend.

One component that was consistent in all the interviews was the inter-generational aspect associated with time. It was interesting to observe how children take their parents into account in their discussion of time lost and parents

²¹Canada lifted the moratorium on deporting Algerians in April 2002. To read more on the experiences of non-status Algerian migrants in light of the decision to lift the moratorium, see Lowry, M. & Nyers, P. (2003).

include their children when addressing temporal loss, as the excerpts below reveal. Nadia and her family remained without status for nine years.

On est [nous sommes] restés neuf ans sans statut. Puis tout d'un coup, on est régularisés. C'était le 18 janvier 2005. Je dirais que depuis qu'on a été régularisés, on essaie de s'en sortir et de rattraper le temps perdu, et ça ce n'est pas facile. Quand nous sommes arrivés, ma mère avait trente ans et mon père, quarante-deux... pleins d'ambitions, pleins d'espoir et tout ce qu'on veut... Neuf ans plus tard, c'est sûr qu'ils ont pris de l'âge, et on est passés par des moments très difficiles. Alors maintenant, il faut essayer de rattraper le temps perdu, et c'est difficile, ça signifie les études, travailler deux fois plus, et aussi pas tellement d'argent... Parce que tout a été – comment dire – ... les frais d'avocat, d'immigration, mille dollars par ci, trois mille dollars par là... Aujourd'hui, on essaie de rattraper le temps perdu.

Miles apart: family separation

In some cases, the unsettling effects of living in limbo are aggravated when refugee claimants are separated from their families for extensive periods of time due to immigration regulations and restrictions. Family reunification continues to be a challenge in Canadian Immigration policy.²² In such instances, making up for lost time has a different set of complex implications. When Pierre was asked about his overall experience in Montréal, he answered that he cannot speak of a positive experience without acknowledging the difficulty of being separated from his family for a long period of time. Pierre was required to become a permanent resident before he could sponsor his family to join him in Canada.

²² According to the CCR, refugees in Canada may face several different barriers to family reunification.

These include the inability to pay costly processing fees, bad advice leading refugees not to include family members on their permanent residence application and the narrow definition of family in Canadian immigration law which means that many significant family members cannot be included. See Canadian Council for Refugees. (November 2004). More than a Nightmare: Delays in Refugee Family Reunification. Retrieved from <http://www.ccrweb.ca/reunificationen.html>

The Immigration process took him a total of seven years, during which he was separated from his wife and children.

En ce qui me concerne, je dirais que c'était assez difficile. Je suis marié et père de cinq enfants. Ma famille ne m'a rejoint que l'an dernier, plus précisément le 17 juillet 2008. Je ne peux pas parler d'une bonne expérience sans tenir compte de ma famille, que j'ai revue après sept ans.

Refugees continuously try to make up for lost time whether on the personal front or in terms of employment and integration in the city. The impact of Pierre's seven-year separation from his family for seven years is still felt, as he explains:

Malheureusement, en arrivant ici, pour ce qui me concerne, on a mis beaucoup de temps pour m'accepter comme résident permanent. Il fallait d'abord que moi je sois accepté pour que je puisse parrainer ma famille. Elle vient à peine d'arriver, ils ont perdu beaucoup d'années. S'ils étaient arrivés il y a trois, quatre, cinq ans, ils seraient déjà intégrés. Ils sont arrivés après sept ans. C'est très dur à accepter. Mais, au moins, ils peuvent se promener, aller à l'école, s'intégrer malgré leur retard. [...] Ils doivent tout recommencer à zéro [...]. Les conséquences de cette immigration, de cette intégration difficile se répercutent sur de longues années, elles ont des conséquences sur moi, sur ma femme, sur mes enfants. C'est plus difficile de quitter un pays quand tu es plus âgé. À présent, ils ont un peu de mal à s'adapter, il faut les aider, les accompagner.

Clearly, physical separation from one's immediate family members for such long periods of time is detrimental to the future of the family. In other cases, family members living together in Montréal also struggle to make up for lost time.

Donna, a single mother who arrived through the American border and claimed refugee status along with her daughter is a case in point. To this day, Donna carries the guilt of what she claims is her inability to be there for her daughter even though the two were not geographically separated as Pierre and his family were. Donna worked two jobs in order to survive and raise her two children, yet feels she was largely absent when her daughter needed her.

Normalement, je me lève à 5 heures et demie du matin, je prépare les affaires de mes enfants pour l'école, et je marche [pour aller] à mon travail. Je reviens à la maison vers 7 heures du soir. Pendant ce temps, encore aujourd'hui, je manque comme mère [sic], j'ai manqué à ma fille. Je ne suis pas présente pour ma fille [...] et ça c'est vraiment difficile pour moi. Difficile. Même maintenant, entre nous, il y a ce temps que j'ai manqué et je me sens coupable.

Nadia describes the inescapable reality of this limbo and how it colours every aspect of refugees' lives, weighs on her and her family, even around the dinner table. She wants to "evacuate" it from her mind, but it is always there. Everything is on hold. Here, she describes the atmosphere when the moratorium on deporting Algerians was lifted in 2002 by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC):

J'étais au secondaire 4, c'était en 2002 et on venait de lever le moratoire. Donc, c'était la pire année, c'était la panique générale. Vraiment la panique. Ça veut dire que tu peux recevoir du jour au lendemain un papier par la poste te disant : « Au revoir, tu rentres chez toi. » C'était très difficile pour moi et mon entourage. J'étais insupportable, je n'avais pas le moral, je ne parlais que de l'immigration – que ce soit avec mes amis ou mes parents. Quand on reçoit des gens à la maison, des Algériens pour souper par exemple – eux aussi des sans-statut, des gens qu'on a rencontrés avec le Comité d'Action des Sans-Statut –, on est en train de souper et le seul sujet, c'est l'immigration. Il n'y a rien d'autre. D'ailleurs, plusieurs fois, je leur dis : « Est-ce que vous n'avez pas d'autre sujet, d'autre chose à dire ? »... Ça pèse, ça devient très fatigant. À un moment donné, on a envie d'évacuer ça de nous, mais on n'a pas le choix, ça fait partie de ton quotidien. Ça reste là dans ta tête. Tout ce que tu vas vouloir faire, tous tes projets, tu vas toujours penser : « Mais est-ce que l'immigration...? Est-ce que je dois...? Est-ce que je peux ? » Tout est en attente.

Her words provide important insight as to the harsh repercussions of the temporal suspension involved in the refugee determination process on the lives of refugee claimants. The length of the wait is directly proportionate to the repercussions suffered and the efforts to make up for lost time, or "stolen time" as the refugee

activist group *Solidarity Across Borders*²³ describes it. Clearly, suspended temporality negatively affects refugees in terms of lost time, but, as I discuss later, it can also become a platform for political and social participation in city life.

Spatial aspects of “in-betweenness”

In line with Chavez’s description of the Soccer Field, spatial “in-betweenness” refers first and foremost to an actual physical location. One could argue that spatial “in-betweenness” stems from the condition of displacement. Peter Nyers (2003) writes that “for abject migrants, the cast-offs of world order, their situatedness is displacement” (p.1072). Leaving their home countries behind, refugees are forced into displacement as a result of persecution, death threats, and disappearances. Refugees undertake significant risks to get to Canada, as many of them put their financial resources, their families’ safety, and their lives on the line. Assuming the journey to the Canadian border is successful; refugees are temporarily relieved to have reached a safe haven from persecution. Upon arrival, however, complications quickly arise for the vast majority of refugees as they begin the tedious process of claiming status, particularly if their cases are rejected by authorities. Spatial “in-betweenness” is amplified, similar to the Soccer Field; they are neither here nor there and feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness take over. This “in-betweenness” is further complicated when feelings of

²³ In their campaign to end all deportations, the Montréal-based network *Solidarity Across Borders* makes the following statement on their website: “For every arbitrary detention, for every summary deportation, for every minute spent in jail without charge or trial, for every anxious and dehumanizing day spent waiting for status - all the days, months, years that the government has stolen from us - we will continue to organize and struggle, for justice and dignity. Join us to take back stolen time.” See *Solidarity Across Borders*. (January 2007). “About Solidarity Across Borders.” [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://solidarityacrossborders.blogspot.ca/2007/01/about-solidarity-across-borders.html>

attachment and belonging to the home country are involved. In Ella's case, even though her life was threatened in Zimbabwe, a part of her still feels connected to her country of origin, which she expresses in the urge to assist her country in some way, while seeking asylum and acceptance in Canada.

It's so painful...like I said... I guess at the back of mind really... I'm a politician without words...who cannot express herself...what's happening in my country is so painful...I say to myself...okay...Canada has refused me...Zimbabwe has sent me away....so which means....I'm stateless, I have nowhere to go....

Spatial limbo is also accentuated when refugees realize that they are stateless. Ella finds herself in between Zimbabwe and Canada, with "nowhere to go". Besides the reality of statelessness, refugees face a constant fear of deportation that threatens their opportunity to leading a "normal" life. However, as Pierre describes, despite this fear and the fact that numerous aspects of his life were suspended, he had no choice but to keep subsisting.

Les six premiers mois étaient beaucoup centrés sur les développements de notre dossier de réfugié, parce que plusieurs aspects de nos vies étaient remis en cause et dépendaient de son acceptation, ou non. En tant que réfugié, en tant que demandeur [revendicateur] du statut de réfugié, on court le risque d'être expulsé du Canada. Si les agents d'immigration jugent le dossier non consistant, ils peuvent déclencher les procédures de déportation du Canada. En même temps, parallèlement à ça, il fallait qu'on vive, qu'on trouve un emploi rapidement.

Many refugee claimants are obliged to balance ensuring basic living needs with the real risk of deportation, placing them in a state of perpetual "in-betweenness." For a number of refugee claimants, when the dreaded deportation order becomes reality, the state of spatial "in-betweenness" takes on an entirely new dimension. They face the risk of returning to their home country, where their lives were threatened. When the deportation order is delivered, many claimants cannot

countenance returning to the dangers they faced in their countries of origin. As a result, they choose to go underground or take sanctuary for protection. In this extreme circumstance, spatial “in-betweenness” culminates in and turns into spatial confinement, often in church basements, in order to escape deportation. Refugee claimants are constantly hounded by the fear and the reality of deportation, especially migrants who are deemed “suspect.” Jenny Burman (2006) describes how the deportation threats have “a disciplinary use, with an element of spatial confinement- both internalized and externally enforced” (p.177). Burman writes on the “removal” of non-citizens deemed suspect within a climate of spreading Islamophobia following September 11, focusing on anti-detention and anti-deportation activism in Montréal. She highlights a “linguistic shift” in Canadian legislation and governmental parlance, which opts for the word “removal” rather than “deportation”. She describes how this shift in terminology to *removal* causes an “erasure” (p.280).²⁴ Furthermore, as Burman points out, the use of this language in policy documents wipes out (removes) the prospective deportee’s current dwelling place completely. Migrants are thus not ordered to be removed *from* Montréal, but removed *to* Algeria, Columbia or Zimbabwe.

Sanctuary and social inclusion

The act of taking sanctuary stems from the idea of a “sacred space of protection.” A sanctuary movement developed in North America during the 1980s in order to provide asylum and protection to refugees from Central America

²⁴ Burman (2006) bases her notion of erasure on aspects of deportation policy that “disavow state accountability for the socialization of young residents”. She specifically points to legislation introduced in the 1990s and the fact that “targeting Caribbean-born Black men frequently led to the deportation of non-citizens who had been living in Toronto since infancy (not born, but certainly “bred”)” (p.280).

(Nyers, 2003, p.1085). This movement sparked feelings of sympathy, particularly in church goers. Through cooperative U.S/Canada efforts, a number of Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants were brought to Canada (through an “over-ground railroad”) to avoid detention and deportation from the United States (Stastny & Tyrnauer, 2004). Theories around the British sanctuary movement during the 1980s drew a distinction between “exposure” and “concealment.” This dichotomy resembles accounts of underground and overground railroads in US accounts of sanctuary. Randy Lippert (2005) claims that the context of Canadian sanctuary does not fully reflect this distinction. During the first documented case of sanctuary in Montréal in 1983, five weeks of concealment preceded exposure (p.15). In other words, exposure was part of the sanctuary movement. In fact, more recent cases of sanctuary in Montréal do reflect Lippert's definition of sanctuary, where migrants entered and remained in physical protection to avoid deportation. That entailed strategic efforts to expose this fact to mass media, communities and political authorities (p. 16).

The idea of sanctuary has an extensive history dating back to the Old Testament, referring to cities of refuge. Detailed historical accounts of sanctuary exist in ancient Greece, Rome, and Byzantium, as well as throughout Medieval Europe. Among the Ancient Hebrews, sanctuary was a way to create a framework for revenge for a slaying by providing the time and space for negotiations between the murderer and the offended party (Lippert, 2005, p.3). Peter Nyers (2003) takes the idea of sanctuary as sacred space and secularizes it, calling it a “liberated zone” presenting “a challenge to the principle of state sovereignty” (p.1086).

Despite the fact that Canadian officials have said that taking sanctuary violates the law, it is interesting to observe the nodes of community support that form around refugees who take up sanctuary in places of worship. In a guide written for church congregations, Stastny and Tyrnauer (2004) point out the illegality of the act. They stipulate that “those who offer sanctuary must realize that they are breaking the law. A refugee applicant who has lost her or his case and seeks to avoid removal commits an illegal act; assisting a refugee in that act of avoiding removal (offering church sanctuary) is also illegal” (p.6). The 1983 case of a number of Guatemalans in Montréal is noteworthy because it demonstrates how the groundwork for sanctuary was set in place; however, there was reluctance to break the law. Late in 1983, a number of Guatemalan refugees in Montréal received deportation notices following the rejection of their applications for refugee status. Seventeen churches supported a demand to stop the deportations and grant the refugees asylum. Arrangements were made to accept refugees in sanctuary. In early 1984, public opinion convinced the government to reverse its decision. The government announced a temporary moratorium on deportation of Guatemalans, suspending any deportations to Guatemala. During that time, sanctuary was not needed but the support for refugees and willingness to house them in sanctuary was considerable. One of the supporters involved with the churches later observed that “there was a broad enough public opinion [supporting us] and enough openness on the part of the authorities that we could get the Canadian government to protect [the refugees] legally. We were trying to comply with the rules of international law [barring forcible repatriations] and Canadian

law; and, when there was a contradiction, close the gap” (Stastny and Tyrnauer, p.22).

Although supporters wanted to comply with Canadian law and to assist the refugees at the same time, more recently, the activism around sanctuary is more radical. Willingness to break the law is more overt and entails strategies to expose sanctuary to the public as much as possible, through the use of media and high visibility campaigns, with recourse to community resources and mobilization, as well as grassroots advocacy campaigns. The next section traces one highly mediatized case of sanctuary in Montréal, as well as cases of sanctuary involving respondents I interviewed.

Mobilization surrounding immobilized refugees

One of the more recent and visible cases of sanctuary in Montréal was that of Abdelkader Belaoui (Kader). This highly mediatized case adopted the strategy of “exposure” to borrow Lippert’s term and ended in success. Kader fled to New York City in 1996 after civil war broke out in Algeria. Following the events of September 11, he was placed on a special “registration list” because he came from a Muslim country and his passport was confiscated. He arrived in Canada in March 2003, fearing imprisonment and deportation from the US.²⁵ Kader spoke French, took courses, volunteered and took steps to find employment in spite of his blindness and diabetes. Still, his case was rejected by the IRB on January 21st

²⁵ For detailed breakdown of background information about Khadr’s case see Justice and dignity! Committee to Support Abdelkader Belaoui. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.soutienpourkader.net/en/background.php>

2004.²⁶ Kader took sanctuary on January 1st 2006 to defy his deportation. He lived in the St-Gabriel's Church basement in Montréal for almost four years. Groups such as *Solidarity Across Borders* and the *Committee to Support Abdelkader Belaouni* led a determined campaign and used means such as posters, spray painted stencils²⁷ on concrete blocks around the city, alternative radio, and the internet to gain public support and overturn the government's decision. Such steps proved to be successful. On October 26, 2009, Kader was granted permanent resident status.²⁸ Despite the fact that Kader went "underground," he and his supporters did not opt for concealment, but rather exposure. Only three days after taking sanctuary, Kader held a press conference in the Pointe-Saint-Charles church during which he stated:

I'm not hiding from Immigration Canada, but I want to tell them clearly, I will not be presenting myself for deportation. I've been able to achieve autonomy and dignity in Montréal, and I don't want to lose that. My

²⁶ The IRB commissioner presiding in Abdelkader's refugee hearing was Laurier Thibault, who accepted one single claimant in a two year period. In other words, Thibault had nearly a 100% refusal rate. In February and March 2005, Abdelkader submitted requests for a Pre-Removal Risk Assessment (PRRA) and a Humanitarian and Compassionate claim (H&C). Both were refused on 24 October 2005. The reasons given for the refusal were that Kader had no family in Canada and that he was not working. The Committee to Support Khadr point out that "this assessment ignored the tight-knit network of friends and supporters that Kader does have in Canada, all of the structural barriers that he faced in finding employment, and the fact that Kader contributed to society through other means, such as volunteer work, when denied access to paid employment". See Justice and dignity! Committee to Support Abdelkader Belaouni. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.soutienpourkader.net/en/background.php>

²⁷ Jenny Burman (2006) describes a scene in the winter of 2004 on Montréal's Ste-Catherine Street: there was a spray-painted stencil on a block of concrete that read "Ramenez Cherfi," or "bring back Cherfi". Mohammed Cherfi is an Algerian-born Montréal resident who was forcefully removed from church sanctuary in March 2004 and detained in the United States, although Canada was his point of entry. Many Montréal-based activist groups use banners, stickers, posters and spray paint stencils during marches, manifestations or just to communicate their messages around the city, as such media have become integral to the aesthetic of Montréal-based activist groups.

²⁸ Refugee free after 4 years in Montreal church. (2009, October 26). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2009/10/26/abdelkader-belaouni-free.html>

family and my friends are here. I am here to defend myself; I am here to defend justice.²⁹

Through a number of events organized around and for him, Kader sustained this exposure throughout the community, the country and even internationally, until he was free to set foot outside the church almost four years later. This mobilization consisted of a grassroots campaign including actions such as letter-writing initiatives to the Minister of Immigration, pickets, petitions, and marches. Conviviality and support was expressed through community dinners and barbecues, and public awareness was generated through cultural shows, art and musical collaborations, where Kader himself performed.³⁰ Kader even hosted a radio show recorded from the church basement for McGill University's CKUT. It was called "Radio Sanctuary" and aired on FM radio. Kader quickly became a spokesperson for refugee and immigrant rights. Kader's lawyer attributed his client's victory, at least in part, to the widespread public support he received.³¹ This mobilization forges firm connections between groups of people from different backgrounds. Whether viewed as sacred or secular, sanctuary contains the paradox of being a protected space that violates state decisions, yet that attracts a community to rally around a cause and an individual. Not only does the non-status person in question benefit from the support afforded to him or her, but also, through this struggle, non-status individuals, such as Kader, partake in

²⁹ See Justice and dignity! Committee to Support Abdelkader Belaouni. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.soutienpourkader.net/en/background.php>

³⁰ For list of events and flyers see Justice and dignity! Committee to Support Abdelkader Belaouni. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.soutienpourkader.net/en/background.php>

³¹ Khadr's lawyer Will Jared's statement can be found in the following article Refugee free after 4 years in Montreal church. (2009, October 26). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2009/10/26/abdelkader-belaouni-free.html>

community life. Whether through volunteering³² or through music performances, Kader has been an outspoken advocate, bringing public awareness to the precarious situation of non-status individuals living in Canada. Such initiatives of resistance ultimately create a sense of belonging and solidarity throughout the community which can help reduce hostility and low tolerance towards immigrants and refugees, through collaborative efforts between migrants and citizens. Kader's civic engagement during sanctuary in terms of volunteerism and contributions to enrich the community is not what is typically expected of an individual without status. Nevertheless he was able to create meaning in his life and in the community surrounding and supporting him through his political actions and commitment, even while waiting in the confines of a church basement for a decision to be made.

Ella, whom I interviewed speaks about the support that mobilized around her, especially when she was forced to briefly enter sanctuary. This support network is quite similar to the one that formed around Kader. When her husband was murdered due to political strife in Zimbabwe, Ella decided to pursue her husband's killers. When her personal safety was seriously compromised in her country of origin, she claimed refugee status when she and her son arrived in Canada via London.

³² Kader has been a dedicated volunteer with the Multi-Ethnic Association for the Integration of the Handicapped of Québec (AMEIPH), where he served as a receptionist from January 2005 until December 2005. He contributed to other community associations in Point St. Charles, such as Welfare Rights, and in the refugee rights network Solidarity across borders. See Justice and dignity! Committee to Support Abdelkader Belaoui. (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.soutienpourkader.net/en/background.php>

Ella's case was rejected for the first time in 2001 on the basis that her story was "not credible," and she was scheduled to be deported in February of 2002. In order to avoid removal, Ella was granted protection at the church that she attended. The Pastor invited Ella and her son to stay in his church, because, as she explained, officials were known to "*pick you up the night before, because they are afraid you might decide to go underground.*" She waited there for the government's final decision.

He [the Pastor] came in, opened the church, we went in, we sat and we waited for the phone call from the Federal Court, and the Federal Court called and said.... well.... we couldn't stay the deportation, so you guys are supposed to report at the airport at 4pm....that's how...I realized what it meant....I'd run away from Zimbabwe, from death, now I realized that the Canadian Government was sending me back to die....so...the pastor said okay...the only thing you can do is to stay here, nobody will come for you here in the Church...so we stayed in the church, while they were making connections, contacts and everything else you know...the news people and everyone came in.....and so we stayed.

Ella's stay in sanctuary was brief, a total of three days. After those three days, she and her son were allowed to stay in Canada under a Ministerial order. The Minister of Immigration at the time, Denis Coderre, announced that Canada had added Zimbabwe to the list of countries to which deportations would no longer be made.³³ However, even once they were allowed to stay in Canada, Ella's case was far from resolved, as she continued to live in immigration limbo as a single mother.

We're lucky, we stayed 3 days (in sanctuary) and that's how the Government of Canada realized that there is a situation in Zimbabwe because they ..they actually said, oh no, we didn't know this was this ...that's how the moratorium was put into place...so...under the Ministerial

³³ See Canada suspends deportations to Zimbabwe. (2002, January 30). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2002/01/30/deport020130.html>

order we stayed...ya...we stayed...but nothing...happened, you know, it was just like we just stayed...and nobody wanted to say anything about us, or do anything about our case ...and thereafter actually, other people from my country were accepted...(...) So most people who went for their hearings, they got their status....and... we, we were left in limbo... we lived in limbo....

After leaving the spatial confines of sanctuary, it was five years before Ella was called to a hearing. Although the waiting period was extended for Ella, she realizes the importance of lawyers, church pastors and other allies who helped advance her case. She says that during her time in Montréal, she was able to gain respect and sympathy from people about her case. She especially acknowledges that without certain people and organizations, she and her son would have been deported.

Volunteering while seeking refuge

The spatial “in-betweenness” of Patricia’s stay in sanctuary is extreme, as her spatial confinement was extensive. In 2003, Patricia, her father, and her mother spent over a year and a half, precisely 567 days living in a church basement, after receiving a removal order to return to Colombia. When Patricia’s family was first denied refugee status, they turned to a local church “because we couldn’t return to Colombia.”³⁴ The Church accepted them and provided a network of support, from doctors who checked on the family, to volunteers who did grocery shopping and others who were paid to help them do laundry.

Patricia’s time in sanctuary included a great deal of support; however, spatial

³⁴ Patricia’s father was a university professor in Colombia, who denounced the kidnapping of a former student by Colombian government security forces at the beginning of 2001. He gave interviews and public lectures on human rights and environmental law in and around Bogota. He says he received death threats, and was kidnapped and tortured in June 2001. Two subsequent attempts were made on his life.

confinement was a grueling experience for Patricia, in terms of both temporal and spatial “in-betweenness”. Despite being spatially confined for such a long period of time, she managed to create meaning to life on hold and even succeeded in contributing to the community through voluntarily tutoring children. When speaking about her time in sanctuary she said:

It was part of my life...It was hard, it was really hard. I kept up with my mom, my mom was my strength....my mom...was like my “baton”. She gave me all the strength. Like sometimes, I had really bad days....and she told me “No, we are gonna get through this.” And I knew in my heart we were going to get through this....I knew it...but it was so hard...to know that you didn’t know when you were gonna get out of there....and (deep sigh) sometimes, it just felt terrible...I just wanted to go to...you know you just.....can’t bear it anymore...but the people...we always had a visit...the people....who supported us....so....I even gave classes...to little children....so that helped me a lot.

(Patricia, 25 years old, 3rd year university student, arrived from Colombia on October 11, 2001 with her parents. Status at the time of the interview: Permanent resident)

Besides working with children, Patricia was part of the church choir which also eased her time in sanctuary. Classes from a local CEGEP made regular visits to the church, which allowed for social interactions. Patricia and her family were also involved in various activities organized by the church. During these activities they cultivated friendships and expanded their social networks. “*We met a lot of our friends we know here through the church. So it was hard, but very enriching...*” As the community mobilized around Patricia and her family’s extended immobilization, the weight of sanctuary was eased through the creation of moments of leisure, social events, and spiritual comfort. Patricia describes how the community once organized a “Cabane à sucre” (Sugar shacking) day for them in the confines of the church. She also mentions two interfaith services: “*there*

were people from different religions...who came and did a prayer...for us and for the other refugees who were in sanctuary...so it was really nice service...”

Accepting refugees in sanctuary is an enormous responsibility for any church and its community.³⁵ By providing the necessary support, the church created a warm and welcoming environment for Patricia and her family, in contrast to the threat of deportation and some of the more hostile encounters they had during the Immigration process.³⁶ This frame of social exclusion was created paradoxically around those who embodied exclusion and were considered “removable.” Within this framework, Patricia not only forged a sense of belonging with the community surrounding her, but also managed to contribute to the community, through constructive acts like helping children with their homework from the confines of a church basement. Although Patricia’s predicament involved considerable spatial confinement, even circumstances in which her mobility was restricted, she managed to be proactive. Furthermore, citizens, allies, community members, lawyers, and pastors mobilize around immobile migrants. Thus the view of deportation that describes the condition as being a “limbo-like existence of unbelonging” (Davies, 2002, p.964) shifts when

³⁵ I attended a talk organized by the McGill Refugee Research Project entitled “Supporting Refugees in Sanctuary: Learning From the Past, Possibilities For the Future” on January 25, 2006. Reverend Rosemary Lambie-Brombie (United Church) emphasized that because sanctuary is illegal, it is a huge commitment for the community and church to take on. She stressed the importance of being prepared in terms of human, legal, and financial support and building networks of support, to keep the refugees’ spirits up. Rev. Lambie-Brombie also stated that “You need patience, persistence, publicity, and to bring the refugees living in sanctuary inner peace”. (Author’s notes)

³⁶ Describing her arrival at the Lacolle Border between Canada and United States, Patricia says: “They weren’t the nicest people on earth. There was only one person who was really nice...and he was nice...but the other people...I dunno....I imagine it’s their job...but at that time...we were a little traumatized”

“unauthorized” individuals become “informal citizens” (Sassen, 2006), establish belonging to their community, and even contribute to the community.

The majority of the respondents and members of their immediate family engaged in volunteer work during their time as refugees. Donna recalled how on Sundays, accompanied by her daughter, she would distribute food to the homeless. As a volunteer for the Salvation Army, she found that helping others allowed her to cope while in limbo.

Nadia and her family were active in a local Québécois community centre, which she says allowed her to better integrate into Montréal life.

Mes parents ont eu l'intelligence de commencer à fréquenter des centres communautaires. Ça nous a permis de mieux nous intégrer. Là, il y avait des gens, des sorties étaient organisées : aller à tel endroit, aller cueillir des pommes... Tu vois, c'est toutes sortes de trucs. Puis on n'était pas encore refusés par l'immigration, on avait toujours cet espoir au début. On a fait partie de, pas moi personnellement, mais mes parents, se sont beaucoup impliqués dans le quartier, au centre communautaire du quartier. Il y a un en particulier, c'est le « Local Ensemble ». C'est un centre communautaire qui aide les jeunes familles. Je pense que ma mère allait trois ou quatre fois par semaine assister à des réunions. Et c'est comme ça que ma mère a pu mieux comprendre le Québécois (laughs). Au début, c'était vraiment difficile de comprendre.

Pierre also volunteered for Projet Genesis, an organization that defends the population's social and economic interests, located in the Côte-des-Neiges neighborhood. Besides social issues such as homelessness and poverty, the respondents were also invested in the cause of refugees and immigrants. For instance, many of the respondents were vocal in defending their rights. Ella and Nadia addressed the crowd during the No One is Illegal March to Ottawa in

2005.³⁷ Hussein was a volunteer with a community organization (now defunct)

that used to assist refugees and immigrants. He explains his involvement :

Oui, quand j'étais réfugié, j'étais un peu impliqué dans les activités religieuses. Aussi, j'étais devenu membre d'un organisme communautaire. Quelques personnes qui étaient réfugiées, bien avant, ont mis sur pied un organisme qu'ils ont appelé "Canada Terre d'Accueil", qui devait fonctionner comme un organisme d'accueil pour les réfugiés et les immigrants, les deux en même temps. La priorité était accordée aux réfugiés, et cet organisme allait accueillir les réfugiés et les immigrants, les orientaient et les assistaient. Il leur fournissait de l'aide et tous les services, en se basant sur l'expérience que chaque membre a connue dans le passé.

The narratives and experiences showed that the refugee claimants were open and willing to engage with community organizations. By becoming involved, refugee claimants who are generally deemed to be passive, are actually contributing to civic and community life in Montréal. Furthermore, their work to advance their own causes, as well as to advance the fundamental rights of other refugees and immigrants makes them into political subjects. This portion focused primarily on refugees creating social meaning in their lives, as they become engaged “informal citizens” within communities comprised of refugees and non-refugees, even while living in sanctuary. The following section discusses how refugees carve out agency as political actors in society.

II. Urban movement: Refugee activism in Montréal and inclusion

Being a refugee claimant and “being political”

Montréal has a long and vibrant history of social and community activism, including the Québec separatist movement, labour union struggles, international

³⁷ In June 2005, *Solidarity Across Borders* along with its allies walked from Montréal to Ottawa to demand the regularization of all non-status persons in Canada; an end to the deportation and detention of migrants; and the abolition of security certificates.

solidarity with Palestine, and organizing aid for the homeless. More recently, the mass student demonstrations during the Maple Spring demonstrated that Montréal is a city involved in social activism on several fronts. It is not uncommon to see grassroots organizations, whether dedicated to human rights, women's issues, or cultural communities, actively demonstrate in the city when triggered by injustices whether at home and abroad. Anti-deportation and asylum-seeker advocacy groups in Canada seem to be grounded in anti-war, anti-poverty, and anti-globalization movements, as well as being connected to Aboriginal rights activists. In particular, Montréal's anti-deportation movement has been international in its concerns but intensely local in its actions (Burman, 2006, p.289).

Following in the footsteps of other global movements, questions and cases related to immigration and refugees have sparked a particular interest and investment at the community level in Montréal. This trend grew following the policy restrictions, tightening of borders and increased suspicion surrounding migrants post September 11. Recent cases of deportations, refugees living in sanctuary in church basements, and persons under Security Certificates³⁸ in Montréal and the rest of Canada, have led people to mobilize around non-status

³⁸ According to Public Safety Canada, the security certificate process within the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act "is not a criminal proceeding, but an immigration proceeding. The objective of the process is the removal from Canada of non-Canadians who have no legal right to be here and who pose a serious threat to Canada and Canadians." See Public Safety Canada. (2012). *Security Certificates*. Retrieved from Public Safety Canada

<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/prg/ns/seccert-eng.aspx>

In other words, it allows the government to jail and even deport any non-citizen who it deems a security risk. Some aspects of the security certificates have been struck down as unconstitutional. I elaborate on the recent changes later in this chapter.

persons and refugees. Organizations such as *No One is Illegal*³⁹ (NOII), *Solidarity Across Borders*⁴⁰ (SAB) and the *Comité d'Action des Sans-Statut Algériens* (CASS) have striven to push issues related to immigrant and refugee rights to the forefront of the media and into the public eye. They emphasized the sense of urgency needed in circumstances such as pending deportations and secret trials.⁴¹

The *raison d'être* and the workings of such grassroots organizations are of central importance when considering the social inclusion of refugees, because of the ways in which refugees themselves are involved in carrying out migrant activism, thereby turning themselves into political subjects. As such, refugee claimants are not mere passive by-standers who accept at times hostile and unfounded decisions and outcomes. Rather, they are actively engaged in various events and activities, despite the risks and dangers involved. These movements have grown organically throughout Montréal's landscape and continue to expand their reach. The internet has been particularly important in this: videos, blogs, event descriptions and information circulate on social media between refugees, their allies, and other advocacy networks.

³⁹ NOII is a group composed of predominantly young, seasoned anti-globalization activists from Montréal's Anti-Capitalist Convergence (see Nyers, 2006, p.62).

⁴⁰ Solidarity Across Borders is a Montréal-based network engaged in the struggle for justice and dignity of immigrants and refugees. The group is made up of migrants, immigrants, refugees and allies who come together in support of three important demands: the regularization of all non-status people (Status for All!), an end to deportations and detentions, and the abolition of security certificates. See Solidarity Across Borders. Status for All Booklet. (2012).

<http://www.solidarityacrossborders.org/en/revendications/status-for-all-booklet>

⁴¹ Canada's Secret Trial Five have been held for up to six years without charges under security certificates, a section of Canada's *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* which allows for non-citizens to be held indefinitely under secret evidence. The five men under Security Certificates include Adil Charkaoui from Morocco, who was suspected of being a terrorist linked to Al Qaeda and was released on bail in 2005. The other four are Mohammad Mahjoub, an Egyptian refugee and father of two; Mahmoud Jaballah, an Egyptian refugee and father of six; Hassan Almrei, a Syrian refugee; and Mohamed Harkat. A special prison unit (costing 2.2 billion dollars) was built for them in Kingston, Ontario, annexed to the penitentiary and guarded by the Canadian Border Services Agency.

Solidarity Across Borders, a Montréal-based coalition of self-organized refugees and their allies, formed in 2003. The coalition emerged as a result of refugee communities' struggles against anti-immigration policies in Montréal, and has been organizing for justice and dignity for immigrants. The activists come present three main demands: first, the regularization of all non-status people (hence their tagline: Status for All!), second, an end to deportations and detentions, and lastly, the abolition of security certificates. Their campaigns for justice have included organized demonstrations, actions, and pickets, as they have actively resisted deportation, and supported individuals and families who face what they call an "unjust" immigration system.⁴² One notable action organized by SAB, which also received a considerable amount of media-coverage, was the "No One Illegal" March on Ottawa in the summer of 2005.⁴³ SAB and its allies walked from Montréal to Ottawa to demand the regularization of all non-status persons in Canada, to put an end to detention and deportations, and to call for the abolition of security certificates. Many non-status refugees took part in the march. As mentioned in the section on volunteerism, two former refugees interviewed for this project addressed the crowd during the March to Ottawa. The event⁴⁴ led to mass mobilization around their demands and was accompanied by an aggressive

⁴² SAB has organized cultural events, published newspapers and produced educational material, written hundreds of letters, collected thousands of signatures, and intervened in the public debates on immigrant rights. The group has also directly confronted the decision-makers responsible for removals and detentions. For detailed accounts of their work, see. *Solidarity Across Borders*. (2012). *Status for All Booklet*. Retrieved from

<http://www.solidarityacrossborders.org/en/revendications/status-for-all-booklet>

⁴³ The march was inspired by Shamim Akhtar, who was deported in the summer of 2004. She was a refugee from Pakistan who had been living in Canada with her husband and four children. Akhtar proposed the march at the first *Solidarity Across Borders* meeting as a means to challenge "the unjust laws and institutions that oppress and victimize immigrants and refugees" (Gomez, 2006, p.14)

⁴⁴ A documentary film directed by Guylaine Racine and Merdad Hage called *Documenting Citizenship* (2008) follows the "No One is Illegal March" to Ottawa.

sensitization campaign to exert pressure on then federal Citizenship and Immigration Minister Joe Volpe.

The *No One is Illegal* (NOII) collective also plays an important role in public activism. Their blog records many of the struggles and campaigns associated with migrant and indigenous justice issues in Montréal and Canada. The group is known to be comprised of a number of young anti-globalization activists who effectively organize and hold demonstrations, as well as directing action delegation visits, etc. There is also a broader coalition in the group, including non-status people. NOII takes on responsibility for some actions that involve greater risk to refugees, including the danger of being arrested by Immigration authorities. For instance, they took on the task of distributing flyers in the high security environment of Montréal's Trudeau Airport (Nyers, 2006, p.63). A few of the respondents I interviewed acknowledged their involvement with and the support they received from NOII. Umar,⁴⁵ for instance, explained that he was involved with NOII and was proud that he was once invited to give a speech to the organization.

The Action Committee for Non-Status Algerians (CASS) has directly felt the impact of discrimination and even deportation. This group of self-organized Algerian refugees living in Montréal refuses to remain silent and invisible. The group has developed a strong presence in public spaces around the city by organizing events and demonstrations which have been attended by over a thousand people. CASS is also known to organize unannounced delegation visits

⁴⁵ Umar, age 62, lawyer from Pakistan, single. Arrived to Montréal on June 15, 1993. Status at the time of the interview: Canadian citizen.

to Immigration offices. Initially, CASS was established to provide a space for non-status Algerians to convene, speak freely, and share their experiences in a non-hostile environment, as many members were reporting institutional obstacles. The CASS took on a more active role after the moratorium on deportations to Algeria was lifted in April 2002. Nyers (2006) says that the most successful political actions taken by CASS and their supporters focused on disrupting the everyday operations of securitization. They were especially successful in developing politically savvy counter-strategies aimed at over-turning technologies of deportation. Similar to the *sans-papiers* in France, members of CASS, non-status individuals, asserted themselves as active political agents, creating enough political pressure to force sovereign powers to recognize them as political agents. Refugees involved in NOII, SAB, and CASS's actions present a radical political moment (Nyers, 2006, p.54) and create new spatial and political possibilities. As Burman (2006) notes, when deportation and detention, which is a particular type of blockage, are met with active resistance and activist mobilization, a dialectical tension between block and flow comes forth. She writes: "Targeting, detaining, and removing suspects from the city block movement and horizons but give rise to new spatial and community possibilities through demonstrations, marches, sit-ins in government offices, and other appropriations of urban space" (p.283).

As Nadia explains, the contributions made by organizations like NOII along with CASS are what "saved our lives." NOII and CASS members joined Nadia's family for weekly protests in front of the Immigration offices. She explained that if they were going to occupy an Immigration office in order to

speak to an immigration representative, NOII and CASS were on the front lines protecting those without status from being arrested. Their allies also helped the claimants stay informed of their rights. Most importantly, Nadia says they were able to establish a bond of trust with members of NOII. This was important given the already vulnerable position they were in as non-status individuals, besides being reluctant to share their cases with just anyone. Nadia realizes the extent to which organizations like NOII and CASS, helped advance their cases.

Le Comité d'Action des Sans-Statut des Algériens nous a beaucoup aidés. (...) Vraiment, il y a des groupes qui nous ont beaucoup aidés, ils nous ont sauvés la vie. No One Is Illegal, c'est eux qui sont venus : chaque lundi, avec le Comité, de 16h à 18h, pendant un an, été comme hiver, -40 ou 32 degrés, sur Guy-Favreau ou au 1000 Saint-Antoine, devant le bureau d'Immigration pour manifester. Une fois, c'était au début, ils sont venus à Guy-Favreau, deux, trois membres de No One Is Illegal ; ils nous ont parlé, on avait peur et c'était une période où on ne voulait pas que n'importe qui s'unisse à nous... Parce que souvent, dès que tu arrives à faire confiance, tu n'entends plus parler d'eux, tu ne sais pas à qui ils vont raconter [ton histoire]. Donc ils sont venus. On a commencé à faire des réunions avec eux, des assemblées, et ils nous ont aussi informés de nos droits [juridiques], jusqu'où on peut aller. Par exemple, si on va occuper un bureau, ils vont nous dire ok, au lieu que ce soit nous – les sans-statuts – à être à l'avant, ça sera eux ; comme ça, nous, ils n'auront pas la chance de nous arrêter. Donc, ils ont vraiment fait énormément pour nous, d'ailleurs, jusqu'à présent, ils continuent.

The interviews revealed that refugees play a political role. They engage with organizations that are instrumental in ensuring the fundamental rights and dignity of refugees, combined with grassroots advocacy and lobbying strategies. By protecting themselves against exploitation, harassment, and discrimination, refugee claimants learn the ropes of community and civic life, while gaining important insight into Canada's political mechanisms. In mapping frameworks of inclusion, Stewart & Askonas (2000) indicate that “the central requirement of any

distinctive politics of inclusion is the need to combine the continuing pursuit of social justice with a recognition of and respect for pluralistic diversity” (p.10). Therefore, those refugees who involve themselves in social justice cause their own social inclusion in Montreal’s pluralistic reality.

Non-status and suspect

As positive as a refugee’s engagement with such groups may be, such involvement increases suspicion and discrimination against refugee claimants, particularly claimants of Muslim background post September 11, 2001. When Mohammed Cherfi became involved with the CASS, his political activity led him to be arrested three times in six months (Nyers p. 60).⁴⁶ Cherfi was denied refugee status once he entered Canada via the US in 1998. There was a moratorium on removals due to the civil war and unrest in Algeria. Cherfi was not deported but lacked any formal immigration status. When Cherfi was refused permanent residency status by Immigration Québec in November 2003, he took sanctuary in a church in Québec City. For the first time in Canadian history, police entered and violently arrested Cherfi on a “technicality”. The reason Immigration Quebec ordered Cherfi’s arrest, which was conducted by local Québec police, was because he was deemed inassimilable in Québec. This was in part due to his involvement with the CASS and his ineligibility for refugee status. He was therefore ordered to “be removed”—that is, deported—to Algeria under the pretext that he was not “adequately integrated” in Québec, despite having married

⁴⁶ The first time Cherfi was arrested was during a delegation visit to the Montréal Offices of the Québec Minister of Immigration along with 20 other CASS members in March 2003. The objective of the act was to speak directly to the Minister without an appointment; the delegation hoped to discuss ending the deportations of non-status Algerians from Canada. (See Nyers 2003, p. 60).

a French-Canadian and speaking French fluently. The claim that he was not “adequately integrated” as an excuse for Cherfi’s deportation is as Carole Boyce Davies (2001) argues a “version of the criminalizing and parallel conferring of statelessness on those with political positions deemed radical by the state” (p.951). Shortly thereafter, he was deported to the United States. Immigration officials there put him under detention, where he stayed for 16 months. He was finally granted refugee status in the US after his detention and in 2005, received permanent resident status in Canada.⁴⁷

Cherfi is one of many non-citizens who were viewed as suspect in the climate of Islamophobia after 9/11. He was detained along with Hassan Almrei, Mohammed Mahjoub, Mohammed Jaballah, Mohamed Harkat and Adil Charkaoui. These men were known as Canada’s Secret Trial Five. They were detained and/or deported without specific charges via security certificates, “a legal mechanism contained in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* that permits the detention without due process of non-citizens suspected of involvement in terrorism and more, significantly, those considered to have the *potential* to commit terrorist acts” (Razack, 2008, p.5). This tendency to criminalize non-status migrants or refugees has proliferated during the last decade. Suspending foreigner rights has been legally authorized as necessary in what is called the “war on terror”. Razack, who writes about the eviction of Muslims from the political community, describes how surveillance of immigrants and refugees has increased. Though Razack does point out that not all immigrants and refugees are

⁴⁷ See Mohammed Cherfi de retour au pays. (2009, August 4). Retrieved from <http://www.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/National/2009/08/04/001-mohammed-cherfi-retour.shtml>

necessarily innocent, nor do their cases necessarily require investigation, she emphasizes that when there is a lack of full legal scrutiny, then “we can only err on the side of our own ideological leanings” (p.50). In a world where “profile is proof” (Razack, p.51), Adil Charkaoui was another individual of Middle Eastern origin held under a security certificate. A Montréal schoolteacher from Morocco, Charkaoui was suspected of having links with al Qaeda. He was in Canadian detention for two years and under house arrest for four years. Adil Charkaoui’s security certificate was lifted by the Federal Court in October 2009 and he was released from house arrest, after wearing a GPS tracking bracelet system as a bail condition for the preceding four years.⁴⁸

To date, there has been some progress in the situation overall. A February 23, 2007 ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada ruled it unconstitutional to detain people based on secret evidence (Razack, 2008, p.27). The decision ruled that the sections of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* that allow secret evidence to be used for security certificates unfairly deny detainees their fundamental right to a fair trial. Denying foreign nationals a prompt hearing also violates the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Ibid, p.27). Groups such as *The People’s Commission on Security Certificates* have been active in monitoring and opposing the “national security agenda.” The Montréal-based network is “a space for individuals and groups who face oppression in the name of “national security” - such as indigenous people, immigrants, racialized communities, radical political

⁴⁸ See Perreux, L & Freeze, C. (2009, September 24). Charkaoui freed, Ottawa’s terror law shattered. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/al-qaeda-suspect-freed-ottawas-terror-law-shattered/article4295498/>

organizations, labour unions - and their allies, to form alliances, share information, and coordinate strategies to defend their full rights and dignity.”⁴⁹

In the quest for national security, refugees are often constructed as threats and as dangerous individuals, particularly depending on the region of the world they are from. This construction was reinvigorated by the perceived threat of terrorism. In this environment, discursive associations between criminality, security, fraud and foreigners are conflated, as profiling is considered to be proof. Despite this climate of fear of the “other,” Charkaoui and Cherfi, like Kader, chose to speak up and actively oppose the limitations imposed on them by sovereign powers. Peter Nyers aligns this stand with what he calls “abject cosmopolitanism”, which he describes as the “emerging political practices and enduring political problematics associated with refugee and immigrant groups resisting their targeted exclusion” (2003, p.1072). By involving themselves in such activities, refugees proved that as much as they are being pushed out, by virtue of their political and social involvement, they can find social inclusion as well. This reality echoes Askonas and Stewart’s (2000) view on inclusion. They write, “inclusion is a matter not only of an adequate share in resources but equally of participation in the determination of both individual and collective life chances” (p.9). Typically viewed as outcasts, these individuals managed to shift the paradigm from exclusion to inclusion through their own participation and with the community’s support.

⁴⁹ See The People’s Commission Network. Retrieved from <http://www.peoplescommission.org/en/>

Conclusion

This chapter's objective was to counter the misperceptions and stereotypes surrounding refugees, who are perceived as passive and as abusing the system. By showing how refugees manage themselves during the phase of "in-betweenness," I demonstrated that refugee claimants become active social and political actors. I proposed that the tension refugee claimants experienced as they faced both social exclusion and inclusion creates a sense of "in-betweenness" within the urban context. This "in-betweenness" is comprised of both temporal and spatial dimensions. As the interviews demonstrated, "suspended temporality" led to the need to make up for lost time as a result of indefinite waits, as well as the inability to plan for the future. The respondents' inter-generational experiences also surfaced. Children addressed their parents' experience and parents' described the impact waiting times had on their children's experiences. Refugees faced issues of family separation due to immigration processes. Feelings of guilt associated with not being adequately present for family members were also prevalent.

Within the realm of spatial "in-betweenness", respondents expressed finding themselves torn between their homeland and their new dwelling place, separated from family members. Furthermore, finding oneself stateless reinforced the spatial "in-betweenness" experienced by refugees. Finally, the lingering fear of deportation from one day to the next was omnipresent in most cases. The actual confinement of living in sanctuary is the culmination of spatial "in-betweenness." Nevertheless, even in such situations, instances and pockets of social inclusion emerge.

Community support and activist mobilization also help foster social inclusion. Refugee claimants taking on political roles represent a critical moment. Although the interviews did not include questions directly addressing political involvement, the activities and actions refugees participated in define them as political actors. Many became outspoken critics of the system, especially as they waited for their status to be determined, despite fear of deportation.

Due to their political engagement, refugees reconcile suspended time and political space as they participate in and contribute to social, community, and civic life. Through their own proactive (and for some, provocative) stance, they carve out their own agency and create meaning in their lives despite being put on hold indefinitely. This positive effect of liminality echoes what Myriam Hachimi Alaoui⁵⁰ calls *exil assumé*. According to her, this kind of exiled person considers him or herself an “actor in their own story”. She explains how these types of exiles manage to create meaning for the rupture they have suffered. They not only appropriate the political space they now find themselves in, they also take control of time. She opposes this type of exile with *exil subi*; these exiles consider themselves victims of a situation that they did not choose. In contrast, she writes:

« L'exil assumé correspond à l'expérience des individus qui parviennent à donner du sens à la rupture de l'exil, certains d'entre eux réussissant même à l'investir d'une valeur positive. En définissant la rupture comme une nouvelle donnée de leur existence, ils réussissent non seulement à s'approprier le nouvel espace politique où ils s'installent, mais surtout à maîtriser le temps » (p.43).

⁵⁰ Alaoui does a comparative study on the social destinies of exiled Algerians in France and in Canada. She examines immigration and integration in both countries and describes the ways in which the exiled overcome social, economic and political obstacles. See Myriam Hachimi Alaoui (2007) *Les Chemins de l'Exil: Les Algériens exilés en France et au Canada depuis les années 1990s*.

Many refugee claimants are able to take on political positions or, in Saskia Sassen's (2006) words, produce "new types of political subjects and new spatialities for politics" (p.279) which destabilize the formal, narrow apparatus of citizenship as an institution. By engaging in such acts, they temporarily alleviate their alienation and isolation through solidarity and a sense of community. In this context, silenced voices, as Jacques Rancière recognized, "speak against injustice and vocalize grievances as equal beings" (in Isin, p. 277). It would therefore be valuable to re-consider and re-frame how refugee claimants' political acts may become moments of social participation and civic engagement that, in turn, foster social inclusion. Recognizing non-citizen participation is necessary, as refugee claimants undertake legitimate political actions. These actions are constructive and cumulatively constitute modes and practices of informal citizenship, to borrow Sassen's term.

Whether occupying immigration offices or sugar shacking in sanctuary, refugee claimants can lead active political and social lives despite not being formally recognized as citizens. Such actions can be viewed as tactics that help refugee claimants' stake their claim to the city. Stefan Kipfer (2008) comments on Lefebvre's take on 1968: "In the disruptive moments created by [this] spatial dialectic of mobilization, experiences of comradeship, festivity, and democratic community may liberate "parodies" of minimal difference and shatter homogeneous-fragmented world of abstract space and linear time. In these moments, a "different" – creative, self-determined, fully lived-urban society is tangible."

Lefebvre invites us to draw an explicit link between hegemony and the production of space. Such oppositional strategies carried out by refugee claimants and their advocates transform imposed space and time. More recently, David Harvey (2003) argued that Lefebvre's concept is "not merely a right to access what already exists [in the city], but a right to change it after our heart's desire." (p.939) Therefore, counter-hegemonic spatial practices carried out by refugee claimants themselves can create pockets and instances of inclusion, where space is subverted and suspended time is once again re-activated.

Chapter 3

I. Double absence to double presence: Departures and everyday movement in the city

“Autobiography has to do with time, with sequence and with what makes up the continuous flow of life. Here, I am talking of a space, of moments and discontinuities” (Benjamin, 1979, p. 12).

Introduction: Deconstructing displacement

Double absence,¹ a term popularized by Abdelmalek Sayad(2004), is a condition that migrants may face during their lives, whether they are illegalized or legalized. Sayad defines this condition as being “absent *both* from ... place of origin and ... place of arrival” (emphasis added, p.xiv). In the context of emigration and immigration, this double absence is likely to start during the pre-migratory stage, when a departure is envisaged. Based on extensive epistemological research, Sayad’s work has greatly contributed to our understanding of the immigrant condition. He reveals the contradictions that characterize immigrants’ displaced existence. “Collective dishonesty” is perpetuated as immigrants downplay the suffering of emigration out of self-respect and in order to encourage their fellow countrymen to join them. Separated from their homes, families, and homelands, immigrants are burdened by a sense of guilt for being absent from home. Simultaneously, Sayad claims, immigrants

¹ Abdelmalek Sayad’s *La double absence: des illusions de l’émigré aux souffrances de l’immigré* was originally published in French in 1999 and later translated to English in 2004. Sayad died in 1998 before he was able to publish his work. Sayad worked closely with French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. After Sayad’s death, Bourdieu assembled these writings for publication.

are “absent” in the country of arrival, where they face exclusion and are seen simply as members of the labour force. Although Sayad’s concept is foundational in understanding migration, I invert his notion and introduce what I refer to as “double presence.” Besides acknowledging absence, this approach highlights migrants’ presence in their new dwelling place.

In the first portion of this chapter I briefly reflect on the migratory stage of departure, to reveal some of the key elements tied to narratives of forced departure. Particularly, how do the circumstances and experiences of departure extend to the everyday lives of refugee claimants once they begin the re-settling process? What impact do their departures have on them once re-settled? Moreover, how do my research respondents frame and articulate their recollections and memories of their places of origin?

The second portion of this chapter is concerned with refugees’ physical movement throughout city space and how they manage to create room for themselves in the city. I trace the ways in which refugee claimants navigate and narrate the city on their own terms, with a particular emphasis on the act of walking, as theorized by Michel de Certeau (1984). I consider the practice of walking in the city to be particularly significant, as pedestrian movements offer creative and new possibilities for refugee claimants to shape their experiences of re-settlement in the city. I contend that through the act of walking and by narrating how they circulate in the city, refugee claimants re-write their routes, thereby re-affirming their presence in the city. This advances the possibility of what I describe as a “double presence”: their actual physical presence in the city

as well as experiences of carrying memories and a place of origin throughout their new dwelling place. Such an approach contrasts with the emigration process which Sayad notes is an occurrence of double absence. Rather than focusing solely on absence in experiences of re-settlement, I deem it necessary to examine the opportunities through which refugee claimants re-affirm their presence in the city. These opportunities are seldom addressed in studies of refugee urban re-settlement. My approach centered on the “everyday” and on activities considered trivial, such as walking, allows us to acknowledge a different type of presence in the city experienced by refugee claimants. Furthermore, this challenges reliance on notions of absence and exclusion commonly associated with the refugee predicament.

Departures

Migration can be a stressful and challenging experience, in particular for refugee claimants as this process “co-exists with the often traumatic and violent pre-migration, trans-migration and post-migration experiences of refugees, and the stress commonly surpasses an individual’s or family’s natural coping capacities” (Kaaren Frater-Mathieson in Hamilton & Moore, 2003, p.12). In fact, each stage of the migration process entails unique stressors.² Here, I address the pre-migration and the departure stages. Miriam Potocky-Tripodi (2002) associates these stages with the loss of family members, friends, home, and the familiar environment. Based on a number of authors who write on refugees from

² The process of moving from one country and settling in another consists of three major stages according to Drachman (1992). These are *premigration and departure*, *transit* and *resettlement*. See Drachman D. (1992) A stage-of-migration framework for service to immigrant populations (as cited in Potocky-Tripodi (2002). p, 17).

psychology and social work perspectives, she writes about the additional challenges refugees face, as for them departure “often involves traumatic experiences such as war, famine, violence, rape, imprisonment, torture, witnessing violent death of family members, as well as ostracization, and other forms of persecution within their homeland” (2002, p. 257).

Besides the disruptions departure causes in numerous realms of life, this stage is also often accompanied by a sense of confusion and extreme vulnerability in the face of unbearable and unjust situations. Authoritarian regimes, paramilitaries, and corrupt leadership leave citizens powerless, particularly when abusive forms of authority violate human and fundamental rights. According to Frater-Mathieson the complex situation which constitutes the refugee experience is a result of “the multiplicity of these losses and stressors of exile, in addition to traumatic events” (p. 12).³

Such coerced departures generally entail rushed farewells, hurried preparations, and the burden of having to leave loved people and prized possessions behind. These clandestine exits are at times executed with false documents purchased at excessive prices. The need to leave can be so dire and the options extremely limited, that some even resort to the help of human smugglers. As Potocky-Tripodi writes, “for refugees, departure is often unplanned, hasty, chaotic, and dangerous” (2002, p. 257). Regardless of the channels used to flee,

³ Frater-Mathieson (2003) also discusses the dimensions and complexities of refugee trauma, with an emphasis on refugee children and the impact it may have on their psychological development. She highlights that “not all refugee children will develop clinical symptoms as a result of trauma; however, every refugee child will have experienced some degree of trauma in relation to their experiences of disrupted family, school and community life, multiple losses and the effects of war, as well as with respect to the ongoing and complex family reunification and resettlement issues they face in the country of resettlement” (p. 13).

the departure marks the beginning of a new passage whose trajectories are punctuated by a series of enormous unknowns and risks, with great personal and financial insecurity.

It is therefore futile to speak of refugees who sought asylum in Montréal without addressing the living conditions and experiences *prior* to their departure which ultimately prompted their escape. Although the act of departing is not one of the central themes of this project, it is necessary to establish, at the very least, an initial idea of the conditions, circumstances and emotive repercussions surrounding involuntary flight. Doing so may elucidate the conditions and complexities associated with being a refugee claimant in the destination country.⁴ Looking more closely at “departure” may also contribute to understanding the ways in which memory is articulated. Mary N. Layoun (2001) says this of the value of taking refugee memory into account: “Critical community, refugee and nonrefugee, would recognize refugee memory as not simply plaintive stories about a lost past. For memory is also, and perhaps more crucially, about the present. And about the possible futures.”⁵

“Double absence” and departures

I frame my discussion of departure narratives relying on Abdelmalek Sayad’s empirical work on ‘Algerian immigration’⁶ to France in the second half

⁴ I avoid the use of the term “host” country, which remains prevalent in literature surrounding immigration. For instance authors of *The Age of Migration* Castles and Miller (2003) use this term liberally. However, I argue that the term “host” reduces the role of refugees and immigrants, suggesting that they are passive, which goes against the grain of this project.

⁵ See Layoun, M. N. (2001). *Wedded to the land?: Gender, boundaries, and nationalism in crisis*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press. p. 59.

⁶ The expression ‘*l’immigration algérienne*’ has two inseparable meanings according to the book’s translator. One is the emigration process from Algeria and the other is a population of Algerian immigrants who reside in France. The translator notes that Standard English would refer to

of the twentieth century. This sociologist's research goes beyond epistemological principles and methodological guidelines and is based on more profound discourses which are bound up with both "experience and social trajectory," as Pierre Bourdieu explains in the book's preface (p.xiii). Although Sayad's research is primarily concerned with male labour migrants, his approach can be equally useful when considering migrants more broadly and refugee claimants specifically. Far from embodying the same realities, the significance of both the terms "immigrant" and "refugee claimant" nonetheless share at least one commonality. Like other forms of migration, they entail the act of leaving one place, usually a homeland, and going to another for either temporary or permanent residence. The main difference, however, in the case of refugees, is that the departure is usually a forced one driven by persecution and not by economic needs or other life choices.

Despite this difference, Sayad's emphasis on the discourse of emigration remains valid when addressing refugee claimants' movements across borders. He states: "one cannot write on the sociology of immigration without, at the same time and by that very fact, outlining a sociology of *emigration* (emphasis added) [...] The two are indissociable aspects of a single reality, and one cannot be explained without reference to the other" (p.1). Thus, among Sayad's significant research contributions is the importance he allots to the "emigrant." In so doing, he shifts the traditional discourse on migration, which tends to focus on the

'l'immigration algérienne' as 'the Algerian community in France'. The term 'community', however, upsets the "classic French notion of secular and universalist republic" which does not recognize the existence of 'communities' based on ethnicity, religion, culture, language and even gender. The translator therefore adopts 'Algerian immigration' to reflect the double meaning of *immigration*, even though it departs from normal English usage.

immigrant from the point of view of the “host” or destination country. The classical discourse centers on how the receiving country views immigration as a social problem in terms of immigrant adaptation. Sayad critiques how the immigrant is usually taken into consideration, arguing that it is “as though his life [the immigrant’s] began the moment he came to France” (p.29).

Given Sayad’s focus on emigration with regards to personal experience and social trajectory, he also highlights that one of the features of exploring the twin components of emigration and immigration is necessarily being “self-reflexive” (p.2). As the narratives gathered for this project demonstrate, this reflexive attitude is indeed what brings the nature of both major and minor disruptions suffered to the surface. It is these disruptions that tend to describe refugee plight/flight.

Narratives of departure

The theme of departure came up spontaneously on numerous occasions throughout the interviews, even though my project does not directly address the emigration part of the migratory process. It instead focuses on refugee experiences unfolding in city of asylum, Montréal proper. However, mentions of emigration are expected, considering that an event or a series of events are what triggered the departure and brought the respondents to seek refuge in the first place. Therefore, a basic understanding of why these individuals were forced to flee their countries can inform us of how refugee claimants come to build a relationship or rapport with communities in Montréal, Québec and Canada at large, once they arrive. Furthermore, shedding light on the reasons for departure,

as well as the conditions surrounding flight can elucidate certain instances of inclusion and exclusion that the refugee claimants encounter while waiting for their status to be determined.

Given that memory is also about the present and the future as Layoun (2001) writes, what are the ways in which refugee claimants formulate their memories about their place of origin? How do they perceive their own uprooting, which is additionally marked by the passing of time and geographic distances? Within the constructs of memory, it is important to realize that spatial and temporal dimensions come into play during the act of remembering, particularly with regards to one's "home," as the refugee narratives demonstrate. In *Materialising Exile: Material culture and embodied experience among Karenni refugees in Thailand*, Sandra Dudley (2010) highlights this aspect when writing about refugees who inhabit camps. She writes: "For refugees, the sensory and ambivalent processes of remembering and imagining the pre-exile past traverse not only temporal distances but spatial ones too." For Dudley, the merger of temporal and spatial aspects is what she considers to be "home." She does not conceive of "home" as a necessarily defined physical space, nor as Lisa Malkki describes it as a somewhere where one feels most safe and at ease, but "as somewhere that people feel is an intrinsic part of them, of who and what they perceive themselves to be" (p. 9).

In speaking to individuals who fled in order to protect themselves and their families' personal security, I tried to grasp the circumstances under which the respondents were forced to leave their homes. It is precisely this recognition

of emigration that Sayad emphasizes – the importance of causes and reasons that may have determined the departures and oriented the diversity of the trajectories.

Given the potentially traumatic nature of their departure, I left it to the respondents' discretion to determine how much they wished to disclose about their circumstances of departure. The only formal inquiry I made into the situations and conditions of departure arose in the penultimate question of the interview questionnaire. In this question, I asked the participants: "How was your life before you came to Montréal?" However, the majority of the respondents did not wait for this fairly open-ended question towards the end of the interview. Instead, in answering other questions related to their experiences in Montréal, the participants spontaneously interjected with personal experiences, as well as social and geographical trajectories associated with their departures. Despite my conscious effort to avoid probing such sensitive topics, a few of the respondents willingly revealed horrific experiences they had seen and lived. Others declined to divulge additional information, and instead made broader statements regarding the circumstances surrounding their departure.

Regardless of whether the interventions that I recount below are completely spontaneous or prompted by my questions, the very fact that the respondents brought departure narratives to surface, or chose not to disclose them, demonstrates the "indissociability" (Sayad, p.1) of emigration (here, forced leaving), and immigration, (here, seeking refuge).

Three major themes emerged as I analyzed my respondents' departure narratives. First was an initial unwillingness to leave. Second, the respondents

made comparisons between the difficult conditions in their cities and regions of origin and the relatively calm reality of Montréal. Third, they addressed one of the major challenges accompanying departure: not holding all the documents required to cross international borders, that is, lacking passports.

An unwillingness to depart was a common theme in several of the interviews. A number of respondents expressed early on in our dialogue that they did not wish to leave their homes, nor the lives they had already put considerable effort into building to start again from scratch in complete uncertainty. Some had well-established careers they were obliged to abandon, others were saddened to recall immediate or extended family members that they left behind, as well as having to abandon homes. Nevertheless, all the respondents did explicitly cite personal security and persecution, including dangerous, even life-threatening encounters with individuals in positions of power, ranging from government officials and state police, to military and religious leaders.

When Ella's case was initially refused by the Immigration and Refugee Board in 2001, with a deportation date set in early 2002, she and her son were sheltered by a downtown Montréal church. They received the call saying that they were to submit to deportation while waiting in the church. They were ordered to report to the airport at 4pm that very day. Ella recounts what she thought at that moment when her claim for refugee status was declined:

That's how...I realized what it meant....I'd run away from Zimbabwe, from death, now I realized that the Canadian Government was sending me back to die...

Despite the fact that she was initially refused refugee status after fleeing a dangerous situation in her homeland, Ella made it clear all along and even reiterated to the immigration officials that she did not want to leave Zimbabwe in the first place.

What am I going to do?...it's not like I wanted to leave...I had a job...I had my life...I had a house....I had a car...my children, they lived a normal life, like any other kid...but my son has been forced to grow up...quicker than his 16 years of life...because...he had no choice...it's really difficult...

After a three day stay in the church following the deportation order, the Minister of Immigration announced his decision that Zimbabwe be added to the list of countries to which deportations would no longer be made.⁷ As a result, Ella and her son were allowed to stay in Canada due to the moratorium on deportations to Zimbabwe. After that ordeal, it was another six years before they were granted permanent residency. Once Ella and her son arrived in Canada, the refugee determination process proved to be charged with insecurity and instability. Ella did not migrate to Canada for a more prosperous life; she was settled and content in Zimbabwe, until the political oppression unfolding in her homeland took control of her life. As she pointed out during the interview:

*It's so painful when you are stateless.... It's really painful...and what pains me mostly is....I didn't come here for economic reasons...I came here because I was running away from a situation...and the situation got worse...and it's even worse now ...*⁸

⁷ On January 30, 2002, Minister of Immigration Denis Coderre made the announcement that Zimbabwe was being added to the list of other countries to which deportations would no longer be made. See Canada suspends deportations to Zimbabwe. (2002, January 20). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2002/01/30/deport020130.html>

⁸ During the time of the interview, a state of emergency was announced in Zimbabwe. See Zimbabwe cholera 'an emergency'. (2008, December 4). Retrieved from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7764200.stm>

The “situation” Ella refers to is the violent regime of President Robert Mugabe, under which political beatings, killings and torture were commonplace. This is what led her to flee the first place. Following her husband’s murder, she tried to pursue his killers. This in turn seriously endangered her and her family’s safety and compromised her physical and psychological well-being.

Marie Lacroix (2004) points out how political events in the claimants’ countries of origin “shattered their lives and dreams, and led them down the road to becoming refugees. As they were forced out of their countries, the hope for a better future and the possibility of being part of that future was extinguished” (p.155). Lacroix’s statement resonates with Ella’s reality of broken dreams as a result of major life disruptions that were brought on by political occurrences leading her to the non-status reality in Canada. With regards to the ways in which departure can mark a refugee’s existence, Lacroix draws the following conclusion based on empirical research on refugee claimant subjectivity: “Leaving is seen as accepting defeat, renouncing the ideal which fuelled the struggle. This leads to a profound rupture in their political subjectivity and diminishes their sense of who they were, creating a derivative, [...] of the men they were” (p.155). This observation reflects the inadequacy refugee claimants like Ella feel. At times, they experience a sense of defeat not only in their new dwelling place, but vis-à-vis their country of origin.

Sometimes I just think...my mother is still alive anyway....and I think of how those people are surviving... sometimes I just want to go back...and be part of that struggle, [...] if I still call myself a Zimbabwean, then what can I do for my country right now...?

In Montréal, Ella lives in humble conditions⁹ after having to struggle to overcome the immigration obstacles and indeterminacy she faced during her lengthy refugee determination process. As a result, she does not possess the comforts – both in terms of emotional and financial security – which she possessed in Zimbabwe, particularly prior to the political turmoil that turned her into a refugee. In addition to irreplaceable human loss – that of her husband – all the amenities she was accustomed to, as well as the comforts that come with being at home also disappeared. Such cumulative losses can potentially lead to the creation of a “derivative” of who they once were, as Lacroix posits, especially when the loss of home is implicated.

The difficulties that Ella encountered in Montréal can therefore be considered an extension of what occurred prior to her departure, in light of Sayad’s emphasis on emigration. This extension comes to the surface especially when Ella recounts the challenges her son experienced once in Montréal, namely being diagnosed with depression.

We had to go to the Children’s Hospital for assessment and everything...he was assessed for a year...then they made an application to the Minister of Education explaining his condition...because..I mean the reason why we came here.... is because....his father was shot dead... a political thing in Zimbabwe.....so he is a child who has this kind of depression, thinking of his father...and he comes here thinking that all is going to be well and suddenly he cannot go to school, he cannot understand the language and nobody wants to explain what is saying... “ça va?” what does it mean and whatever...and so he says... ‘oh okay, Mom, I’m not going to go to school’...

What stood out in her recollections is the struggle her son experienced adjusting to his new surroundings, namely understanding and learning the French language.

⁹ The interview was conducted in her apartment in the Montréal borough of Verdun.

The adjustment took a major toll on Ella's son, to the point that he sank into a depression and refused to go to school, due to the bullying and mocking that he faced. The traumatic nature of Ella's emigration and the horrific circumstances surrounding it very likely had an impact on her and her son's psychological well-being in Montréal. As Sayad points out, the life of the migrant does not start in the destination country. Rather, the conditions in the homeland and the circumstances of departure are directly related and are "indissociable" from realities experienced in the new dwelling place.

It should be added that Ella has a daughter who is not in Montréal. In fact, at the time of the interview, they had not seen each other for the past eight years. Due to financial constraints, Ella left her daughter in London, under the care of a church organization:

(...) It was a bit dangerous for her to be in public (in Zimbabwe)...(...) the reasons being that...I pursued my husband's killers, it was the government anyway...so it wasn't safe for us...

As the narratives surrounding departure demonstrate, the "derivative of self" that Lacroix underscores in refugee subjectivity often came up in my dialogue with Ella. Furthermore, her relatively comfortable and established life in Zimbabwe was one which she had no plans of abandoning until the political situation became unbearable. A social worker by profession in Zimbabwe, Ella has not been able to continue and build on her career in Montréal, due to her precarious state. This state was dragged out by a slow determination process, keeping her life stalled.

The initial unwillingness to leave the homeland Ella expressed also surfaced in a number of the other interviews. Forced departure was the last

recourse because, for the most part, these individuals were well established, respected and recognized in their countries of origin. As a result, the thought of emigrating had not necessarily occurred to them. Most had received college degrees in their home countries and were employed as professionals, besides having solid networks of family and friends in place. My interview with Pierre revealed how well-established he was. He had a promising future, a good salary and potential promotions. Leaving Congo Brazaville during the mid 1990s due to tribal conflicts was the last thing on this mind, as he himself states. When he spoke of the past before the unrest became intolerable, the degree of pride and confidence was audible in Pierre's voice as he described a time and place where life was relatively stable and reliable.

J'étais à la direction générale des transports terrestres avec beaucoup de promotions à venir. J'étais un collaborateur d'un directeur, donc j'étais quelqu'un qui était prêt à devenir un chef de service très très vite, j'avais beaucoup de perspectives, je gagnais bien ma vie...disons que je n'avais pas du tout l'idée même d'immigrer (...) parce que j'étais bien là où j'étais.

When Pierre explained his situation to immigration agents, they did not give his claim much credence, even though he had the documents to support his case. He showed them papers that proved his established career, so that the decision made in his case would be based on fleeing from political persecution and not conflated with leaving for economic reasons.

Donc, c'est ça que j'ai essayé d'expliquer aux agents mais, c'est peut être normal qu'avec l'affut des réfugiés à l'époque, ils avaient comme idée générale, le fait que les gens viennent pour des raisons économiques, parce qu'ils ne vivent pas très bien chez eux, ils veulent venir améliorer leur mode de vie ici, mais ce n'est pas toujours le cas. Pour mon cas, non, c'est loin de là. J'ai des preuves, j'ai des papiers, qui montrent que j'étais ingénieur principal à la direction, je gagnais bien ma vie...donc j'arrive ici, parce qu'il y a eu des guerres, un conflit, un contexte politique très difficile, avec

des guerres tribales parmi nous, des guerres de clans, qui ont fait que je serais dans l'impossibilité de vivre là avec ma famille....

The political circumstances that destabilized Pierre's life were completely out of his control. His existence was threatened because he was identified as a member of the "wrong" tribe. Once he left, the challenges Pierre faced were immense. He was obliged to rebuild his life from scratch, creating, once again, a "derivative" (Lacroix) of the man he once was, in a place where no one knew his name, credibility, past accomplishments or potential. In addition to the psychological repercussions such a transition may have, refugee claimants have to rebuild new networks when they are unfamiliar with resources, especially in the early arrival stage of the migratory process.

The second theme related to leaving one place for another that emerged in the interviews is the comparisons the respondents made between their cities or regions of origin and Montréal. This aspect also highlights Sayad's notion that it is impossible to dissociate emigration and immigration. During my dialogue with the respondents, often the current place of immigration is defined in relation to the past place(s) of departure. Pierre draws a contrast between the streets of Montréal, which he now navigates in relative peace, and previous cities where he lived in constant fear due to the armed military, who belonged to the opposing tribe and controlled his neighbourhood.

Pierre was eventually evacuated by Foreign Legions¹⁰ to Gabon during the war, but was not allowed to stay there. Subsequently, he flew to Russia with three

¹⁰ The French Foreign Legion is the military service wing of the French Army. There are 7699 legionnaires and non-commissioned officers hailing from 136 different countries, including France. See French Foreign Legion Recruiting. (2013). <http://www.legion-recrute.com/en/>

of his children to join his wife, who had also fled from Congo, Brazzaville to Russia. The Russian authorities accepted the children, allowing them to reunite with their mother; however Pierre was immediately put on an empty plane and deported back to Africa, because he lacked his documents and passport. He describes the perils he faced as follows:

Donc je suis allée avec mes 3 enfants qui avaient évacué avec moi, puis quand on est arrivé à Moscou, autour du 15, mi-juin, 1997. Ben, je suis arrivé là et puis les enfants ont été acceptés, ont été récupérés, ils sont restés en Russie, auprès de la mère, mais moi, le même jour, j'ai été réacheminé en Afrique. Et puis, il y a avait un avion vide qui était pour moi seule. J'étais réacheminé en Afrique dans un avion russe, parce qu'ils ont dit que vous n'avez pas de documents, pas de passeport. Je leur ai dit, je ne pouvais pas en avoir, je suis un réfugié.

Lack of documentation is an important factor that leads to the rejection of cases, at the time; Russia refused Pierre, despite being married with children to a Russian national. Pierre is well aware of economic migrants and phony, fraudulent refugee cases trying to take advantage of the system. He explains throughout the interview how he struggled during the hearings to convince the judges that his was not a case of this sort. Once in Canada, he was initially refused refugee status by the Immigration and Refugee Board, even though he had documents proving his position with the Transport Ministry as an engineer in Congo Brazzaville before the civil unrest. The documents showed that when it became too dangerous, he was evacuated to Gabon by Foreign Legions not completely willingly; he had no other choice. When he finally did make it to Russia, once again, he once again lived in terror, this time as a Black man in Russia. Even though Pierre spoke fluent Russian and was educated at a university in Leningrad (now St-Petersburg) during the 1970s, when he finally managed to

stay in Russia, joining his wife and children, it soon became unbearable for him to live there as an African man. Pierre was constantly physically and verbally attacked by neo-Nazi skinheads. He was forced to leave and relocate once again.

Quand j'ai quitté le Congo pour arriver en Russie, je pensais trouver un temps d'accalmie, mais là, c'est une autre guerre avec des skinheads et tout, donc on était la proie des skinheads, on marchait dans la terreur. Partout on était dans les autobus et métros on était attaqué, c'était un climat de terreur et de peur et on avait le traque, j'avais le traque tout le temps.

So, seeking safety from persecution in Brazzaville led to additional persecution and living in fear, this time in Russia. Moreover, he had already been deported from Russia due to a lack of documentation. The fact that he lacked adequate documentation was out of his control. With imminent danger looming in zones of unrest, securing appropriate traveling documents is an arduous process, full of countless obstacles. This leaves a number of asylum seekers no other alternative but to travel without appropriate papers or opt for false passports: this is the third common theme I address surrounding departure. Given the political instability in regions that refugees are trying to escape from and, also, due to the urgency of their exit, obtaining the necessary identification papers can be a painstaking process. In fact, even the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) makes allowances for the situation, saying: "Due to the circumstances in which they are sometimes forced to leave their home country, refugees are perhaps more likely than other aliens to find themselves without identity documents."¹¹ The Canadian Council for Refugees also bring awareness to this issue by emphasizing that traveling with false identification is the only viable way

¹¹ See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (1984). *Identity Documents for Refugees*. [Document EC/SCP/33]. Retrieved from UNHCR online <http://www.unhcr.org/excom/EXCOM/3ae68cce4.html>

to flee a country refugees otherwise would not be allowed to leave if they tried to use formal, legal channels to acquire passports.¹²

Nadia and her family made the journey to Montréal via London in 1996 using false passports. Their departure was marked by the critical uncertainty of having to go through borders with forged documents. She attributes their success in passing through to sheer luck. According to her, a two-year old child could have identified the papers as false. She explained:

(...) et déjà juste pour passé à l'aéroport Heathrow à Londres, on a vraiment eu beaucoup de chance parce que mon père, il avait 42 ans, il avait un passeport d'un français qui avait 30 ans et ma mère qui avait 30 ans, elle avait un passeport d'une femme espagnole de 52 ans. Et ma mère elle ne parlait pas un mot en espagnol, et vraiment c'était casse-gueule d'essayer de passer.

At Heathrow, after some tense moments as a customs agent went through their false documents, the agent apparently winked at Nadia's younger sister who was watching him intently, and followed his gesture with a "Bon Voyage." Once in Montréal, Nadia claims it was once again good fortune that salvaged the situation and made their passage into Canada possible.

Et une fois qu'on est arrivé, donc on arrive au guichet aux douanes, ici à Mirabel,¹³ et alors, l'agent prend les passeports, les regarde.... mon père dit, « écoutez, ce sont des faux passeports » Le monsieur dit oui, oui

¹² The Canadian Council for Refugee (CCR) provides the following facts on their website: "Interdiction measures include visa requirements and identity checks by airlines and other carriers. Used by many governments – including the Canadian government – to prevent people from arriving on their territory, these measures force refugees to use smugglers and false documents to reach safety."

As such, for many refugees fleeing persecution, a false travel document is the only way to escape. The CCR also states that "repressive governments often refuse to issue passports to known political dissidents – or imprison them if they apply. Sometimes refugees are stripped of their identification as they flee from conflict or have no time to collect their documents before fleeing for safety." See Canadian Council for Refugees. (n.d.). Facing Facts - Myths and misconceptions about refugees and immigrants in Canada. Retrieved from <http://ccrweb.ca/documents/FFacts.htm#4>

¹³ From 1975 to 1997, all international flights to/from Montréal were required to use the Mirabel Airport, located in Mirabel, Québec, north of Montréal, along Highway 15 North.

monsieur allez à droite..... « attendez, faux passeports Monsieur ! » On pensait qu'on allait être arrêté ou je ne sais pas, puis non, en fin de compte on est passé par le guichet de nouveaux arrivants, je ne sais pas trop quoi, et voilà, c'était ça la première journée au Canada.

While I did not ask the research respondents to explicitly divulge how they arrived in Canada and whether or not it was through irregular means, some participants, like Nadia, voluntarily provided that information. It is still unclear how she and her family were able to obtain the forged documents in the first place. Customs agents realizing that the documents are falsified, yet allowing passage can be disconcerting for some or considered to be an act of altruism by others. This apparently exceptional example of airport officials' complicity with migrants is ambiguous and beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, securing and traveling with the (in)appropriate identification papers is a critical aspect linked to departure for a large number of refugees.

Other interview respondents were not as vocal about the conditions that prompted their departures. When I asked Umar about his life in Pakistan prior to arriving to Montréal, he tried to divert the question with the following answer:

I told you...my life the same as...[sic] working with the political institution and organization and busy....

I asked him if he was persecuted. He answered, lowering his voice. Compared to his initial answer, Umar's tone completely changed.

I was arrested. That is a different story. It is a very dark. ... in Pakistan and the religious [sic].... And I'm the left-leaning...many times...it's bitter bitter memory, it's past memories...

I interjected by assuring him that we did not need to talk about it. And he continued:

No, no.....it's not good...interrogation, going to the police, coming here...every time something.....once upon a time, I was very happy... I told my family don't worry... I'm a safe man...they said how? Why?...I said the police man would walk with me from morning to evening, they are watching my whole...every movement....when I was under surveillance, I was happy...no problem....nobody will kill me...I have bodyguards....

He ended his statement about the past with humour and sarcasm, describing how he was followed and harassed while under surveillance for his political views as a lawyer in Pakistan.

Hussein, a forty-two year old business man sought asylum in Montréal and had been living in Canada for eight years and four months at the time of the interview. When I asked him about his experience in Montréal so far, I was initially struck by his confidence when describing his migratory trajectory. The other respondents vividly recounted the anxiety and insecurity surrounding the refugee determination process and how it would unfold. Hussein, on the other hand, even before leaving his place of origin, was overly certain that he would be granted refugee status. He suffered persecution in Mauritius for having converted from Islam to Christianity. As his statement below shows, he had verified his eligibility based on the Geneva Convention and had also studied the Canadian refugee determination system closely and knew its ins and outs quite well, compared to other refugee claimants who arrive unaware of their rights and the services available to them.

Depuis que je suis arrivé à Montréal, au début j'avais revendiqué le statut de réfugié dès mon arrivé à l'aéroport. Pour moi, si j'avais revendiqué le statut de réfugié, c'est parce que j'ai senti que c'était un droit pour moi. Donc j'étais déjà persécutéà cause de ma religion. J'avais changé de religion. Et ensuite pour opinions politiques aussi. Et j'avais des enfants et pour eux c'est une question de nationalité. Donc vers la fin, j'avais constaté que dans l'ensemble je remplissais déjà, je rencontrais déjà quatre

des cinq critères de la Convention de l'ONU pour la revendication du statut de réfugié. Dès que j'étais à l'aéroport même, qui est aujourd'hui Pierre Eliot Trudeau, dès que j'ai dit à l'agent que j'étais Musulman dans le passé et je suis devenu Chrétien et c'est pour cette raison que je revendique le statut de réfugié, la raison principale c'est ça, il y a aussi les opinions politiques derrières....Lorsqu'elle a regardé mes documents, elle a regardé tout, tout était en ordre et authentique, c'était une dame, elle m'a dit 'venez, remplissez les formulaires', elle était très gentille avec moi, et j'ai fait toutes les formalités sans problèmes, et après j'ai quitté l'aéroport et je suis arrivé au YMCA¹⁴ comme tout le monde, et on m'avait même indiqué comment il faut faire pour arriver au YMCA.

Despite this relatively complication-free entry into Canada, Hussein's personal experience and social trajectory was marked by the difficulty of establishing himself in Montréal, and securing employment, considering that he was a successful businessman in his country of origin. This once well-respected and thriving businessman found himself working a series of minimum-wage jobs in Montréal, until he finally landed a job in a *friperie* (second-hand clothing store) once he secured his status as a refugee. He had worked in the clothing industry before fleeing to Canada, as an importer. Hussein was the only man employed at the friperie in Montréal and the women were not initially accepting of his presence. While working at that job, Hussein received news that his wife had suddenly died in Africa. With the loss of his wife, he was confronted with having to raise his two young children, who later joined him in Montréal, on his own.

Every individual interviewed had unique narratives and motives for leaving their home countries, often triggered by corrupt political regimes, religious and racial hatred, widespread violence, and warfare. The narratives of departure themselves are telling as the respondents recalled the various situations

¹⁴ Hussein is referring to a temporary residence run by the YMCA where refugee claimants are housed for a maximum of one month. This particular residence is known as the "Covered Garden" or "Jardin Couvert" and is located on Tupper Street in downtown Montréal.

in their home countries. These past experiences in turn shed light on some of the obstacles they experienced as they re-settled in Montréal. In describing their circumstances of departure, this migratory phase initiates their experiences as refugees, thus shaping their condition as refugees. After all, the circumstances they recount are what propelled them to leave their homes in search of safer ones, especially when in many cases their lives were on the line.

Raffi is a 37 year old refugee, now entrepreneur, who arrived in Montréal in October 1989, to flee the civil war in Lebanon. When I asked what his life was like before coming to Canada, he explained:

Living in Beyrouth....it was... fucked up...I mean war... because, you know we used to be kids...the school would close, there were bombardments, we wouldn't go to school, you know, we would play guns which is fun for that age....if I look back now, like....it's crazy....we lost a lot of people because of stupidities....what can I say...it was very hard, very hard, especially like....now that I'm a father you know ...when I look back, I see it more...that uncertainty we lived....within our families...like my father and mother...like they tried not to show it, they hide it...it wasn't easy...it wasn't easy...it was very hard...

Upon his arrival, he started working in a “tabagie”¹⁵ downtown. After he migrated to Canada, he worked in convenience stores and print shops. He had difficulty getting a work permit and recalls wanting to work as opposed to simply receive financial aid. Over time, Raffi made a concerted effort to build his life locally and interacted with many local inhabitants as well as other immigrants. When he had attained a more secure migratory and financial position, Raffi started his own company. He claims that there is something that pushed him to re-build and re-create, and it likely had to do with the war and having been forced to leave a life

¹⁵ “Tabagie” is a French word for a convenience store where tobacco and cigarettes are also sold.

behind in the prime of his young adulthood. He said this when discussing the reality of flight and re-settlement:

The things we have experienced...have made us stronger in some ways...in other ways, it fucked us up...but it compensated in other ways...

The narratives in this segment demonstrated how emigration (forcefully leaving) and immigration (seeking asylum, re-settling) cannot be dissociated. By recalling their social and geographical trajectories, a sense of double absence emerges for the respondents who claimed refugee status, both in the places they left behind and in their place of arrival, where they struggle to establish themselves, as they oscillate between presence and absence. I now turn to the ways in which urban re-settlement for refugees can present the possibility of double presence through the lens of everyday life and movement in the city.

II. “Double presence”: Everyday movement in the city

Having considered how the notion of “double absence” can emerge in the lives of refugee claimants, I now argue that even if this absence unfolds, refugee presence cannot be overlooked, particularly the ways in which they express their own presence in the city. For individuals who may find themselves on the margins of the city due to their immigration status, mobility can be a productive and liberating urban practice, especially the seemingly banal act of walking. Pedestrian wanderings, either for a specific purpose or just for the sake of walking often leads to urban exploration and even personal freedom. This repetitive act allows individuals to create their own personal maps based on *their* own will and conditions, without necessarily abiding by the imposed limitations and diminished

authority their predicament encompasses. As such, illegalized or legalized refugee claimants become authors of the city as they re-write their routes, thereby staking claims to city space, and establishing a sense of belonging through displacement. In this section I frame certain urban practices, namely walking around the city, as instances of “double presence”. This approach contrasts with Sayad’s labelling of the emigration process as “double absence.” Rather than viewing migrants as absent both in their home of origin and in their new dwelling place, I frame “double presence” as a more dynamic way of looking at migrant presence in the city.

“Double presence” entails, on the one hand, migrants’ actual physical presence in the city. By this I mean how refugee claimants, with or without status, share the same spaces and engage in many of the same practices as citizens. Therefore, their presence cannot be denied, despite a general tendency to dismiss or sideline individuals in the city labelled as refugee claimants. Secondly, refugees carry the memory of a place of origin. This place of origin is where their journey as refugee claimants began, and consequently the nostalgic reality of ‘another place’ persists as they attempt to establish another home in Montréal. Double presence comes to life especially when some of the respondents describe their experiences in plural Montréal neighborhoods such as Côte-des-Neiges being like “home”, expressing that their level of comfort is particularly high in these areas. These city spaces, appropriated by all, regardless of status or country of origin become everyone’s place and echo Svetlana Boym’s (1998) notion of “diasporic intimacy”, which is “rooted in the suspicion of a single home” (p.1). I

elaborate on Boym's notion further in the chapter, when citing interviewee excerpts.

In particular, I frame the mundane act of walking in the city as a smaller practice of agency for refugee claimants in Montréal. Claimants are not usually fully entitled to city space, given their non-citizen status, but nonetheless, they appropriate space through movement around the city.

In fact, many everyday practices such as walking are defined as tactics by Michel de Certeau (1984), who describes them as a "way of operating". According to him, tactics consist of "victories of the weak over the strong" within an imposed order, as individuals "manipulate events to turn them into opportunities" (1984, p.xix), allowing refugee claimants to create moments and sites of agency throughout the city and re-write their routes by staking claims to space. This resonates with the work of Haitian-Québécois writer Émile Ollivier. He writes about an exiled migrant who walks around the city in his book *La Brûlerie*. Based in Montréal's multiethnic Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood, the protagonist recounts his observations and experiences in the city, where different cultures, times, and places overlap in that space, which he re-baptizes as the "Bronx of Montréal." Ollivier, himself an avid walker through the streets of the city,¹⁶ sought to re-write the cartography of Montréal¹⁷ in his novel *La Brûlerie*, a

¹⁶ A book review in *Le Devoir* newspaper mentions his love of walking in the streets of Montréal. See Monpetit, C. (2004, November 27). Émile Ollivier - Le déracinement, *Le Devoir*. Retrieved from <http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/livres/69470/emile-ollivier-le-deracinement>

¹⁷ In the book's foreword initialled by him and dated January 6, 2001 he writes the following: *Je voudrais que La Brûlerie soit un livre-univers, un livre-monde, et qu'au lieu d'être une lecture lyrique du flux, elle soit une écriture de la cartographie*. See Ollivier, E (2004).

practice used by many immigrants in an attempt to establish their roots in the city either consciously or unconsciously.

In Chapter Two, I discussed the importance of examining everyday life practices and problematized de Certeau's work. De Certeau's work considers ordinary subjects and citizen's everyday life practices, and I argued that refugee claimants who live in a prolonged state of liminality or "in-betweenness" add layers of complexity to de Certeau's work. In fact, de Certeau is primarily concerned with how *ordinary* subjects make room for themselves in urban spaces, described by him as being "overdetermined by maps, plans, rules, codes and schemes" (2005, p.114). If ordinary citizens need to overcome overdetermined city space according to de Certeau, then refugee claimants' struggle to overcome this same overdetermination is additionally complex, as questions of belonging, entitlement, and ownership for refugee claimants linger over the urban landscape. De Certeau writes how "every story is a travel story – a spatial practice" (1984, p.115). According to him, 'spatial stories' are ways in which ordinary city dwellers make sense of urban spaces. Influenced by Michel de Certeau's work, Tonkiss points out how different social actors will have different "spatial stories" to tell about their routes through the city (p.113). The respondents in my research were asked to describe, among other aspects of urban re-settlement, their first impressions of the city, the nature of their daily routines, experiences of walking around the city, where they went for leisure and to socialize, and in which neighbourhoods they felt most comfortable. I pay close attention to the language used by the respondents as they describe their experiences circulating through the

city, to their 'spatial stories' of Montréal. Other authors who have written on refugees or undocumented migrants' everyday life practices have produced ethnographically informed work, but such work is often limited to the realm of social exclusion or integration experiences (De Genova 2002, Valenta 2010, Candappa and Igbinigie 2003). The subjective, pedestrian and more inclusive aspects of the everyday are often overlooked, especially for those, like refugee claimants, who are vulnerable to urban marginalization.

In the next section, I will address Nicole's experiences of walking around certain neighborhoods, specifically around Côte-des-Neiges, as well as Pierre and Ella's urban pedestrian experiences compared to other cities they have lived in.

Comfort zones in the city

When I asked 27 year old Nicole from Mexico about her experience in Montréal, she offered her perception of the city in the following terms:

Je crois que Montréal a des beaux espaces dans tous les sens, dans le sens géographique, dans le sens social, dans le sens politique, et on peut se réfugier un peu, aller chercher du confort dans ces espaces-là. J'aime penser que les gens d'ici alimente entièrement cet espace là et j'aime penser que je peux partager cet expérience, alimenter, d'agrandir cet espace pour tout le monde.

(Nicole, 27 years old, holds a bachelor degree and working on Master's degree. Arrived to Montreal on September 27, 1996 from Mexico. Coordinator at a migrant worker centre in Montreal. Status at time of interview: permanent resident.)

Nicole sees the space of Montréal as being "open" and as a place where she can make room for herself, despite the challenges involved in securing her status with immigration authorities. She has faced discrimination from one local police officer, and also initially had difficulty with the French language. One of the

things that struck Nicole about her new dwelling place was the sense of serenity the city exuded. She recalls her family's first apartment in a Montréal suburb as calm, even silent, compared to the bustle she was used to in Mexico. Nicole relates her first impressions of the city upon arriving in Montréal as a teenager through her pedestrian experiences. She recalls how walking alone on the street in Mexico was a traumatic experience, regardless of what time of day it was. In her own words:

Mais la première fois que j'ai marché à Montréal, et que je me suis rendu compte que je ne 'checkais' pas en arrière pour voir si quelqu'un me suivait, j'ai faite comme ouu! Et je ne dis pas qu'il n'y a pas de violence contre les femmes à Montréal, je ne dis pas qu'il n'y a pas de viol, et je ne dis pas..mais...le ratio, et en ce qui concerne l'impression de s'adjuster..c'est surtout ça puis le calme.

Expanding on the feeling of safety and comfort, I asked Nicole which zones of Montréal she feels the most at ease in walking. Without any hesitation, she said she was most comfortable in Côte-des-Neiges, a “multiethnic neighbourhood,” as described by Annick Germain and Cécile Poirier (2007) where the “cultural and demographic heterogeneity is striking” according to Deirdre Mientel (1997) who has extensively studied the plurality of the neighbourhood. In describing that urban space, Nicole says the following:

Je pense que tout le monde à l'air aussi perdu que toi à CDN, comme tout le monde vient de partout, et tout le monde à l'air perdu et tout le monde s'en fout. Je pense que c'est un espace plus flexible, c'est...il y a tout, comme tu as les petits dépanneurs, tu as les petits magasins de ci, des magasins de ça, il ne faut pas que tu marches beaucoup pour trouver quelque chose, puis tu peux acheter la bouffe à n'importe quelle heure, c'est ouvert... et la pharmacie, il y a seulement une pharmacie à Montréal qui est 24 heures, puis elle est à CDN... Je pense que c'est l'endroit que je me sens le plus en sécurité.

I asked her what she meant by CDN being a “flexible space,” and whether she was alluding to the cultural and racial plurality of that neighbourhood. She answered that:

Le fait que ce n'est pas homogène comme population, oblige tout le monde à faire des petites concessions.....je pense que tout le monde qui a déjà habité à CDN doit faire des concessions, (...)Plus les gens doivent faire de compromis, puis des ouvertures, plus les gens sont à l'aise, alors il y a encore plus de diversité qui arrive, alors ça se retro-alimente. (...)Le fait que tout le monde soit différent rend ta différence normale. Je ne dis pas qu'on est tous égaux (...) le fait qu'ils soient mélangé à CDN casse un peu le mythe de la ghettoisation de Montréal et prouve qu'on peut vivre décemment sans.... c'est pas un quartier dangereux, c'est pas un quartier laid, c'est un quartier super beau...

According to Nicole, amid this plurality, the space's inhabitants are obliged to make concessions in order to co-exist and as a result, are more open. Nicole observes that this openness is in fact what draws more diversity to the neighborhood. Her description of Côte-des-Neiges is reminiscent of Boym's (2001) formulation of “diasporic intimacy” which “thrives on the hope of the possibilities of human understanding and survival, of unpredictable chance encounters, but this hope is not utopian” (p.252-253). Common ground emerges among migrant dwellers. Boym argues that for migrant dwellers, “the illusion of complete belonging has been shattered. Yet, one discovers that there is still a lot of share. The foreign backdrop, the memory of past losses and recognition of transience do not obscure the shock of intimacy, but rather heighten the pleasure and intensity of surprise” (p. 255). Côte-des-Neiges as a prime example of urban space that breaks the ghetto myth as Nicole explains, allows the inhabitants to feel “normal” despite the existing differences. Regardless of the restrictions, limitations, and prejudice that Nicole faces, she finds openness and potential in

Montréal's city space. Moreover, the narratives connected to refugee claimants circulating around the city and the comfort level with a particular diverse neighborhood resonates with diasporic intimacy which "reflects collective frameworks of memory that encapsulate even the most personal of dreams. It is haunted by images of home and homeland, yet it also discloses some of the furtive pleasures of exile" (Boym, p.2).

When I asked Ella to name the streets and neighbourhoods in which she felt most comfortable walking, she didn't explicitly address the question in her reply and instead said:

The only danger I felt was that I was afraid something would happen to my son. Because, he would go to the park and he would come back without a T-shirt or without a shoe (...) we came from Zimbabwe...it's a British colony, and English as well is our second language...we have another language, our African native language...so when we first came here...we got all sorts of insults...on the phone... 'oh, you have an accent, why don't you go back from where you came from'... and you cannot go around explaining it to people So I remember one time, my son ...was victimized by these kids at the park just across the street...this boy....let his dog on my son and said 'I'm going to feed my dog...I want to feed my dog on you'...my son...really didn't have shoes and he left his shoes at the park...he went through stuff like that...

Ella's adaptation to the new urban environment was stressful. Her main concern was the security and well-being of her child, who was being bullied and harassed at the park and who was diagnosed with depression shortly after their re-settlement in Montréal. Furthermore, Ella herself dealt with hostile and racist encounters during everyday interactions. Due to her debilitating rheumatoid arthritis, she relied on public transportation more than on walking to move around the city. Even so, using the Metro and the STM buses was difficult for her due to her illness.

Pierre fled the political turmoil and violence in Congo Brazzaville. Once in Montréal, he was separated from his wife and children for 7 years due to immigration procedures. Before arriving in Montréal to claim refugee status, Pierre spent time in Moscow, Russia. There, he was constantly attacked and harassed due to his skin colour, especially due to the proliferation of skinhead movements in the city. He describes his flight from Moscow as follows:

Quand j'ai quitté Moscou pour arriver ici à Montréal, c'était un contraste énorme. C'était le calme, j'étais surpris de pouvoir marcher sans que personne ne m'attaque et sans que personne ne me regarde, parce qu'à Moscou, il y avait une autre façon de, une autre forme d'agressivité, c'est celle d'être scruté des yeux parce que tu es de couleur différente, donc tout le monde se retourne, parce qu'ils sont surpris de voir un noir. C'est vraiment drôle, si tu marches, tu te rends compte que les gens te regarde d'une manière bizarre...c'est inhumain...Oui, ici, quand je suis arrivé, je marchais personne ne me regardais, je me dis ben, j'ai encore le réflexe d'être à Moscou. Mais, je voyais que c'était vraiment différent. J'étais très détendu parce que je pouvais enfin marcher dans n'importe quel endroit de la rue du quartier sans être agressé ou verbalisé ou bien d'être arrêté par de policiers qui veulent contrôler mes documents et tout ça. Donc de ce point de vue-là, oui je me sentais en sécurité partout....et jusqu'aujourd'hui d'ailleurs.

De Certeau acknowledges that not all people can walk as freely as the male (as cited in Bridge, p.47). To this I would add that not all urban dwellers may walk as freely as a *white* male, due to a long historical and social legacy of criminalizing and policing black male bodies in urban centres.¹⁸ Pierre's experiences correspond with Philomena Essed's definition of "everyday racism," whereby racism itself

¹⁸ Jerome Miller (1992) writes about the damaging impact of the US criminal justice system on blacks. He considers the pervasive criminalization of black youth as analogous to the white slave owners' practice of crippling young black male slaves to prevent them from escaping to freedom. Also see Walcott's *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada*, in which he discusses the racialized discourse of black bodies within a Canadian context. He writes that the "racialized discourse, fostered by and emanating out of slavery, is continually fashioned through ideology that suggest that black bodies can and must be abused, misused, regulated, disciplined and over-policed" (2003, p.45).

For more specific cases of racial profiling within the Canadian context see Ella Tator and Francis Henry's (2006) book: *Racial Profiling in Canada: challenging the myth of a "few bad apples"*.

could not be diminished as a sporadic or unique event. Rather, it was experienced through manifold relations and situations and systematically created and reinforced through everyday practices (as cited in J. Herbert, 2008, p.156-7). The urban space of Montréal did provide a sanctuary, as Pierre was able to walk around freely, despite not being formally recognized as his case was still being processed by authorities. Although he does not deny the existence of racism in Montréal, the extreme nature of the daily discrimination he encountered in Russia was not something he faced in Montréal.

Between mobile & immobile realities: politics and play in refugee claimants' everyday life

Nadia encountered major obstacles during her re-settlement process in Montréal. During this process, Nadia and her family lived a total of nine years without status. However, when I asked about her adaptation to the new urban environment, particularly in terms of actual mobility around the city, she answered that it had been very positive. During the times Nadia was not taking care of her siblings and of domestic tasks in the absence of her parents, who were heavily involved with refugee advocacy, she indulged in urban pedestrian wanderings. It was a diversion that was accessible at no cost. She would walk around the city a great deal, her trajectory often taking her from her neighbourhood of St-Henri to Place des Arts, an important arts and culture neighborhood located in the heart of the city. She explained:

Je n'avais pas de problème à aller marcher, prendre une marche. Je faisais régulièrement de chez moi, de St-Henri jusqu'à Place des Arts. Je m'assoiais un peu là où est-ce qu'il y a les fontaines, les trucs et je

revenais à pieds. Pour ça, je n'ai pas eu de problèmes... Je n'avais pas peur d'être attrapée...non, pas du tout...

Nadia liked walking along Ste-Catherine Street best of all. Ste-Catherine Street is one of the main east/west arteries of the city center. She described herself as walking by “inaperçue” or unseen. She describes how, due to the amount of movement and people on this particular street, she felt as though she could walk by unnoticed, especially when her refugee status case was in the process of being determined. When asked to elaborate on what she meant by “inaperçue”, she went on to say:

Inaperçue dans le sens où je peux m'habiller comme tout le monde. Ce n'est pas écrit sur mon front que je suis une réfugiée. Donc on ne va pas me dire « Ah non, tu ne peux pas marcher sur ce coin parce que ... » Donc j'ai l'impression que là je suis sur mon terrain et je peux marcher tranquille. Aussi je pense que le fait de pouvoir marcher, de pouvoir sortir, de pouvoir aller au cinéma, de faire tous ces loisirs-là, je pense que c'est vraiment quelque chose de bien, enfin, c'est une des choses très bien queparce qu'ils y a des gens qui ne peuvent pas faire ça.....ils sont obligés...je ne sais pas si vous connaissez Abdulkhadr¹⁹ qui vit dans l'église, ben lui c'est dans l'église. Il ne peut pas aller marcher, il ne peut pas.... c'est vraiment difficile, difficile. Moi j'ai la chance, la chance d'aller marcher, donc ça c'est un privilège.

Nadia pointed to the privilege of mobility in the city, in contrast to the immobile reality of some non-status migrants who take sanctuary in church basements when faced with removal orders. The act of walking for Nadia becomes a liberating experience, as she goes by unseen. In this light, the city and the anonymity of the people in it grant Nadia moments of reprieve and relief, even of emancipation.

¹⁹ It is a common occurrence in Canada for church parishes to offer sanctuary to refugee claimants who have received removal orders, in other words, who are set to be deported. Montréal in particular is known for its activism surrounding sanctuary, as refugee advocates and community members mobilize around and support those who are living in sanctuary. The most recent and highly mediated case was that of Abdelkadr Belaouni (Kader) who was granted permanent residency in October of 2009, after spending nearly four years living in a church basement.

Gary Bridge (2005) describes the liberating nature of walking in the city based on the fact that each individual etches their own trajectory. He writes: “the effect here is presumably a sense of personal liberation, being the author of one’s own urban story, precious because unshared” (p. 47). Furthermore, the anonymity Nadia encounters in the city offers her space where she can dissociate her identity from that of a refugee, away from the surveillance and judgement of immigration officials, and also public scrutiny. Indeed, the desire for anonymity is strong among refugees claiming status, as some cases in Montréal have been highly mediated; therefore they feel a powerful urge to go unrecognized and to escape from the constant weight (burden) and wait (temporal).

Contrary to Nadia’s mobility around the city, Patricia’s spatial confinement in church sanctuary drastically limited her movements. In 2003, twenty-five year old Patricia and her parents spent over a year and a half—precisely 567 days—living in a Montréal church basement, after receiving a removal order to return to Colombia. A local Church accepted them and provided a complete network of support, from doctors who checked on the family, to volunteers who did grocery shopping and others who were paid to help them do laundry. Despite being spatially confined for such a long period of time, Patricia managed to create meaning in her suspended life. Despite being trapped in a liminal space, she even succeeded in contributing to the community, through voluntarily tutoring children with their homework.

As the community mobilized around Patricia and her family’s immobile reality, the weight of sanctuary was appeased as moments of leisure, social events,

and spiritual comfort were created for them. Among several activities, a sugar shacking day organized for them in the confines of the church, as well as interfaith services, helped break the isolation, provide temporary breathing space, and appease the indefinite wait.

The oppressive reality of living in a confined space to avoid removal and the risk of once again being persecuted ironically provides a space of utopian refuge, albeit a claustrophobic one. In fact, living in sanctuary in a church basement echoes Foucault's idea of heterotopia, a site that "undoes the usual order of space" (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 132). The meaning contrasts with utopia, which is a site with no real space, whereas heterotopia refers to *real* spaces. According to Foucault (1984) these real places are like "counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, [...] are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted."²⁰ The sanctuaries in which some refugee claimants live can be seen as what Foucault has called heterotopia of 'crisis' meaning "spaces laid aside for transitions or events that set an individual apart from the larger social group" (ibid). They are "privileged, sacred and forbidden places" usually reserved for individuals who are in a state of crisis. Non-status refugees who go underground to avoid removal transform the real place of the church into a heterotopia *par excellence*. Tonkiss points out that the modern heterotopia, unlike Foucault's work on certain institutions "is not confined to disciplinary spaces" (p. 133). Thus, by subverting the church's 'real arrangement of space', this sacred place is transformed into a political one.

²⁰ See Foucault (1984). The text *Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias*, entitled "Des Espace Autres," was the basis of a lecture given by Michel Foucault in March 1967.

Living in church sanctuary is an extreme case of immobility. Most refugee claimants are able to freely circulate around the city. They forge a proactive everyday existence despite not being formally recognized, and notwithstanding the limitations set by immigration policies and bureaucracies. In effect, refugee claimants' daily routines are particularly shaped by their own efforts to weave social, familial, and labour networks. In other words, they form social capital based on weak and strong ties.²¹ Such a proactive stance not only allows refugee claimants to find help appropriate to their own objectives and priorities, but also allows them to partake in and contribute to local community life through volunteerism and political activity surrounding refugee and immigrant causes.

Conclusion

In this third chapter, I highlighted some impressions of and practices of circulation in the city. My intention was to demonstrate how refugee claimants can carve out space for themselves in the city. The seemingly mundane or banal aspects of everyday life contained in such 'spatial stories' and in the 'act of walking' hold the very limitations, contradictions, and possibilities associated with urban refugee re-settlement trajectories.

The narratives associated with departure in the first portion of this chapter demonstrated that the conditions and reasons for forced departure cannot be dissociated from the realities experienced once these refugee claimants arrive in

²¹ Literature on social networks includes the concept of "weak ties" advanced by Granovetter (1973) which refers to acquaintances, rather than close family and friends, which are viewed as "strong ties." Thus, "weak ties" allow individuals "to diversify their social network and serve as a getaway to an array of socio-economic and cultural resources beyond those generally available in the person's ethnic or immigrant community." Aroian, 1992; Hagan, 1998 as cited in Damaris Rose and al (1998). See Damaris Rose and al., 1998 and Margaret Walton-Roberts, 2008 for more on the dynamics behind strong and weak ties.

Canada. Sayad's concept of "double absence" encourages us to think of the conditions linked to emigration rather than simply focusing on immigration and on life in the place of arrival. It is imperative that we acknowledge and understand the circumstances of departure if we wish to more accurately address life in the city of asylum. The narratives showed three common threads related to departure. The first is the refugees' initial reluctance to leave. Secondly, lack of official documents came up in many of their trajectories. Finally, the refugees spoke of a stark difference between the unstable conditions of their places of origin compared to the relative tranquillity in Montréal.

Refugees leave their places of origin, often clandestinely, and once in the city of arrival find themselves to be invisible and absent on most levels by virtue of not holding status. As the excerpts demonstrated, once in Montréal, some became derivatives of what they used to be in their places of origin. The moment and the decision to the departure are critical, and often occur against their will; at other times the eminent danger makes them desperate to exit in any way possible. In the process, however, families are fragmented, enormous risks are taken, false passports are sought, and lenient border guards and immigration officials are desired. The refugee then embarks on an uncertain trip that can last for an indefinite period of time, with an unknown final destination. The way the departure is remembered and articulated is also of value, as it leads to the construction of their place of origin and creates a bridge to the way their lives have unfolded in Montréal.

In this chapter, I also momentarily opposed the logic of Sayad's "double absence" and proposed the notion of "double presence" in terms of the physical movement of refugee claimants in the city. This different lens acknowledges refugee presence in the city. Restricted physical and social mobility are a part of the refugee claimants' experiences. Nonetheless, they manage to create room for themselves in the city, despite the limitations and discrimination they encounter during their periods of "in-betweenness," through their own mappings and writings of the city. Perhaps one does not visibly carry the status of refugee around the city, as Nadia suggested, even though it is an inescapable reality she faces every day. However, individuals who are, like Pierre, additionally marked by race besides the predicament of refugee status, re-write the city through a different lens.

Unlike Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*, refugee claimants, like de Certeau's pedestrians, are less glamorous. Instead, they are practitioners, meant to be ordinary people. In the case of refugee claimants, they walk a fine line between social inclusion and exclusion on a quotidian basis. This echoes Elizabeth Wilson's argument: "for although women, along with minorities, children, the poor, are still not full citizens in the sense that they have never been granted full and free access to the streets, industrial life still drew them into public life, and they have survived and flourished in the interstices of the city in their own particular way" (1991, p.8). In their own words, refugee claimants re-traced their routes in the city, by staking their claim to space and time. In highly multiethnic neighborhoods, such as Côte-des-Neiges, Boym's idea of diasporic intimacy

comes alive, as this intimacy with the world is “rooted in the suspicion of a single home, in shared longing without belonging” (p.252). The sense of belonging forged by refugee claimants is never complete. However, on a daily basis, they make active attempts, and refugee claimants determine the extent of their belonging even when it is obscured by the systems in place, their own immigration status, or other people’s xenophobic attitudes. The research respondents also characterized the city space as open, flexible, racist, safe, dangerous, anonymous and full of possibilities based on their everyday experiences.

This chapter has outlined only a small fragment of the plethora of refugee claimants’ spatial practices that manifest their presence in the city. “Double presence,” comprised of physical presence and diasporic intimacy can be productive in counterpointing the institutional and everyday barriers that refugee claimants encounter as they face indefinite waits for status, daily uncertainty, and discrimination. Instead, refugee claimants themselves succeed in creating pockets and opportunities in the city where entitlement, belonging, and a space for themselves are accessible.

Chapter 4

Refugee narratives and representations in urban cultural production: Marginalization and belonging in theatre

“Because the city can trap you, nurture you, teach you, unravel you, unspeak you. Because you are just one among many here, and the dynamic of one in relation to many (conversation, dialogue, difference, the negotiation of public space) is what theatre emerges from and thrives on, what art must address and what cities must somehow contend with if they are to survive” (Harvie, 2009, p.xiv).

Introduction

Throughout history, a number of cultural responses to asylum and displacement have circulated in literature, cinema, amateur and professional theatre, photography, art installations, and documentary films,¹ expressing silenced and oppressed voices. With the staggeringly high number of displaced individuals around the world, such cultural productions acknowledge and represent the life-altering upheavals faced by refugees, including conflict, crisis, and exile, as well as the ensuing exclusion, poverty, isolation, depression, and the condition of otherness; also, they illuminate instances of belonging and social inclusion.

Theatre and theatrical texts, for instance, come to intervene, witness, and respond to the challenges of displacement. Such texts are significant within popular culture, as they allow narratives of exile to be voiced on stage, thereby

¹ From post-World Wars to contemporary times, diaspora, exile, immigration, and emigration are manifested in a vast body of audiovisual arts throughout all continents. Works by Vladimir Nabokov, Milan Kundera, V.S Naipaul, Mona Hatoum, Shirin Neshat, Gavin Jantjes, Kim Thúy, to name only a few, raise issues centred on displacement. See also Naficy (1999), Horowitz (2008), and Mercer (2008) for more on the cross-cultural experiences of migration and displacement that characterize twentieth-century art and culture.

reaching and engaging different audiences. This chapter examines how immigrant and refugee voices in two theatrical texts, come to critique the xenophobia towards “others” that exists within the urban Canadian landscape, and unhinge the stereotypical representations of the migrant. The reasons for a forced departure from the homeland are depicted in these texts, as is the adaptation to a new home. These narratives expose audiences to instances of marginalization and inclusion that unfold in refugees’ daily practices in the city. Such texts therefore portray narratives and stories that do not typically appear on the nightly news.

Through a textual analysis of two Canadian plays, *Montréal La Blanche* (2004)²— based on actual testimonies—and *Bashir Lazhar* (2004),³ I reflect on how these theatrical texts advance dialogue that counters prominent beliefs and media discourses that portray refugee claimants and immigrants as criminals or terrorists who depend on and drain the system, particularly in the post September 11 era of suspicion. Instead, through an examination of the narratives depicting fragments of refugees’ and immigrants’ everyday life practices, I consider how these plays narrate experiences of social exclusion and inclusion, as well as the “in-betweenness” associated with the complexities of the refugee condition.

Ultimately, I shed light on how individuals seeking refuge can become emergent

² I thank Annabel Soutar and Joël Richard at Projet Porte Parole for their assistance in helping me obtain the script of *Montréal La Blanche*.

³ A considerable number of plays over the last three decades have focused on themes of displacement and exile within the Canadian theatrical landscape. Works, to name a few, by Montréal-based theatre companies like Teesri Dunya (Counter Offense 1996, 1997, Job Stealer 1987), The Black Theatre Workshop (Story Ya, 2011), Toronto based companies Tarragon Theatre (The Golden Dragon, 2012) and NY-based NACL Theatre, which has Canadian collaborators, (Exilio: My Life as Bolaño, 2011). Francophone theatre has also addressed similar themes, such as theatrical companies Trois Tristes Tigres, (L’Énéide 2007, 2010) and Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, (Incendies 2006). In 1981, Alberto Kurapel, himself exiled from Chile, founded La Compagnie des Arts Exilio in Montréal, which he has had seven major productions, all of which explore various aspects of exile. See Teatro-Performance de Alberto Kurapel (2012). About me. [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://kurapel.blogspot.ca/>

political and social subjects through cultural production, regardless of the status they hold.

Why theatre

The art of theatre takes many forms in society and prompts cultures to “both assert and question themselves” (Harvie, 2009, ix). Ric Knowles (2010) describes theatre as being “cultural forms in which performers and active or passive participant-audiences coexist in the same space for a set time” (p.3). This coexistence in live time, around live action, and often followed by discussions with the audience, constitutes a unique social spectacle. I therefore chose to write on theatrical texts that are based on actual refugee narratives and informed by their experiences in the city. Moreover, my focus on theatrical texts as a form of urban cultural production is grounded in the characteristics and repercussions of theatre as art form in the multicultural forum of Montréal; namely, as an artistic and social mediator of culture and politics in the city.

Based on an interdisciplinary approach that merges cultural analysis, urban studies, drama, and economics, Jen Harvie explores the relationship between theatre and the city, arguing that “theatre can help us understand *how* we live in cities” (p.4). She reminds us that we make countless assumptions about our fellow city dwellers on a daily basis: we make assumptions about “those strangers we live within our cosmopolitan cities – on the basis, for example, of whether they wear business suits or tracksuits, whether they move with assurance or are frozen by some secret fear, and whether they appear to feel socially entitled or are socially excluded” (p.3).

By understanding theatre in the city, Harvie suggests that “we can make sense of and change social experiences in and of the city so that many benefits of urban living are more widely shared” (p.8). According to Harvie, there are at least three ways that theatre practices produce urban meanings. First, through their dramatic texts (representations of city experience in drama); secondly, through material conditions (both the theatrical and cultural conditions in which the drama is produced and received); and finally, through performative practices which concentrate on “the ways people can and do act with freedom to self-author, exercising agency, control and power through everyday acts of self-articulation and self-creation” (p.45).

Given the agency and freedom that come with performative practices, I argue that the individuals portrayed in the narratives and texts I analyze explore the “utopian potential for challenging hegemonic oppression” (Harvie, p. 48) much like the everyday practices of resistance to marginalization, inclusion, and informal citizenship exhibited by refugee claimants which I described in the two previous chapters.

Even though the theatrical texts examined in this chapter convey narratives and experiences of refugee claimants and immigrants based both on actual testimonies (in *Montréal La Blanche*) and fictionalized characters (in *Bashir Lazhar*), it is important to stress that the refugee narratives here cannot be treated in the same way as the data collected from the research respondents for the purpose of this project. The significance of culturally produced texts differs from the one-on-one interview format I used, which is guided by an open-ended

questionnaire tailored for the purpose of this project. Instead, theatrical texts and theatre require a different approach, as they are written and performed in diverse ways, circulate as a form of popular culture, and conform to the language and theories associated with the art of theatre, to be interpreted differently by a broad range of audiences. Nevertheless, I deem it important to include an analysis of these culturally produced texts through the lens of social exclusion and inclusion, not only because it coincides with the larger themes of this dissertation and because little has been written about these texts, but also because these circulating texts offer audiences important insight and increase levels of awareness on refugee issues that unfold in their own locality. Such cultural texts play a pivotal role in offering alternative voices, redressing certain attitudes and increasing knowledge around refugee claimants and their lived realities.

Setting the stage

Montréal La Blanche (Bensaddek, 2004) and *Bashir Lazhar* (de la Chenelière, 2004), are two plays that speak to some of the quotidian realities and experiences of Algerian refugees and immigrants living in Montréal. Both have been produced and performed within the city's theatrical milieus. There are common themes in both plays, including forced departure and loss of a homeland, hostile sentiments towards individuals who have newly arrived and the reality of encountering obstacles to adaptation on a daily basis. One salient aspect of the plays which echoes this project's larger argument is the instances of social inclusion that exist in both scripts. In fact, the majority of the characters featured in both *Montréal La Blanche* and *Bashir Lazhar* convey a willingness to belong to

and partake in Canadian society by taking on proactive social and political roles in their everyday lives. As such, the strict focus on refugee and immigrant marginalization is temporarily shifted away from the common stereotypes, as new openings and possibilities emerge through these two scripts. Therefore, without disregarding the challenges and marginalization the characters in these texts face, what are some of the shapes social inclusion take in these narratives?

In this chapter, I consider how these two scripts, which have been produced and staged in Montréal by professional theatrical companies, reflect on fragments of refugee experiences in the city. It is important to note that my focus here will be on a textual analysis of the scripts, meaning the stage directions and the dialogue, as opposed to an interpretation of the actual theatrical performances.⁴

Immigrant theatre in Québec

In her writings on immigrant theater in Québec, Jane Moss (2004) argues that immigrant playwrights have transformed Québécois theatre into “a site of heterogeneity,” as they expose their memories and challenging adaptations to life in Québec in ways that ask Québécois de *vieille souche* to acknowledge them (p.65). This is relevant particularly in relation to *Montréal La Blanche*’s script, written by Bashir Bensaddek, a documentary filmmaker originally from Algeria

⁴ Conducting a textual analysis allows for a more engaged focus with the actual script, including the language, vocabulary, descriptions and stage directions, as it applies to the broader aims of this project. However, this does leave out other dimensions associated with theatricality. These dimensions include the actual embodied performances by actors, the set blocking and decoration, the lighting and the audio, such as the use of music. Both plays were staged for limited runs, *Montréal La Blanche* in 2004 by Porte Parole and *Bashir Lazhar* in 2007 by Theatre d’Aujourd’hui. I became aware of the plays only after the stage productions.

who now lives in Québec. The notion of theatre as a “site of heterogeneity” nonetheless remains relevant, if we consider Evelyne de la Chenelière’s play *Bashir Lazhar*. Even though she grew up in the Montréal neighborhood of NDG,⁵ de la Chenelière writes about an Algerian refugee claimant, which is far from her own reality. In what Moss calls a “post-Québécois” or “post-nationalist theater of heterogeneity,” she acknowledges that this type of theatre allows for opening the scene to “multiple identities, different collective memories, and other languages” (p.65). Moss explains that this transformation and shift is significant as it takes Québécois audiences who were accustomed to sharing one language, one national history and identity into a realm of drama that is beyond the realm of “*nombrilisme*” (self-absorption). Instead, it leads them “toward the understanding and acceptance of others necessary for its future as a pluri-ethnic society open to the world” (ibid). Amid Québec’s evolving identity, Moss sees immigrant theatre as reflecting the “social and cultural transformations that have accompanied demographic changes in the province, claiming space for itself and thereby redefining Québécois theatre as an important post-national site of representation” (p.77). Qualifying theatre as a “public forum in which to portray alterity and metissage” (ibid), she also points out that through this site of representation the Québécois audience are forced to not only see the xenophobic encounters, cultural stereotypes and economic exploitation of immigrants, coupled with an array of psychological problems, but also to consider the poverty and political violence refugees faced in the homelands they fled.

⁵ Notre-Dame-de-Grâce is a residential neighborhood in Montréal, located in the city’s west end.

Notably, the first major figure in francophone immigrant theatre, known as a vocal advocate of a theatricalized *parole immigrée* (immigrant voice) in Québec is Marco Micone. Erin Hurley (2004) writes about Micone's 1980s trilogy⁶ which encapsulates "the particular history of Montréal's Italian immigrant community, as he traces the "general contours of the immigrant condition" (p.1). The triptych of plays covers the trajectories of three generations from a village in Southern Italy devastated by earthquakes and fascist rule, to Montréal's Little Italy, to the more affluent neighborhood of St-Léonard. Based on a number of essays and interviews, Micone reveals that "he wrote these plays to give voice to those who could not speak of the pain of leaving their native land or of the suffering they endured in a host country that humiliated and exploited them" (Moss, p.66). Following the influx of allophone Italian and southern European migrants from the 1950s through the 1970s (Lacroix, 1996), migrants were "torn between the impossibility of remaining as they were and the difficulty of becoming other," (Micone, 1992, 87-88) as their immigrant identity oscillated between being Italian and being Québécois.

As the 1980s and 1990s welcomed largely francophone immigrants from the Maghreb and the Middle East (Lacroix, *ibid*), as is the case in both plays examined here, the geographic shift also points to a linguistic shift. Algerians' knowledge of French facilitates communication and increases employment opportunities to an extent, compared to Italians who mostly spoke English. However, xenophobia and economic exploitation have not dissipated, but have

⁶ Micone's three plays concerning the Italian immigrant condition: *Gens du silence* (1982), *Addolorata* (1983; 1996), and *Déjà l'agonie* (1986).

taken on a new resonance with the tendency to marginalize Arabs, particularly Muslims who increasingly became targets of suspicion and surveillance during the post 9/11 period in Canada (Razack, 2008).

I. “Montréal La Blanche”: introduction to a documentary play

In 2004, the Porte Parole Project theatrical company produced and presented *Montréal La Blanche*, a documentary play about the Algerian community in Montréal. The production was well received by the cultural media and mainstream local press.⁷ According to Moss, who specializes in Franco-American theatre, the staging of this production was significant because it was the first theatricalization of the Algerian immigrant experience. What also made it unique was the opportunity it gave actors of Algerian origin to perform their “cultural specificity on the professional stage” (p. 29). Six out of the seven actors were of Algerian origin during the production staged in 2004 (ibid). Given the topic of this play and the socio-political context in Québec, when I conducted research for this chapter, I was surprised to see that very few writings consider this theatrical text.

Referred to as documentary theatre, the French language script written by documentary filmmaker Bachir Bensaddek derives from transcribed interviews

⁷ Reviews in local mainstream Francophone and Anglophone media include: Lévesque, S. (2004, May 19). Théâtre - Du soleil algérien aux neiges montréalaises. *Le Devoir*. Retrieved from <http://www.ledevoir.com/culture/theatre/54900/theatre-du-soleil-algerien-aux-neiges-montrealaises>
Also, Radz, M. (2004, May 12). Reflections in a rearview mirror. *The Gazette*, pp.D8; Saint-Pierre, C. (2004, May 13). Montréal La Blanche, Taxi Driver. *Montréal Voir*. Retrieved from <http://voir.ca/scene/2004/05/13/montreal-la-blanche-taxi-driver/>; Barratt, A. (2004, May 6-12). Taxi from the Maghreb: Montréal la Blanche documents the Algerian immigrant experience. *Montréal Mirror*. Vol. 19, No. 46.

and concentrates on experiences of emigration, immigration and integration as narrated by recent immigrants, both men and women, in their own words. This approach is in line with the empirical approach adopted throughout this dissertation where the collection of refugee narratives forms the groundwork for analysis. Yet, as outlined at the beginning of the chapter, the text entails a distinct approach, due to the fact that it is a culturally produced piece that abides by the rules of a certain genre (documentary theatre), produces its own discourse and is performed for an audience. The characters/individuals⁸ are vibrant, eloquent and outspoken, as Bensaddek succinctly brings together narratives which present a vivid portrait of contemporary immigrant experiences in Montréal.

In terms of the storyline, the actions of the play unfold mostly in and around the main protagonist, Amokrane Ben Yahi's taxi, as the piece maps the personal trajectories of Algerian immigrants residing in Montréal. The characters recount the daily challenges of adaptation and integration in Québécois society, as well as how they recall their homeland and emigration process, their search for employment in Montréal and how they negotiate the Islamic faith within a secular city. The title of the piece "Montréal La Blanche" is a play on words with "Algiers la blanche," as the Algerian capital known for its white buildings is paralleled with Montréal when covered by a sheet of white snow in the winter. Despite the stillness associated with snow, there is constant movement in this documentary play's script. Besides the idea of mobility around the city that

⁸ It is important to point out that even though I refer to the individuals portrayed in the play as "characters" this should not be taken strictly in the fictional meaning, given that the voices in the scripts do belong to actual individuals. I therefore use the words "characters" and "individuals" interchangeably in my analysis of *Montréal La Blanche*.

accompanies a taxicab, the play interweaves a variety of people embarking and disembarking from Amokrane's taxi. This offers a multitude of voices and views, reflecting a microcosm of Montréal's distinct plurality. Amokrane is open to converse with his Québécois, Bangladeshi, or half-Lebanese customers, who seem amiable and curious. His customers are as willing to confer with him, about anything from the demise of vineyards and the wine industry in Algeria following Independence, to international politics, reasons for emigration and the various idiosyncrasies of Arabic dialects. Throughout the play, the exchanges between immigrants and non-immigrants illustrate sincere interactions, as the customers express curiosity about Islam and Algeria. There are nonetheless awkward moments where things become lost in translation or customers express the rampant misconceptions around Algeria and the Islamic religion that can surface in daily conversations. Bensaddek uses these interactions to rectify misconceptions about Islam, as well as to undermine what Moss calls "the usual complaints about Québec's xenophobia found in immigrant texts" (p. 31).

Montréal La Blanche (MLB) contains comical moments, especially during Amokrane's exchanges with customers, but also makes direct reference to the massacres during the Algerian Civil War which began in 1991. This brings an interesting balance to the lighter and graver side of immigrant and refugee experiences, especially in terms of how memories of the homeland are carried and expressed. Even though there are subtle hues of nostalgia throughout the play, the text does not drown in overly melancholic language and narratives. Instead there is the urgency of dealing with everyday life issues, such as securing employment

and securing status. The majority of characters are Algerian immigrants. One of the characters is a retired Québécois judge who worked for the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB); he ponders the decisions he has made in admitting or refusing refugee claimants and the integrity of the refugee determination system overall. The play features a total of twenty characters, many of whom are Algerian immigrants recounting their experiences of immigration. The script contains characters reciting quantitative data about Algerian immigration, with statistics and figures intercut with the dialogue, as part of documentary narration. The characters' personal narratives are at times interrupted by characters who recall the horrific acts that took place during the Civil War, including the enumeration of journalists and intellectuals who were massacred. Besides informing the non-Algerian audience about the events, Bensaddek uses these interventions to convey the characters' connection to the homeland, reminding the audience that they have witnessed these events, as they recount their current experiences in Montréal. In fact, the intention to inform the audience is clear in the play and further reinforced by the content of the program notes for *Montréal La Blanche*. The program contains statistics about the immigration of Algerians to Canada, a map of Algeria, and background information on the violence that took place in the country. In addition, Porte Parole ran post-performance discussions on a number of issues linked to immigration from the Maghreb (Moss, p.29), allowing the public to engage with the topics addressed and issues raised in MLB, ultimately creating dialogue in audiences interested and invested in the artistic and socio-political scene in Montréal and beyond.

When conducting research for this chapter, I contacted Bensaddek to inquire about his script writing process. I had been unable to locate an elaboration on his methodology in theatre reviews or journal articles centred on his work, other than a brief description stating that Bensaddek's script is based on actual immigrant testimonies. Bensaddek stated that he conducted all the interviews himself.⁹ When asked if the entire play is a transcription of interviews or whether there are some narrative elements added as well, he responded that "almost all the text is just live action and interview transcriptions, except for the opening and the end where I sort of quote a song of Idir (Algerian mythic Berber singer) referring to a legend (the light knights) and use it as a metaphor of the Algerian tragedy. The director Philippe Ducros also added two or three sentences of documentary narration, when it comes to statistics." When I asked whether the exchanges that take place in the taxi are actual conversations, he replied that "all exchanges taking place in the taxi are real exchanges that I saw with my own eyes and recorded on my minidisk." The script also contains the ages and previous and current occupations of the characters.

In order to shed further light on MLB's approach of informing and engaging the audience, the following sections consider *Projet Porte Parole*'s mandate, followed by an overview of some theoretical approaches to "documentary theatre" as a genre, and an analysis of the script in the context of this dissertation's larger research project.

⁹ (B. Bensaddek, personal communication, February, 29, 2012). My translation from French.

Projet Porte Parole

Montréal La Blanche was Projet Porte Parole's (PPP) first French language production, presented as a documentary play. Maintaining a socially and politically *engagé* as well as an artistic stance, Porte Parole positions itself as “digging¹⁰” political dialogue and has a firm belief that “theatre is the best medium to engage in it” (porteparole.org). Committed to current issues that are of substantial social and political importance within the province of Québec and throughout Canada, this theatrical company's mandate is to open up a “unique civic arena in Montréal: one where spectators become active and engaged citizens through the transformative power of theatre.” Porte Parole is recognized for performing documentary theatre, a genre that is characterized by subjects inspired by real events and contemporary social issues.

Initially a research initiative founded by Annabel Soutar and Alex Ivanovici in 1998, the Company has written and produced seven critically acclaimed productions to date. Porte Parole's bilingual documentary plays cover a range of contemporary social and political issues in Québec, such as health care, Montréal's crumbling urban infrastructure, genetically modified food, and issues of immigration. In terms of its artistic vision, the Company's productions aim to nurture, amongst its collaborators and audiences, “the concept of 'The Artful Citizen' - a person who recognizes that sustaining a healthy community requires a

¹⁰ The Porte Parole website does actually use the term “to dig” (from 1970s slang) to express its position on political dialogue. See Projet Porte Parole. (2013) “About us”. Retrieved from <http://porteparole.org/en/about-us/>

creative vision of, and an imaginative participation in, active public dialogue. In order to meet this goal, PPP's theatre provides its community with "an artistic forum in which to examine its public affairs."¹¹

Given Porte Parole's mandate and self-positioning, the script of *Montréal La Blanche* epitomizes the concept of "artful citizen". The words of the text, coupled with the decor and artifice of theatre such as lighting, props and costumes evoke an emotive response that incites reflection. Given that the dialogue is grounded in real testimonies, this invites the audience, whether of Algerian origin or not, to think and engage with issues omnipresent in Montréal's plural urban fabric. In fact, the company's "About us" section on their website says part of their mandate is to empower audiences to take action and engage in various causes that affect the local community: "Each of our plays dives deep down into the human detail of urgent current event stories, empowering our audience to understand the root causes of social conflicts and inspiring them to play an active role in confronting them".

There is certainly an aspect that encourages audiences to be proactive, as the company sees itself as "the one link that has been lost in our democratic chain" as it creates a space where citizens are "inspired to become a player in a dynamic political community."¹²

¹¹ See Cleveland, K. (2003). Projet Porte Parole. In *Canadian Theatre Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from <http://www.canadiantheatre.com/dict.pl?term=Projet%20Porte%20Parole>

¹² See Projet Porte Parole. (2013) "About us." Retrieved from <http://porteparole.org/en/about-us/>

“Bodies of Evidence”: Documentary theatre as genre

Annabel Soutar, co-founder and artistic director of Porte Parole, studied theatre at Princeton University under Emily Mann¹³, one of the main proponents of documentary theatre in the United States. It is a genre to which Soutar is firmly committed and that acts as the foundation of her artistic and social vision as co-founder of Porte Parole. One of documentary theatre’s main characteristics is that the words of actual people are used. These words have been either recorded or transcribed by the scriptwriter during an interview or research process, or are appropriated from existing records such as the transcripts of an official investigation.¹⁴ Once the testimonies are collected, they are then “edited, arranged or recontextualized” to compose a dramatic presentation, in which actors perform the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used (Hammond & Steward, 2008, p.9). Mann similarly describes her method as consisting of not actually writing dialogue but rather using “people’s own words arranged, shaped and offset with dramatic timing.”¹⁵ Rooted in oral history and referred to as “theater of testimony” by South African theater artists,¹⁶ this theater is “not

¹³ Mann is the author of the award-winning documentary play *Execution of Justice* (1984) based on the assassination of San Francisco mayor George Moscone and City Councilman Harvey Milk in November 1978. The play was also staged on Broadway after regional tours. See script Mann (2005)

¹⁴ The theatrical material is also complemented with other sources like specialized journal articles, statistics, court cases, public reports, televised reports, or any other document or material that can feed the chosen topic (See Lévesque, S. 2006, p.158).

¹⁵ See LoBiondo, M. (2012). Profile: Emily Mann, Artistic Director of McCarter Theatre. Retrieved from *Princeton Patron Magazine* <http://www.princetonol.com/patron/emann/>

¹⁶ Ibid.

objective in the truest sense of the word,” but, according to Mann, it is “reality-based.”¹⁷ Given the approach of integrating facts and real people’s words there are inevitably also ethical and moral claims that are connected to the truth-telling that is expected when viewing and reading documentary theatre, as the literature on this genre acknowledges (See Martin, 2006, p.14; Hammond & Stewart, 2008, p.10). In fact, the question of truth consistently emerges in theories surrounding documentary theatre, considering that the scripts are based on actual testimonies. The relationship between truth and fiction is an elusive one, yet Soutar is well aware of the contradiction it brings forth, given the artificial theatricality in this genre. She explains: “On présente des faits de la «réalité vraie» dans un espace artificiel qui est le theatre, ce qui est, en fait, une contradiction; mais il se trouve que le dialogue entre la scène et la salle résulte justement de cette contradiction. Je crois que ce dialogue sur la notion de réalité est cruciale aujourd’hui” (Lévesque, 2006, p.159). Inspired by Emily Mann’s ability to strike the balance between truth and fiction in her staged productions, Soutar explains how Mann’s work allowed her to discover theatre’s power, which is capable of breaking down the most stubborn of prejudices, contributing to open dialogue by establishing a unique relationship with the audience. Besides being a form of entertainment, this type of theatre encompasses stories told on stage which are based on realities that the audience may connect with and even grants them the power to make a difference, given the contemporary nature of the topics (2006, p. 159). Even though Soutar is not the author of *Montréal La Blanche*, she nonetheless was directly involved in staging the production, ensuring that the themes and the script

¹⁷ Ibid.

meet the mandate of Porte Parole, as well as the criteria for the documentary theatre genre.¹⁸

To draw parallels with other forms of cultural production, the relationship between truth and fiction not only applies within theatre but is addressed in other forms, such as film and television. Sherry Simon writes about how a number of films that deal with “cultural diversity (in Québec film and video from 1985-1995) straddle the border between fiction and documentary” with the objective to explore “more personal, internal issues of identity.”¹⁹ The personal and internal issues of identity also grant the space for characters’ everyday lives to emerge through the personal narratives.

In terms of existing literature on documentary theatre, many of the landmark texts were written during the 1980s or early 1990s. A special issue in the academic journal *The Drama Review* (TDR), edited by Carol Martin (2006), remains a seminal collection of texts that many scholars rely on, as the articles “mapped the conceptual parameters of a burgeoning field of theatre practice, focusing primarily on documentary theatre’s relationship with the archive, its potential resistance to hegemonic structures of power, and its contribution within the public sphere” (Forsyth & Megson 2009, p.1-2). In this special issue, Martin’s

¹⁸ Annabel Soutar and co-founder Alex Ivanovici handed the job to documentary filmmaker Bachir Bensaddek, due to the demands of motherhood and the nature of the material. “Soutar and Ivanovici have contributed to the artistic process primarily as “outside eyes,” watching the odd run-through and offering feedback. They and Ducros also collaborated with Bensaddek on the “packaging” of the material, crafting a story out of the transcribed interviews.” See Barratt, A. (2004, May 6-12). Taxi from the Maghreb: Montréal la Blanche documents the Algerian immigrant experience. *Montréal Mirror*. Vol. 19, No. 46.

¹⁹ Simon (2004) talks of the hybrid character of film and video productions from Québec (and in particular from Montréal). This half-documentary and half-fictional genre emerges in the two films she analyzes: Michel Brault’s *Shabbat Shalom* (1992), Bruno Raminéz’s *La Sarrasine* (1991). These films also convey hybridity in that they address the “new mixtures of identities found in contemporary Québec” (p. 52).

article “Bodies of Evidence,” from which I take the title of this section, is thought-provoking. The author candidly admits that the phrase “documentary theatre”²⁰ fails us in its inadequacy. She is cognisant of documentary theatre’s blurring of the real and the represented, similar to television’s ambiguous “reenactments,” “docudramas,” and “reality” shows (p.13). Of the complex process of staging documentary theatre, Martin writes that “What makes documentary theatre provocative is the way in which it strategically deploys the appearance of truth, while inventing its own particular truth through elaborative aesthetic devices” (Martin, 2006, p.10).²¹ She also problematizes the representation of memory, truth and history that comes with documentary theatre, drawing distinctions between evidence and testimony. In acknowledging documentary theatre’s imperfect nature, Martin stresses that social reality – including reporting on social reality – is constructed.

Given the complexities of the real and the represented associated with this genre of theatre, Soutar sees her mandate at Porte Parole as two-fold: first to entertain the audience through theatre, and second, to base that theatre on words that reflect real experiences lived by real people. For her, documentary theatre is a form of resistance art (Lévesque, 2006, p.162).

²⁰ In the UK, documentary theatre is known as “verbatim theatre” because it makes use of direct quotation. Martin (2006) points out that “verbatim” is also not an adequate way of describing documentary theatre as it “infers great authority to moments of utterance unmitigated by an ex post facto mode of maturing memory” (p.14).

²¹ The six functions of documentary theatre according to Martin are “1. To reopen trials in order to critique justice”; “2.To create additional historical accounts”; “3.To reconstruct an event”; “4. To intermingle autobiography with history”; “5. To critique the operations of both documentary and fiction”; “6. To elaborate the oral culture of theatre” (2006, pp.12-13). She provides examples of staged productions and explanations for each function.

Contextualizing Montréal La Blanche

Before analyzing the characters in MLB, it is important to contextualize the Algerian presence in Montréal. When the play was performed in 2004, more than 30 000 Algerian immigrants lived in Montréal according to the script.²² Over the past two decades, Algerians in Montréal have been actively involved in immigrant and refugee rights, playing vital roles in securing status for themselves and other members of the community through advocacy work with organizations like Comité d'Action des Sans-Status Algériens. A number of activists, Algerians and non-Algerians alike, lobbied for a moratorium on deportations to Algeria given the political unrest following the Civil War. In 2003 and 2004, Canadian and Québec media turned their attention to stories of non-status migrants whose requests for refugee status had been rejected and who were seeking sanctuary in church basements. They focused on cases like Abdelkader (known as “Kader”) Belaouni’s, as discussed earlier in the dissertation. In fact, over 1,000 non-status Algerians living in Montréal launched a public awareness campaign which succeeded in pressuring the Canadian and Québec governments to regularize their status (Nyers, 2003).

²² Montréal is a preferred destination for individuals from North Africa. According to data from the 2006 Canadian census, out of the 16,200 Algerian-born newcomers living in Canada in 2006, 88.6% were in Montréal. New immigrants living in Montréal came from about 100 different countries around the world. Algeria (10.3%) was one of the top five birthplaces along with the People's Republic of China (10.3%), followed by Morocco (8.5%), Romania (6.2%) and France (5.8%). See Statistics Canada (2010). *Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-born Population, 2006 Census: Portraits of major metropolitan centres*. Retrieved from Statistics Canada <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-557/p22-eng.cfm>

Another problem faced by Algerians residing in Montréal was negative media coverage following the 9/11 attacks. In the post-September 11 climate, there was a considerable degree of suspicion towards the Algerian community of Montréal, due to Ahmed Ressam and his “Millennium Plot.” This plot entailed a plan to place bombs in the Los Angeles International Airport in December of 1999. Ressam, an Algerian who had lived in Montréal, had claimed refugee status in Canada²³ and several media reports associated him with Al-Qaeda sleeper cells. Such scrutiny fueled the population’s concerns about Canadian immigration policies, which allowed individuals with terrorist links to cross seemingly porous borders. It also had a negative impact on Muslims who were living precariously as non-status individuals in Canada. Nevertheless, it must be said that Québec, and particularly Montréal, was a favoured destination for Algerians fleeing the civil war according to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Furthermore, French-speaking Algerians, particularly individuals with professional backgrounds, were encouraged to immigrate to Québec.²⁴ It is within this context of controversy surrounding Canadian immigration policies and Montréal’s Algerian community, as well as active core grassroots organizations lobbying for non-status Algerians to be regularized, that cultural production began addressing these issues. Besides the two plays examined here,

²³ See a chronology of Ressam’s travels, involvement in training and other activities that led to his foiled plot to bomb the Los Angeles airport. See Ahmed Ressam’s Millennium Plot. (2013) *Frontline: Trail of a Terrorist*. Retrieved from PBS Online

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/trail/inside/cron.html>

²⁴ The Québec government’s increasing control over immigration and its interest in bolstering the francophone population is manifested through selective immigration. Political scientist Michael Keating (1996) writes, “By an arrangement with the federal government, [Québec] is allowed to select a proportion of Canada’s total immigration quota each year [. . .]. Selection of these immigrants is the responsibility of Québec officials stationed in Canadian diplomatic missions, especially in French-speaking countries” (p.105).

Québec filmmaker Denis Chouinard made a film, *L'Ange de goudron* (2001) (translated as *Tar Angel*), that portrays the obstacles faced by and plight of non-status refugees. Chouinard documents Algerian immigrants' integration into Québécois society. Desroches (2005) argues that the film's appeal was stifled by the September 11 attacks, given that *L'Ange de goudron* was released on September 9, 2001. Even though Chouinard's film did well on the film festival circuit,²⁵ the public was not well disposed to see compassionate portrayals of Algerian refugees and militant activism carried out by illegal immigrants. Burman (2007a), however, extends the impact of the film, as she identifies the "centrality of the nation and national belonging in *L'Ange de Goudron*," (p.267) in analysing many of the film's juxtapositions, such as one of the characters singing a verse of "O Canada" in Arabic, or Québec rural scenery combined with Arabic music.

Portraits in Montréal La Blanche

In this portion of the chapter I conduct an analysis of MLB's script. I argue that the voices included here portray how immigrants and refugees live both within and along the margins of the city. Their everyday life stories, unfolding around a taxi cab, anchor their willingness to integrate, find employment and contribute to society in the aftermath of fleeing the unrest in Algeria.

Monologues do not permeate this script. Instead, dialogue between characters gives the theatrical text a swift cadence, as intercultural²⁶ dialogue is

²⁵ The film was well received in Paris, Berlin and Montréal at various film festivals (See Desroches, 2005). *L'Ange de Goudron* won Best Film at the International Film Festival in Montréal in 2001.

²⁶ In his book *Theatre & Interculturalism*, Ric Knowles (2010) demonstrates a preference for the term "intercultural" as opposed to "cross cultural", seeing as "'intercultural' evokes the possibility

particularly favoured. Bensaddek features the Algerian characters' interaction with Québécois and other migrant groups, as part of the immigrants' quotidian exchanges in the taxi cab. As a result, the "characters" are not represented as isolated or marginalized strictly within the confines of their own ethnic communities and ghettos. Rather, the dialogue displays interactions that counter a common notion about immigrants, that they are insular, interacting largely with their own community members following re-settlement in a new country. Jen Harvie observes that "the relationships between characters in plays about the city can tell us about changing urban social relations" (p.7). In this light, the dialogue therefore suggests the desire of and effort made by the re-settled individuals to forge connections, thereby integrating with Québécois society and establishing a sense of belonging with local society.

However, aspects related to social inclusion alone do not provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying complexities displayed in the dialogue throughout the play. Nevertheless, with still-fresh memories of the painful, often traumatic events that prompted their departure, the characters have no desire to return to Algeria, even though they encounter various obstacles and frustrations in their new dwelling place on a daily basis.

The following analysis will include an examination of all the Algerian characters, as well as two Québécois characters. The themes I address in the analysis are practices related to everyday life and the ways that migrants narrate

of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings, avoiding binary codings" (p.4). The characters interacting in MLB are of various ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, making it more accurate to use the term intercultural to characterize the dialogue in the play. The term becomes particularly relevant within interculturalism - Québec's model of integration.

their experiences of adaptation, integration, and xenophobia in Montréal, as well as traumatic experiences in the homeland. The analysis also highlights the characters' positions on certain facets of religion and gender roles, as well as giving a glimpse of how nostalgia figures into the lives of the characters and how nostalgic elements are integrated in the script by Bensaddek.

The main protagonist, Amokrane Ben Yahia, is a 40-year old university-graduate and once union organizer who now criss-crosses Montréal as a taxicab driver. The centrality of the taxi and taxi driver in the play represents the type of work that many Algerian immigrants took on when they arrived in Montréal, in lieu of employment that corresponds to their credentials, which are not always recognized by Québec employers and professional associations.²⁷ The immigrant as taxi driver, symbolizing limited employment possibilities, is not a new image or reality. However, as Moss points out, what is different in Bensaddek's play is that "his Algerian cabdrivers are not unskilled, uneducated men with limited knowledge of French and English of past immigration waves" (p.30). Instead they work as taxi drivers because the professional credentials and job experience they gained in Algeria do not count for much in "Québec's tight employment market" (ibid).²⁸ The mobility associated with taxis and immigrants takes on an interesting

²⁷ This persistent problem has increased the gap in standard of living between immigrants and Canadian-born workers with similar education levels according to the National Post. In April 2011, Stephen Harper announced that he would offer loans to help immigrants get their credentials recognized. See Tories to offer loans to help immigrants get credentials recognized. (2011, April 6). Retrieved from http://news.nationalpost.com/2011/04/06/tories-to-offer-loans-to-help-immigrants-get-credentials-recognized/?_lsa=161ed8ef. Also see Bloom, M. and Grant, M. (2001). *Brain Gain: The Economic Benefits of Recognizing Credentials in Canada*. Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada.

²⁸ The market fluctuates and Québec does have shortages in certain areas. One of the continued debates in Québec, is the shortage of physicians. The province needs at least 1000 more doctors. However, immigrant physicians who have received their training elsewhere are not seen as

dimension – considering that mobility is represented through the actual movement of the vehicle through urban space, but also social mobility—taxi drivers move through various employment opportunities and social classes.²⁹

Amokrane did not always drive a taxi in Montréal (Scene 33). He explains that he initially worked for companies but could not tolerate being exploited, having been a union organizer in the past. He sees working in such environments as “l’esclavagisme” (a form of slavery). At one point, he was on the verge of returning to Algeria, despite having been persecuted for his political opinions; however, he decided to stay for his children. In fact, he remains involved in activism through his involvement with the board of the school his children attend, having been president of the board for the past five years. He acknowledges that he is incapable of inactivity given his militant past. He says: “Un ancien syndicaliste il peut pas rester sans militer” (Scene 33). Amokrane’s participation in and contributions to the school board and school life can also be perceived as a sign of social inclusion, as he takes on a social role in his community. Given his involvement in this community body, Amokrane likely maintains a considerable

suitable to fill the gap. See Pinker (2002). Similarly, there is a reported shortage of science and math teachers at the high school level in Québec. In fact, McGill University recently instituted a 15 month Master’s program that would certify professionals with a teaching degree as required by the Québec Ministry of education. Besides helping to decrease the shortage, this government initiative has helped to accommodate immigrants who have been trained in other countries to obtain adequate credentials to teach in Québec. See Chipello, C. (2011).

²⁹ The figure of the “educated” taxi driver remains an important archetype in urban refugee and immigrant narratives that has emerged in various cultural productions, with storylines unfolding in Montréal. *Comment conquérir l’Amérique en une nuit*, 2004, written by Dany Laferrière, is a film based on a taxi driver from Haiti. *Taxi Libre*, 2010, written by Kaveh Nabatian & Lalai Manjikian is a short NFB film, about a chemistry professor from Mexico who has difficulty securing employment because his accent is not “adequate” and because his degrees do not correspond to the professional credentials in Québec. Moreover, award winning novelist Rawi Hage, who emigrated from Beirut to Montréal via New York City and writes about displacement related to war and Middle Eastern diasporic communities in Montréal (Cockroach, 2008), worked as a taxi driver when living in NYC.

amount of agency as he assists and guides the decision-making process that has a direct impact on the neighborhood school.

At one point during the play, as Amokrane recalls his past activism in Algeria, he is intercut with Jacques' speaking. The retired IRB agent, and one of the non-Algerian characters, enumerates the names of assassinated citizens, journalists, and artists, giving the dates and different regions in Algeria where the killings took place. In this manner, the play juxtaposes Amokrane's narrative of being under attack as an activist, with the narratives of those who were killed for voicing their political sentiments (Scene 28). Amokrane describes how he was targeted for assassination in Algeria due to his activities as a union organizer and for vocalizing his opinion against the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS).³⁰ During a town hall meeting for municipal elections he proclaimed that their program was totalitarian and that they were using religion for their gain. Following his statements, he did not return to stay with his parents, fearing for his safety. Shortly after, his brother was killed in front of their father, who supported the FIS.

Despite his traumatic past and his inability to secure work as an activist, which he is clearly passionate about, Amokrane nonetheless seems to be invested and involved in his current life in Montréal. Based on his words in the script, Amokrane's openness to converse with taxi customers of different cultural backgrounds, and his involvement in his current community, afford him mobility in the city. This mobility is both literal, in terms of driving around Montréal, but

³⁰ The core objective of Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was to establish an Islamic state that was ruled by Sharia law.

also, figurative, through his meetings with the school board and conversations with customers from different social, cultural and class backgrounds.³¹

Safia Dif, unlike Amokrane, wishes only for employment within her professional field. She is a 36-year old woman who holds a degree in agricultural engineering from Algeria. She is unemployed and living in a 2 ½ room apartment. Throughout most of the play, she is on the phone with social services personnel who assist immigrants, and is adamant about finding a job related to the profession she practiced in Algeria. Recently, she left her previous employment at a bakery because she was unable to work full-time as requested by her ex-employer due to wanting to commit to government training for agronomists (Scene 6). Besides having difficulty securing employment within her field, she faces economic marginalization. In one of many conversations with a social worker, Safia describes how she has only \$545 per month to live on, with rent costing \$400 per month and her ex-employer claiming \$150 from her, she is not left with much financial leeway. Safia's insistence that she must find work within her chosen field counters a common belief about immigrants - one that postulates that immigrants live off and depend on the welfare system. Even though there are a number of individuals who do turn for welfare due to various reasons³², Safia

³¹ Burman (2007a) writes about a "longstanding racialized stratification system in Canada" (p.269) which results in the obstacles to social mobility facing particular groups: "Those who arrive without investment resources and must rely entirely on the new locale, and/or those who are on the wrong end" (ibid) of this system. She provides the example of Afro-Caribbean migrants who are stereotyped and forced to work as labourers and domestics. Similarly, Arabs from the Maghreb can be added to this racialized system, confining certain groups to certain types of employments, i.e Migrants from the Maghreb driving taxis.

³² In Montréal, 20% of newly arrived immigrants were on welfare in 2011, more than twice the rate of the general population, even though immigrants statistically have more years of schooling than the overall population. See La Presse Canadienne. (2012, April 2). *Langue de travail - Québec contribue à angliciser les immigrants francophones*. Retrieved from Le Devoir online

stresses that she is a university educated engineer who had a position in her country, and is not interested in receiving welfare. It is a well-known and documented fact that integration is deemed successful when an immigrant is employed.³³ Considering that adequate employment remains an important pillar to successful integration, Safia's efforts to secure work within her field is an attempt to overcome economic and social marginalization. Towards the end of the play (Sc. 31), we learn that Safia is one of 150 candidates selected to take part in the government training program in her field, attesting that her efforts to find work in an area in which she is academically and professionally trained have paid off.

Contrary to Safia, Slimane Bouziane, a 43 year old trained journalist, was able to secure a job at Radio Canada after being unemployed for a year and a half. Slimane met a Radio Canada researcher who was visiting Algiers on assignment when he was still working for the Alger *Républicain* newspaper (Scene 12). At the time he had already started his paperwork to immigrate to Canada. They stayed in contact and when Slimane arrived in Canada, the researcher offered him an internship. One opportunity led to another, a job opening came up and he was recommended by a colleague. Like many refugee claimants and immigrants, he used "weak ties"³⁴ to secure his job. Had work with Radio Canada not

<http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/Québec/346495/langue-de-travail-Québec-contribue-a-angliciser-les-immigrants-francophones>

³³ The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) highlights the importance of ensuring that immigrants have access to adequate employment by conducting a "stakeholders" analysis. See Ontario Council of Agents Serving Immigrants. (2005, July 13). Integrating Immigrants into the Canadian Labour Market. Retrieved from OCASI online <http://www.ocasi.org/index.php?qid=708&catid=113>

³⁴ "Weak ties" as advanced by Granovetter (1973) refers to acquaintances, rather than close family and friends, which are viewed as being "strong ties." Thus, "weak ties" allow individuals "to diversify their social network and serve as a getaway to an array of socio-economic and cultural

materialized, he states that he would have returned to Algeria, or else become a taxi driver.

Slimane is committed to his present life in Montréal and does not necessarily want to be connected to his past. This is demonstrated in the scene entitled “Intégrisme and Islam” (scene 27), (fundamentalism and Islam) where Slimane tells an anecdote that took place in the newsroom where he and his colleagues were watching an argument in the Canadian Parliament, which he had characterized as being indecent and an embarrassment. When one of his colleagues remarked that: “at least we don’t kill each other here,” Slimane reminded his colleague of the possibility to make a comment on his current society, in Canada, without having to be reminded of his previous one, in reference to Algeria’s unrest.

Slimane, who began his career as researcher, is fittingly the person in the script to provide current statistical information about Algerians living in Montréal, as well as narrating flashbacks related to Algeria’s history (added to the script by MLB director Ducros as part of documentary narration). Providing background and statistical information related to historical events and contemporary topics throughout the script is a technique of the documentary theatre genre, where facts from official records and documents are consulted and integrated into the dialogue. For instance, when Safia is on the phone listening to pre-recorded options at the employment agency, Slimane provides employment statistics on Algerians in Québec, highlighting the fact that over half of the potential workers

resources beyond those generally available in the person’s ethnic or immigrant community.” Aroian, 1992; Hagan, 1998 as cited in Damaris Rose and al (1998).

of Algerian origin hold over 17 years of education; 50% of Algerians who are capable of working do not have a stable job; 16% receive government aid; and half of Algerian workers receive less than 13 500 dollars a year (Sc. 13).³⁵

In another scene, taxi driver Amokrane has an encounter with a client in his taxi, a drunken woman looking for a particular bar. The customer tells Amokrane that she has previously dated a Berber, a group she labels the “Indians of Algeria” (Scene 8). Upon learning this, Slimane offers another flashback, this time to the Spring of 1980. This coincides with the Berber Spring, when a series of student strikes took place in Kabylie. The events were exacerbated when a writer’s talk on Kabylie poetry was barred from taking place by Algerian authorities.

Slimane once again provides historical data during Amokrane’s exchange with a customer from Bangladesh, as they discuss family as well as politics in Bangladesh (Scene 20). Amokrane asks if political reasons pushed the customer to come to Montréal, to which he replies that education was the reason he came to Canada. At this point in the script, fulfilling his role as researcher and journalist, Slimane provides statistics on the plural reality in Québec; he states that 1 out of 10 people are foreign-born, and that 88% of the immigrant population lives in the city, that there are between 20 000 to 40 000 Algerians in Montréal whereas in

³⁵ All figures cited from MLB reflect the reality in 2004, when the play was written and staged. This is a highly educated population: in 2001, almost a third (29.9%) of Morocco-born Moroccans and half (42.5%) of Algeria-born Algerians 15 years of age and older had a university degree (compared with 21.8% of the total number of immigrants and 14% of Québeckers as a whole). Moreover, almost all Moroccan and Algerian immigrants (97.6% and 98.5% respectively) reported in the 2001 census that they speak French. However, despite these characteristics, deemed at the time of selection to augur well for the immigrants’ integration, the 2001 unemployment rate among Morocco-born Moroccans and Algeria-born Algerians who had lived in Québec for five years or less was very high: 33.6% and 35.4% respectively, compared with 8.2% for Québeckers as a whole. See Lenoir-Achdjian & Arcand (2011).

1989, there were only 1500, and that over 149 different dialects can be overheard in the school yards.

Slimane references France's colonial presence in Algeria at the beginning of the play upon hearing a discussion between Amokrane and a Québécois couple. While Amokrane explains how the vineyards in Algeria were replaced by grain during Independence, Slimane interrupts, providing factual historical information about the war for Independence Algeria fought with France, transporting the audience to Algeria, 5th of July, 1962, when the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) installed itself to end 132 years of colonization (Scene 2).

After this flashback, we are immediately brought back to the present. The action takes place in a studio; Jacques Gagnon, a 50 year old retired IRB agent is introduced at this point. The ex-agent is a firm believer in the immigration point system, along with its selection grid, as he explains that his job is to determine what an immigrant can do once settled here:

C'est pour ça qu'il y a une grille de sélection des immigrants.
Et plus t'acceptes de gens qui sont pas qualifiés pour le marché du travail,
plus ils ont de chances de pas réussir leur intégration (Scene 3).

He is categorically against accepting non-qualified people who, according to him, have more chance of failing to integrate if they are not cut out for the job market. Jacques then goes on to claim that he selected 2000 Algerians in three years, conforming to the law and to the grid. In other words, the criteria followed and points afforded to the claimants depended on the degrees they held, their age and their employment experience. Jacques' bureaucratic jargon and descriptions of the procedures to determine status are fairly detailed, as he points to the two

categories: skilled workers and selection for humanitarian reasons. For a skilled worker, he explains that it is important to correspond to both professional and personal integration criteria; but for humanitarian cases, it is only the person's story that will determine his or her admittance.

Jacques seems for the most part to feel a certain degree of compassion for immigrants, as he describes his struggle to understand Algerian culture and mentions the power that is afforded him in deciding people's fates (Sc. 30). He ponders the rationale involved in the decision-making processes during his career, based on whether or not the claimants' lives were in danger and whether the stories he'd heard were credible.

In "Chauvins et voilées" (scene 24), Jacques claims that he has refused some veiled women, namely when they don't shake his hand.

J'ai déjà refusé des femmes avec le foulard,
ça m'est déjà arrivé.
Pourquoi?
Si une femme acceptait pas de me serrer la main,
là j'étais pas capable,
je perdais la boule.
Parce que je leur disais,
l'intégration commence à partir du moment où vous entrez dans mon bureau.
Et les femmes avec le foulard que j'ai refusées
c'est ceux qui refusaient de me toucher.

According to him, integration starts when the person enters his office and views the inability to shake his hand as unacceptable. On the other hand, the retired agent had no qualms about a veiled woman who could shake his hand and even discusses her wearing a veil, the circumstances under which it is worn.³⁶ Jacques

³⁶ In recent years, issues surrounding the hijab have raised a number of debates throughout the province of Québec and have given way to social panics, particularly around the niqab. For instance, in March 2010, the media covered the story of a woman who refused to remove her niqab

recalls how when growing up, it was compulsory that his mother and his sisters wear a headscarf to go to church. He finds wearing the veil problematic when used as a social gesture, and not as a religious one: “Pour un geste religieux, pas de problème, mais pour le geste social là il y a un problème” (Scene 24).

Hasno is the character who faces the brunt of social and economic marginalization more strongly than the other individuals portrayed in *MLB*. He arrived with a falsified passport, which is a common occurrence, as addressed in Chapter Three in the discussion around departure. Described in the stage

veil during French language classes at Cégep Saint-Laurent in Montréal. See Niqab-wearer blocked again from class. (2010, March 9). Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/Montréal/story/2010/03/09/mtl-niqab-Québec-intervenes-again.html>. Renewed debates about wearing the hijab continue to circulate. More recently, young Muslim women, second generation immigrants, have been speaking out about their reasons for wearing or not wearing the hijab. A photography exhibit held at the Corrid’art gallery in Montréal (April-May 2012) entitled “Ce qui nous voile” features a series of images of veiled women living in Montréal. One of the participants, Dalila Awada explains her choice to start wearing the hijab at a young age and reveals that more and more, she is ostracised by many in local society. According to her, a good number of young Muslim women, second generation immigrants, are well integrated in Québec society and want to wear the veil. Muslims living in Québec form 1.5% of the population. Some information on the 53 women who are taking part in the exhibit - two of the participants said that they wear the veil due to family pressures. The average age of the women presented in the exhibit is 27. Around 42 % were born in Québec; three of the women were originally of the Catholic faith and converted to Islam. What they appreciate about Québec is the feminist movement, winter, cultural plurality, bilingualism, freedom of thought, and poutine. On average, they started wearing the veil at the age of 17 and the majority of the participants are against wearing the niqab. The exhibit's organizer Andréanne Pâquet hopes that through this project will foster a space for dialogue and create bridges across communities. See Monpetit. C. (2012, April 13). Exposition – Ce qu’il y a derrière le voile. Retrieved from <http://www.ledevoir.com/societe/actualites-en-societe/347322/exposition-ce-qu-il-y-a-derriere-le-voile>

Interestingly, the same week *Le Devoir* article was published, *La Presse* published an opinion piece by Rima Demanins, a Cégep student, who unlike her mother and sister has made the conscious decision to not wear the veil. She nonetheless maintains admiration and respect for the women who do wear it, as she sees it as courageous. Her article describes an incident at her local pharmacy where the clerk lashed out at Demanins’s mother (who has lived in Québec for 20 years and teaches at a Montréal school board) telling her to go back to her country, to take off her veil and that extremists are not needed here. Her article highlights the stigma, hatred, and fear some Québécois harbour towards women wearing the hijab and points out that she and her family are just as Québécois as others. She writes: «Le Québec fait partie de nous, du bout de nos orteils jusqu’aux épingles qui tiennent nos hijabs». She ends her article by stating that Québec is her country, that she has the Québécois accent, lives through the winters, celebrates St-Jean Baptiste and cherishes the liberty that exists here, closing her article with «Notre ‘chez nous’, c’est ici». See Demanins, R. (2012, April 14). Québécoises...chacune à notre façon. *La Presse*. Retrieved from <http://www.cyberpresse.ca/debats/votre-opinion/2012/04/13/01-4515097-Québécoises-chacune-a-notre-facon.php>

directions as being a “hittiste,”³⁷ Hasno states that the chance to make money and be rich is what attracted Algerians to Montréal. He says that Algerians who come to Canada arrive expecting this new country to be paradise, thinking that they will be given a bag full of money when descending from the airplane, besides the immigration papers and citizenship waiting for them. Hasno is seemingly disenchanted with what “les pauvres Algeriens” really discover once in Canada:

Le froid de decembre les a pincés
Et le père Noël les a trahis.

Hasno used to work but now shoplifts, proclaiming it to be his employment. He drinks to sleep and smokes marijuana to relieve the stress of everyday life, claiming that life in Canada is driving him mad. With his medical insurance card expired, he now has to pay \$80 to see a doctor, prompting him to steal (Scene 22).

(...) la carte d'assurance maladie est périmée.
Maintenant pour passer devant le médecin,
est-ce que je suis bien ou pas,
ils m'ont dit que je devais payer \$80.
Je les ai pas.
Qu'est-ce que je vais faire ?
Je vais voler pour payer.
Et si je vole,
Je grossis mon casier.
C'est ça le Canada.
Tu veux vivre au Canada?
C'est ça.
Ils te rendent malade,
Ils te rendent fou.
Le stress me prend.
Mon esprit divague.
Je me mets à parler tout seul.
Ils te poussent à devenir fou,
Problèmes, problèmes, problèmes.

³⁷ Hittiste is defined as an individual who, within an urban context is dispossessed, unemployed, and does not have a significant chance of employment. See (Skilbeck, 1995).

La loi,
Sale...
Je vais me fumer ce pot,
Je vais finir tout ce putain de paquet.
(il sort un ziploc plein de marijuana)
Je vais me défoncer.

Hasno's difficulties integrating into Canadian life seem to have a negative impact on his well-being, as he finds himself on the margins of the city. In scene 25, he experiences what appears to be a type of existentialist crisis potentially stemming from his displaced reality. He even speaks of attempts to commit suicide:

Qu'est-ce que je vais rester,
Je vais rester pour gaspiller ma vie ?
Qu'est-ce que je vais faire ?
Je me mets à parler tout seul.
Le voilà l'exil.
L'exil m'a foutu la vie en l'air.
Je n'ai pas de conscience.
Je pleure sur ma conscience.
Ils te poussent à devenir fou,
Je vais me couper les veines.
Je vais me couper les veines,
Je vais me couper les veines.
Comment je vais me couper les veines ?
Je vais me saigner en plus ?

Hasno's character and words expose the audience to the despair, isolation and depression which can occur in the life trajectories of a number of refugees and immigrants who are caught within the limbo of being unemployed or "unemployable" due to their non-Canadian credentials.

Similar to the exclusion and desolation Hasno experienced, 50 year old Omar Talbi is unemployed and watches a considerable amount of television throughout the play. He laments the individualistic nature of the society in which

he currently lives. Omar mentions the coldness of a neighbor who doesn't have to say hello, a business that doesn't have to hire you, and how general individualism seems to permeate this society, due to the lack of contact with others besides your own family (Sc.7).

Ici on ne parle pas à quelqu'un qu'on ne connaît pas.
Vous pouvez rester des années,
votre voisin n'est pas obligé de vous dire bonjour.
Pas plus qu'une entreprise n'est obligée de vous recruter.
C'est le pays qui fonctionne comme ça.
C'est chacun pour soi, chacun dans sa maison,
le bonheur oui,
mais le bonheur très limité à sa famille pas plus.
C'est ça.
C'est l'individualisme.
Pas de contacts.

In one of MLB's climactic scenes (16), Slimane reprimands Omar, who is still watching TV and continues to be ravaged by his discontent, as he passively criticizes the Québécois and the province's various social systems, such as education and health. Slimane tells Omar that he should, instead, be grateful to have left a country where injustice is the law of the land.

On trouve pas de travail parce qu'on est meilleurs qu'eux.
C'est pas vrai,
il faut pas déconner,
arrêtez de prendre ces gens-là pour des débiles,
les Québécois ne connaissent rien,
faut arrêter,
C'est grave de devenir raciste,
c'est vraiment du racisme.
Les Québécois ne fuient pas leur société,
ils sont bien dans leur pays.
Nous on fuit et on peut pas venir d'un pays où l'injustice est érigée en système,
on peut pas venir d'un pays où on crève encore de typhoïde et de peste et de choléra
et je ne sais pas trop quoi
et venir ici critiquer le système de santé, l'école.

Au nom de quoi tu saurais mieux qu'eux?

Omar explains that he was editor-in-chief in Algeria but that he didn't apply for such positions here and instead focused on applying for journalist positions (Sc. 19). The answers were negative, as the letters coming in stated that he was overqualified. Omar is overall skeptical about employment opportunities for immigrants and makes the following remarks:

L'année dernière y'a eu 3 700 Algériens
et un peu plus qui sont arrivés, au Québec.
Parmi ces 3 700 Algériens,
combien ont-ils pu regagner la place qu'ils occupaient dans leur pays.
On est dans des boulots,
des jobines,
voilà.
Quand on a passé l'entrevue avec l'agent d'immigration,
on nous a jamais dit que ce genre de problème se posait.
Y'a des gens qui disent ça,
beaucoup,
beaucoup,
beaucoup qui disent qu'ils n'ont pas été avertis des difficultés d'installation
au Canada.
Voilà ce qu'ils disent.
Voilà.

His query reaffirms his doubts about immigrants integrating adequately into society. Omar goes on to claim that: "L'intégration, c'est une marque de commerce" (Scene 19), referring to integration as being a trademark. He describes how many immigrants make a salary each month, but are not sure whether or not next month's salary will come in. Such uncertain employment prospects and precarious financial situations can lead to depression, which tends to stay over the years, and disorients and makes them fragile.

Another character in the play, Aziz Mammeri, is a 39 year old bookseller. He meets with a Montréal city counselor named Rénald Choquette to ask for help with opening a specialized bookstore in the form of an investment. Aziz describes his business idea as a place where “on fait le Maghreb.” Cultural products such as music and books would be sold in this co-op style business which would also act as a meeting point for the community (Sc. 10). This proposed diasporic space in Montréal is common among ethnic communities who have established businesses that add to the panoply of cultural, culinary spaces in the city that recall the homeland unfolding in the locality of Montréal.³⁸ Aziz wants to create a meeting point for the neighborhood, where people can congregate; Algerians and other immigrants from the Maghreb can meet and interact with non-Algerian and non-Maghrebians. Such spaces can foster social inclusion, as they are open to the non-Maghrebian community, and create opportunities for interchange between cultures in order to help establish a sense of belonging within a city, while articulating a diasporic connection to the Maghreb.

Gender roles & religion

The space as proposed by Aziz can also be seen as potentially helping bridge the gap and distance between Muslim and non-Muslim populations in Montréal. Following 9/11, Muslim immigrants and refugee claimants have been largely perceived negatively by the media and public. Some of the main themes

³⁸ For more on everyday multiculturalism, see Martha Radice (2009) who writes about the everyday social relations and mobilisations of ethnicity in multi-ethnic neighborhood shopping streets in Montréal, which she explores in *Street Level Cosmopolitanism: Neighborhood Shopping Streets in Multi-ethnic Montréal* in A. Wise & S. Velayutham (Eds.), *Everyday Multiculturalism* (pp. 140-157).

that emerge in the script include religion and gender roles, as the dialogue surrounding these themes counters a number of stereotypes associated with immigrants who practice Islam.

Dislocation and disruption of gender relations is another theme that emerges in the play. Kahina Amrouche is a 38 year old administrative assistant and mother whose husband is depressed. Her character is significant in that she subverts traditional gender roles. When Kahina worked for radio and television in her country of origin, she was targeted personally and physically. They shot and killed one of her colleagues. Despite the fact that women were not allowed to go to the cemetery to bury the dead, she was determined to attend her colleague's funeral (Sc. 28). The negative gender stereotype of Muslim women as submissive and passive is debunked with Kahina's act of defiance, which counters established gender rules, as she is the only woman walking in the funeral procession. In her new environment, she seems to be flexible and has adapted to her new circumstances, as she works as an administrative assistant in Montréal. She is outspoken when it comes to Arab chauvinism, the appropriation of Islam by fundamentalists and is in favour of the Arab women's progressive movement (Scenes 19, 27).

She is highly critical of how the people she encounters on a daily basis perceive her as a Muslim woman. In scene 27 "l'intégrisme et l'Islam", Kahina questions the image Québécois have of Algerians, pointing out that they often don't know where Algeria is and all they do know of it is that they kill each other there. She describes the reactions and questions people have, as well as the

stereotypes associated with Islam, fundamentalism and the veil during encounters with people she meets when she goes out.

Toujours quand je pars dans des cocktails ou dans des soirées comme ça,
je parle avec une personne,
elle sait que je suis algérienne,
tout de suite après,
est-ce que tu portes le voile,
est-ce que tu es musulmane.
Si je suis musulmane.
Pourquoi tu dois me cataloguer,
Parce que l'islam est associé à l'intégrisme.
L'intégrisme s'est emparé,
s'est accaparé de la religion.

Moreover, the perception of Islam and its association with terrorism is addressed in the script. In light of the Ahmed Resam case, and of the repercussions associated with September 11 in terms of how Muslims were perceived and treated, Slimane also voices his concerns about the narrow view some have of Islam. He states that the worse thing for Algerians who have fled terrorism is to be perceived as terrorists.

Alors t'essayes d'expliquer,
comment, l'islamisme,
comment,
tu racontes l'histoire de l'Algérie que tu connais etc.
Mais en même temps au bout d'un moment tu butes contre une inconnue,
Tu es capable, toi
d'expliquer comment un islamiste
ou n'importe qui
peut égorger un enfant?
C'est pas parce qu'on est Algérien
qu'on a plus de capacités à comprendre
qu'on puisse égorger un bébé
ou une femme
ou une famille au complet
ou un village au complet.
Tu peux pas,
c'est étranger à ta culture

c'est étranger à ta façon d'être
et tu deviens solidaire des horreurs
on te solidarise des horreurs qui sont commises.
Le pire des traitements qu'auraient à subir les Algériens dont la plupart ont
fui le terrorisme,
c'est d'être perçus comme des terroristes potentiels,
je veux dire qu'ironiquement les victimes du terrorisme se retrouvent,
dans l'habit du coupable potentiel,
ça serait très grave,
très, très grave.

Safia is a practicing Muslim who wears the veil to pray at home. The stage directions present her as either getting ready to pray or just emerging from prayer during several scenes (Sc.9, 11). The audience is informed of the lingering suspicion around veiled women as Safia explains how people are apprehensive of her and even avoid making eye-contact (Sc. 24 “Chauvins et voiles”). She also expresses concern about how her wearing the veil could hinder her opportunities to find employment. Safia states that her wearing the head scarf is a personal decision and contrary to what many may think, she wanted to flee Algeria because she did not share the mentality of the people there. In fact, she explains that she has always felt like a stranger in her own country and she didn’t feel as though she could integrate in Algerian society, despite wearing a headscarf. Safia is aware that wearing the hijab can pose problems for her integration into Montréal’s secular society. Eventually, her adaptability rewards her and she is selected as one of the participants in the government training programmes, which is revealed towards the end of the play.

Bensaddek does not dwell much on instances of xenophobia and Islamophobia in the play, and instead demonstrates that misconceptions, lack of

accurate information, and negative perceptions can be overcome through dialogue and sharing knowledge, as the narratives above demonstrate. Bensaddek also includes moments of conviviality between non-Muslims and Muslims. *MLB* features lighter moments where encounters with Québécois are amicable and even welcoming, ultimately engendering instances of social inclusion. Bensaddek's script displays the hospitable nature of well-intentioned bureaucrats and other individuals, which strikes a particular cord given xenophobic tendencies in a post 9/11 climate. For instance, Slimane recalls his experience in front of the immigration judge who he was expecting would grill him and his family. Instead, he fell on someone who was "human" (Scene 30). The same judge made it clear that Slimane would not be able to find employment as a journalist because Québec is a small country, unlike France, but because he found Slimane to be so motivated, the agent said that "I cannot stand in your way". Slimane said a first encounter like that with Québec builds confidence (Sc. 30).

Kahina speaks of a woman she met who was exceptionally nice and helped her and her husband furnish their apartment (Sc. 30). Jacques' compassion surfaces once again when he recounts how he accepted a father and his two sons as refugees. They had been attacked with a blade during a concert in Algiers. As he recalls this particular decision, the stage directions point to Jacques splashing canvas with red paint. He then proceeds to enumerate the journalists and intellectuals who were assassinated, giving their names, titles, and the dates on which they were killed. With each victim's name, he splashes a stroke of red paint

(Scene 27), representing the strong compassion and humanity that defines Canada's position vis-à-vis victims of persecution and oppression.

The characters of Algerian origin represent various aspects of the immigration experience and their positions vis-à-vis the Montréal community, in other words, where and how they forge their belonging in their new locale. This reveals to the audience the characters' determination to pursue employment and their willingness to contribute to local society, despite quotidian frustrations linked to their status as immigrants or refugees. Some successfully integrate, while others face more challenges. Traumatic memories of the past resurge from time to time in the background as they navigate current obstacles in their new dwelling place.

The next section considers how nostalgia manifests itself in the lives of the characters and how nostalgic elements are integrated in Bensaddek's script.

Fragments of nostalgia

Throughout *MLB*, the ways in which the past resurfaces in the present is not a melancholic cry for a lost past typical in most migrant diasporic communities and in a number of culturally produced texts. There is rather a clear acknowledgment of the painful past and of lost homes, not tied up in colonization or the struggle for Independence, but instead resulting from the unrest during the Civil War of the 1990s. Nevertheless, the overall tone is not one of overly dramatic longing. Instead, what permeates the script is the urgency the immigrants feel to get by on a day-to-day basis; they clearly wish to succeed, integrate and belong to a French-speaking society that seems for the most part hospitable

towards these Francophone immigrants. The tone of nostalgia in the script echoes what Svetlana Boym calls “diasporic intimacy”, which is not the promise of a comforting recovery of identity through shared nostalgia for the lost home or homeland, but instead, “a precarious coziness of a foreign home” (p.254) as they live, I would add, amid the tensions of social inclusion and exclusion.

Bensaddek uses theatricality to illustrate an omnipresent, yet subtle nostalgia. Based on the stage directions, the opening scene (Sc.1) begins with Amokrane sitting in his taxi as the audience trickles in. His taxi light is on. The taxi dispatcher is spewing out addresses and names when Amokrane falls asleep. A veiled woman exits the taxi’s trunk, as her voice emanates from the car radio. Warda, the veiled woman, recites lyrics from a song by Idir, an Algerian musician of Berber origin. The lyrics are about a once radiant flower that is now fading. The song is suddenly interrupted by the sound of machine guns and swords striking each other. In response to my correspondence with Bensaddek, he describes the song as “a metaphor of the Algerian tragedy,” in other words the cancelation of elections in Algeria that triggered the Algerian Civil War. The song by Berber singer Idir is from the *Chasseurs de Lumières* album (Light Knights) which is about the musician’s exile in Paris in 1975. Warda falls in the snow, the lighting changes and Amokrane is awake. As a prelude to MLB, this opening scene, apparently a dream sequence, is a nostalgic jump in time to a homeland left behind. It sets the stage for the play’s tone and double function: the connection to a lost past in Algeria and the contemporary reality and relationships Algerians

have in their present lives in Québec. Moreover, Amokrane listens to Chaabi³⁹ music in his taxi that the playwright characterizes as being “*empreinte de nostalgie*” (imbued with nostalgia) in the stage directions (Sc.7).

The homeland that resurfaces throughout the play is mostly factual and historical. References to emigration are made, and the Algerian civil war is alluded to through the prism of memory. Similar to Lebanese and Syrian-born playwrights Wajdi Mouawad and Khaldoun Imam, who feel morally obliged to bear witness to their national tragedies (See Moss 2004), Bensaddek remembers those who died or lived under oppressive rule and did not likely have a proper burial. In this sense, the assassinations enumerated in MLB humanize the civil war, by providing a full name, title, and date of death for the individuals killed.

Moreover, MLB’s subtitle “Alger dans le retroviseur” (Algiers in the rear-view mirror) adds to the nostalgic cues, thus counterpointing a double existence in Montréal, the daily reality and the past life in Algeria. Bensaddek seems to recall a type of reflective nostalgia which says more about “individual and cultural memory,” as “it cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space” (Boym, 2001, 49).

The enigmatic Warda appears once again as the play draws to an end, when Amokrane turns on his radio (Sc.36). The words she recites are inspired by Idir’s song *Ageggig*, using the metaphor of a flower - one that has disappeared, but is not dead. The closing stands as a reminder of survival, a type of homage to all the “flowers” who fell in Algeria during the Civil War of the 1990s.

³⁹ Traditional music of Algiers. See Radio Chaabi Dialna. (2013). La musique populaire algérienne. Retrieved from Radio Chaabi <http://www.webchaabi.com/>

Meanwhile, Amokrane makes it clear that he is not hung up about his job as taxicab driver, and after ending an amicable conversation with a young Québécois couple about life and love, he states in contentment:

C'est la classe le taxi.
Tu causes,
ils causent avec toi.
Tu restes crispé,
t'es foutu.
Faut pas avoir le complexe.
Il faut...
c'est bien de parler avec les gens.

In the final moments of the play, the stage directions prescribe all the actors to sit in the taxi. Amokrane lowers his window and invites the audience: “Montez, Montez, c’est gratuit, j’ai fini ma soiree.”

MLB is a prime illustration of documentary theatre portraying aspects of the everyday lives of refugees and immigrants. The narratives are anchored in real experiences and trajectories lived by actual people. The historical background, as well as current information based on statistics, provides a context and backdrop to the reality and truth of the narratives. Besides witnessing the trauma of civil war as carried by these individuals, the audience is also exposed to some of the everyday obstacles and instances of marginalization that accompany displacement, as well as instances of social inclusion, as these individuals create agency and counter various forms of hegemonic oppression.

Their intercultural voices portray the openings and opportunities that exist despite their “in-betweenness.” Everyday life practices turn these individuals, who may or may not hold status, into political and social subjects who partake in community activities, create new community spaces, establish themselves in the

job market, become active in school board politics, work in local media, and break down gender and religion-based stereotypical images. Moreover, without moralizing, Bensaddek reminds the audience that misconceptions, lack of accurate information and negative perceptions can be overcome through dialogue and sharing knowledge.

II. Bashir Lazhar: The Story

The second play analysed in this chapter retraces the life of Bashir Lazhar, a refugee claimant who fled the violence in Algeria during the 1990s. He resettles in Montréal to prepare the arrival of his family in Canada. Lazhar's suffering brought on by forced displacement is further exacerbated by a suspicious tragedy in which his entire family perishes in a fire the night before they were set to depart for Canada. When a sixth grade teacher in Montréal commits suicide in the classroom during recess at a local elementary school, Lazhar walks into the principal's office and offers his services as a substitute teacher.

Educated under the French system but having no training as a teacher, (he owned a cafe in Algeria, though his wife was a teacher) he does possess a great love for children. Despite his lack of formal knowledge in education, he introduces innovative pedagogy that goes against the grain during his time as substitute. Given the circumstances following their teacher's suicide, Lazhar teaches his students the value of friendship towards one another, courage, and justice, as well as proper grammar; he even encourages the students to have open

discussions about violence taking place at school. As time goes by, the students become fond of Lahzar, as they find themselves growing academically and personally, until Lahzar is asked to leave the school before the end of the school year.

Authoring Bashir Lazhar

When Evelyn de la Chenelière began writing Bashir Lazhar in 1999, she was still unaware of the concept of reasonable accommodations, and September 11 had not yet occurred. The French-Canadian playwright, however, delivered a script that speaks unpretentiously to some of the current realities experienced by immigrants and refugees, as she maps the struggles and losses, as well as the small victories of an exiled Algerian man attempting to integrate into Québécois society. Even though Jane Moss (2004) argues that immigrant playwrights have transformed Québécois theatre into “a site of heterogeneity,” it is noteworthy that, in the case of this play, the themes Moss attributes to works by immigrant playwrights are acknowledged by a Québécoise playwright.

As a social commentary on the cultural realities of Québec, the story touches upon the everyday realities of integration, the values and customs of the receiving society, and the Québec education system, as well as the refugee determination system. De la Chenelière became interested in this topic due to a fascination with immigrants’ capacity to live in Canada.⁴⁰ The writing of Bashir

⁴⁰ See Garcia, G. (2012, April 9). Bashir Lazhar ou les accommodements raisonnables. *L'Express : L'Hedbo des Francophones du Grand Toronto*. Retrieved from <http://www.lexpress.to/archives/3244/>

Lazhar also stems from a desire to revamp her work method, which de la Chenelière claims was usually based on instinct. With this play, she instead opted for conducting research and gathering documents, thus adopting a different intellectual approach. She felt compelled to participate in the cause of refugees even before the Canadian government's 2002 decision to lift the moratorium on deportations to Algeria. She educated herself by reading books and speaking to a law firm specializing in immigration law, which she found to be an enriching experience.⁴¹

De la Chenelière has never been an immigrant, or an instructor, only a student who empathized with her teachers. She explains that she wrote the play because "I wanted to challenge myself by writing something that was very far from my life and what I knew."⁴² Attuned to the pulse of current Québécois society, she sees the play as posing a number of questions, though not necessarily providing answers, thus leaving ample room for individual interpretations and thoughts.

Far from taking a moralizing tone or wanting to make judgments on the situation in Québec, de la Chenelière says of her critically acclaimed play, which has been translated to English, Spanish and German: «Nous avons évité tous les pièges. Je ne voulais pas que ce soit moralisateur ou pamphlétaire et les spectateurs y croient. Mine de rien, il y a de l'humour dans la pièce. On rit

⁴¹ See Anglioni, D. & Singer, M. (2007, January 18). Bashir Lazhar: Gens du pays. *Voir*. Retrieved from <http://voir.ca/societe/2007/01/18/bashir-lazhar-gens-du-pays-2/>

⁴² See Donnelly, P. (2012, February 17). *Éveline De la Chenelière celebrates success of Monsieur Lazhar*. *The Montréal Gazette*. Retrieved from <http://www.Montrealgazette.com/entertainment/movie-guide/%C3%89veline+Cheneli%C3%A8re+celebrates+success+Monsieur+Lazhar/6171192/story.html>

beaucoup avec ce professeur complètement démodé qui vient d'Algérie, une colonie française. Avec sa maladresse, il devient un personnage assez comique».⁴³

Alongside the humour in the play, there is no doubt that the theatrical script has a political dimension. De la Chenelière remains sceptical and speaks of the hostility that persists in the perception of immigrants, particularly towards Muslims, stating in a 2008 interview: «Depuis le 11 septembre, notre méfiance reste épidémique envers le monde arabe. Tout est exacerbé, notre perception fait qu'on mélange beaucoup le terrorisme et la religion musulmane. Je ne vois pas d'amélioration.» When asked about the reason behind the play's success, she states that the play is above all "human." «Cette histoire transcende la réalité, c'est avant tout une histoire humaine, celle d'un personnage qui essaie de renouer avec les autres à travers l'enseignement.»⁴⁴ The play's humanity resides in the fact that refugees and immigrants emerge from the shadows of "anonymity" (St-Jacques, 2007) and are given a voice (even a face) that ultimately fosters dialogue within Montréal's cultural scene and within the larger Montréal community.

De la Chenelière's ideas received even wider circulation when they were adapted from the stage for the big screen by Philippe Falardeau (writer-director). De la Chenelière was involved in working on Falardeau's script (Donnelly, 2012). The award winning and critically acclaimed film "Monsieur Lahzar" received an

⁴³ See Boivin, M.A., (2008, January 20). Bashir Lazhar à L'Anglicane: Une pièce qui tombe à point. *Canoe*. Retrieved from <http://fr.canoe.ca/divertissement/arts-scene/nouvelles/2008/02/20/4862808-ca.html>

⁴⁴ See Garcia, G. (2012, April 9). Bashir Lazhar ou les accommodements raisonnables. *L'Express* : *L'Hedbo des Francophones du Grand Toronto*. Retrieved from <http://www.lexpress.to/archives/3244/>

Academy Award nomination in 2012 for Best Foreign Language Film.⁴⁵ Another recent instance of successful stage-to-screen adaptations out of Québec is Denis Villeneuve's screenplay that garnered him a nomination in the Oscars' Best Foreign Film category in 2011. His movie "Incendies" was based on the play of the same title by playwright Wadji Mouawad.

Bashir Lazhar on stage

The play was first staged in 2007 "au cœur de la tourmente d'Hérouxville"⁴⁶ just as the reasonable accommodations were launched in Québec. After an initial season, the play subsequently toured for three additional seasons. *Bashir Lazhar* went on the road throughout Québec from 2007-2008, then through Canada in 2008-2009 and then back in Québec during 2009-2010.⁴⁷ Directed by Daniel Brière and presented by the Montréal-based Theatre d'Aujourd'hui theatrical company, the first staging of the play coincided with the reasonable accommodation debates, during a time when there was a collective malaise towards "others" surfacing throughout the province of Québec and as St-Jacques (2007) astutely observes: «le degré de racisme des Québécois ayant été le sujet de toutes les tribunes».

⁴⁵ The film lost to Iran's *A Separation*, but did sweep a large number of awards at the Genies and the Jutras; respectively, the film prizes for Canada and Québec. For the list of nominations and awards from *Monsieur Lazhar* see Awards for Monsieu Lazhar. (2011). Retrieved from IMDB online <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2011971/awards>

⁴⁶ See Bashir Lazhar, ou la conjugaison des cultures. (2008, March 19). Retrieved from <http://www.nouvellessaint-laurent.com/Actualites/2008-03-19/article-811739/Bashir-Lazhar-ou-la-conjugaison-des-cultures/1>

⁴⁷ See Theatre d'Aujourd'hui. (2010). Archives. Retrieved from Theatre d'Aujourd'hui <http://www.theatredaujourd'hui.qc.ca/archives/pieces/bashir>

As a timely artistic intervention and social commentary presented on the cultural scene and resonating with audiences in a tense period of re-questioning Québécois identity, the play toured various multiethnic boroughs of Montréal during 2007-2008, as well as other regions of Québec.⁴⁸ Presented as part of the “Week against Racism,” it had a particular significance in the Montréal borough of Saint-Laurent where the themes of this play align closely with everyday life, in terms of plural populations and, as a result, diverse classrooms.⁴⁹

The play's director, Brière, decided to hold discussions immediately following the presentations at Theatre d’Aujourd’hui. These exchanges raised a number of questions and observations surrounding the lack of knowledge around the reality of refugees.⁵⁰ As such, *Bashir Lazhar* becomes “objet de médiation culturelle,”⁵¹ thus enabling dialogue, informing the audience and addressing misconceptions around the lives of refugee claimants which are usually saturated with prejudice. Furthermore, to encourage and facilitate debate, Theatre d’Aujourd’hui offered a number of tickets to certain targeted cultural communities. The initiative, made possible through a City of Montréal grant, allowed members attending the presentations to then share their own experiences.⁵² This also attracted an audience that perhaps was not the usual theatre crowd, which was part

⁴⁸ This could be paralleled with the Bouchard-Taylor Commission touring the island of Montréal, its suburbs, as well as other regions of the province.

⁴⁹ Bashir Lazhar, ou la conjugaison des cultures. (2008, March 19). Retrieved from <http://www.nouvellessaint-laurent.com/Actualites/2008-03-19/article-811739/Bashir-Lazhar-ou-la-conjugaison-des-cultures/1>

⁵⁰ The discussions were led by Monia Chokri and Ariel Ifergan, who are actors from cultural communities who have been trained on the issues discussed. See Anglioni, D. & Singer, M. (2007, January 18). Bashir Lazhar: Gens du pays. *Voir*. Retrieved from <http://voir.ca/societe/2007/01/18/bashir-lazhar-gens-du-pays-2/>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

of Brière's stated desire to open theatre to cultural communities (St-Jacques).

Such initiatives can be seen as encouraging social inclusion. They help to establish belonging through political theatre among community members regardless of religious or cultural backgrounds.

Contrary to MLB, which is based on actual interviews, the script for Bashir Lazhar is a work of fiction, though heavily influenced by a number of real experiences De la Chenelière researched. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that the theatrical staging of Bashir Lazhar does contain certain elements of documentary theatre, even though I focus strictly on the script in my analysis. Brière used excerpts from radio and television news reports from the 1990s.

Bashir Lazhar – A portrait

The main protagonist, Bashir Lazhar, is in constant interaction with others throughout the play, though we predominantly hear his voice through the monologue that constitutes the script.⁵³ The dense script makes several leaps forwards and backwards in time and space. In one of the numerous flashbacks, this time back to Algeria, Lazhar converses with his wife prior to his departure to Canada to prepare for his family's eventual arrival. Lazhar and his targeted family received threats and strange phone calls (p. 31). Clearly feeling suffocated by the civil war in Algeria, he tells his wife: «Ici, on aime mal. Je vais t'aimer mieux ailleurs, ou du moins je veux savoir comment on aime ailleurs, comment

⁵³ Only in the last scene do we see Lazhar having a dialogue with a child, who is unnamed and is identified as "Enfant" in the script, see pages 43-45 in Chenelière (2011).

on fait pour aimer quand on n'a plus rien à craindre» (p.19). His family never left as they were killed in a fire that ravaged his home on the eve of their departure.

What is significant about Lazhar's character is that despite losing his entire family and confronting obstacles in the Canadian refugee determination system, he strives to make a place for himself in Québécois society where many are wary of his presence. Most importantly, he succeeds in making a lasting contribution with the students. At the elementary school where he works, his colleagues, the school administration and even the students' parents remain apprehensive of this "Arab" teacher who seems liberal and is a self-proclaimed atheist and feminist. Having fled the violent unrest in Algeria, he is committed to starting a new life in Montréal and rather than remain idle or depend on welfare, Bashir Lazhar seeks to belong to his new dwelling place and takes concrete steps in fulfilling his ambition. After reading about the sixth grade teacher's suicide in the newspaper, he simply presents himself at the principal's office and offers his services as substitute teacher. At the interview, he has no formal documentation. When asked about his citizenship status, he claims to be a permanent resident with teaching experience in Algeria. When the principal inquires about his curriculum vitae, he explains that in a rush, the only piece of identification and formal card he managed to take with him was his bus pass (p.17). Despite this lack of documentation and the absence of Canadian teaching experience, Lazhar is granted the position in the midst of the unexpected crisis. Once in the classroom, he does not even know the age of students in grade six, and is unfamiliar with the

curriculum. In taking attendance of the culturally plural classroom, he knows how to spell the name Abdelmalek Merbah, but hesitates when writing Camille Soucy.

At first, Lazhar has difficulty managing the agitated students and the adjustment is far from smooth. However, with time, the class begins to familiarize themselves with their new teacher. The students begin to respond well to Lazhar and even appreciate the work and assignments he formulates for them, many of which contain life lessons about courage, justice and violence. Nevertheless, he remains generally misunderstood by the adults around him.

Lazhar has firmly mastered the French language and its classic literature, such as Balzac and de La Fontaine, he uses texts from such “antiquated” (his word) authors for in-class dictations or discussions. At times these texts are too advanced for the sixth graders. Lazhar’s controversial presence is particularly felt when he is critical of the school’s program. He believes that the firemen visiting the classroom, the field trips to the cheese factory, attending a number of plays, and the psychologist’s visit every Thursday are a waste of time. He feels that students’ time could instead be better invested in French language and mathematics classes. This position can be interpreted as a critique of the Québec educational system as a whole, deemed by some critics, politicians, and educators to be suffering a crisis of its own. In sum, Lazhar’s convictions clash with those of the school. Lazhar believes that his students are coping well with their previous teacher’s suicide for the most part and that it is not necessary for all of them to attend the counselling sessions held once a week (p.20).

At times, he makes awkward comments addressed to students or colleagues. For instance, when a student refuses to go outside for recess because he has no friends to play with, Lazhar answers “Mais tout le monde a des amis.” Realizing the inappropriateness of his comment he goes on to say that he too does not have friends, but in his case, “j’ ai le choc des cultures comme circonstance atténuante,” (p.22) which does not necessarily help the student’s situation. However, the statement does reveal that Lazhar faces certain struggles in his own adaptation process.

Lazhar creates more controversy when he distributes copies of a student’s composition based on the themes of violence at school. Alice’s text is an eloquent and heartfelt exposé on the impact left by Mme Lachance’s suicide and a critique of the overly concerned adults who are crowding their healing process; she writes «tout le monde de l’école vient verifier si on se sent coupables. Parce qu’il faudrait surtout pas qu’on soit complètement gâchés comme êtres humains» (p.27). Lazhar sees the student’s text as making a meaningful intervention in the aftermath of the loss, calling it a “source of reflection” for students, staff, and parents. He takes the liberty of photocopying the text and circulating it, to the dismay of the school’s administration.

Herein perhaps lies one of the most crucial contributions Lazhar makes in the students’ lives. Lazhar’s approach to healing, which is in part influenced by his own suffering in Algeria, is different from the school’s. Everyone else at the school seems to avoid talking about Lachance’s suicide, while the students feel the need to express themselves on the matter. When going over a dictation that is

too advanced for the students, Lazhar defines one of the words many had difficulty spelling correctly. He defines the term “chrysalis” as the phase between a caterpillar and butterfly, where the insect is in a cocoon, preparing to spread its wings and fly (p.18). Similarly, the over-protective school administration are holding the students in a cocoon, due to the sudden and public tragedy that they experienced, overlooking the fact that the students need to spread their wings once again. This is something Lazhar encourages them to do before he is let go prior to the end of the school year.

In the meantime, besides the ambivalent welcome at the elementary school, Lazhar is in the process of securing his refugee status with the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). During a flashback, Lazhar is in front of the IRB judge, explaining that he filled out his paperwork, the Personal Information Form (PIF) to the best of his ability, only to be told that his file lacks precision. Thinking he no longer needed courage to face these new circumstances, stating that he used up all his courage long ago, he describes his despair in the face of securing status using the metaphor of a castaway, who finally finds a shore. In this case, Canada acts as the safe haven, which he has reached, only to be told that he needs to start swimming now: «Je me voyais comme un naufragé qui enfin a trouvé une rive, et à qui on dit ‘bon, maintenant c’est l’heure de la baignade» (p. 30). The IRB judge finds that his PIF lacks specificity and, as a result, his testimony lacks precision. He recounts the circumstances of his departure, preparing the way for his family’s exit from the country and the threats that he and his family faced. He is unsure of the identity of his persecutors, which

is part of the political ambiguity surrounding the army and the fundamentalists involved in the Algerian civil war (p.31). In another flashback, the judge's decision is read; Lazhar's claim for refugee status is denied. Lazhar recounts receiving the phone call from his brother Said, who informed him of his family's death, then goes on to say: «Et maintenant j'apprends que je ne suis pas un réfugié politique au sens de la Convention. (...) 'Pour ces motifs, le présent tribunal conclut que le demandeur n'a pas qualité de réfugié au sens de la Convention, ni celle de personne à protéger, de sorte que sa demande d'asile est rejetée' Je demande une révision, monsieur le juge» (p.33).

Lazhar then speaks with his lawyer, expressing his bewilderment at his refusal. Lazhar is convinced that he fits the criteria of political refugee and that he followed the advice provided to him by his lawyer:

Comment pas assez émotif? Qu'est-ce qu'il fallait que je fasse de plus, maître Morin? Que je me répande devant le juge? Il fallait raconter les faits, j'ai raconté les faits... Le choix des mots... Oui, j'avais révisé la feuille que vous m'aviez fournie, regardez, je l'ai sur moi: ... subit, terrible, contraint, agressé, menacé, tué, assassinat, fuir, s'enfuir, urgence, victim, guerre, dénonciateur, charnier, torture, peur, terreur, horreur, massacre... Vous voyez, j'ai mon dictionnaire de poche du réfugié politique. Il me semble que j'ai tout ce qu'il faut pour être un réfugié politique. Moi, je me croiserais dans la rue, je dirais 'tiens, un réfugié politique' (p.34).

Here, Lazhar questions the values and concepts of the immigration system, especially when his case was not deemed credible. Bashir Lazhar fails to adopt some of Québec's social customs, to adapt to the school codes, and eventually is also denied refugee status. In many ways, he is socially excluded, yet the contributions he made as a teacher through his interactions and assignments, and

in providing his students with alternative ways and space to express their thoughts to help and encourage their healing process, cannot be ignored.

Amid his condition “in-betweenness,” Lazhar continues to integrate in society, though it is difficult, given that those around him continue to see him as an “outsider.” During a scene in which he is reading the newspaper over his lunch break, he tells a colleague that he is reading up on what is going on in his country. The colleague interprets *his* country as being Algeria. Lazhar responds: «Non, je ne parle pas d’Algérie, mais d’ici. Mais non, ne vous excusez pas...ça fait un certain temps, alors je me sens un peu chez moi. Je sais pas si je devrais» (p. 35).

Towards the end of the play, he is summoned to the principal’s office. Lazhar defends himself following whispers among the teaching staff about his “questionable” pedagogical approaches surrounding themes of violence which have sensitive implications about Mme Lachance’s suicide. He states: «Ce n’est pas parce que je suis Arabe que je ne respecte pas la femme...[...] J’en ai marre du bruit qui court. Je respecte les femmes, les hommes, et toute la vie, je respecte aussi tous les morts, y compris madame Lachance, que je n’ai pas connue. Nous avons abordé le thème de la violence avec mes élèves, ce qui m’a amené à comparer la mort d’un village à celle d’un individu. ...Non je n’ai pas banalisé le geste de madame Lachance, mais non, je ne l’ai pas relativisé non-plus!» (p. 38) He goes on to state that he would have gladly clarified the nuances of his statements if the students had any concerns. When the principal discovers that Lazhar has distributed Alice’s text to the students’ parents, it is the last straw for the school administration. As Lazhar tries to justify his actions, the principal

makes it clear to him that it is too late. The principal has also uncovered the fact that Lazhar did not have the right to work due to his lack of status and informs him that another substitute has already been arranged (p. 39-40).

Conclusion: The curtain drops

The fate of Bashir Lazhar, a dedicated instructor, leaves one to ponder the place refugee claimants create for themselves, how much room is allocated to them by society and how much they give to themselves. As La Presse cultural critic Sylvie St-Jacques (2007) writes: «Oui, Bashir Lazhar est une pièce à méditer, qui renvoie une image peu reluisante de la société Québécoise, où des individus comme cet enseignant dévoué sont condamnés à l'acculturation ou l'anéantissement.» Towards the end of the play, despite the employment Lazhar was able to secure and the rapport he builds with the students, St-Jacques rightfully identifies the blurred border of assimilation as an immigrant versus utter ruin, devastation, and eventual deportation, which, as in this case, a refugee may face.

Nevertheless, Lahzar, as an inspiring teacher, arrived at the right time in the sixth grade students' lives. Despite his turbulent adaptation and his own suffering, he made positive contributions as a committed substitute, and had a profound impact on the students' lives. Society and the government rejected him, but parallel to the social exclusion he suffers, there are openings in which healing can take place both for Lazhar and for the students. In the end, Lazhar is driven out by the school and by Canada, yet the students' personal and academic growth is permanent.

The refugee and immigrant voices in *MLB* and *Bashir Lazhar* vividly portray some of the complexities associated with forced displacement. The textual analyses of the scripts, both of which contain the narratives of Algerians who have migrated to Montréal, depict how everyday life for these individuals can oscillate between inclusivity and marginalization. While obstacles are omnipresent during the adaptation and integration period, the dialogue demonstrates how these individuals managed to carve out agency, establish belonging and make contributions to local society, whether or not they held status. Therefore, these narratives come to counter dominant discourses that are less favourable towards refugees, immigrants, particularly of Arab and Muslim backgrounds as they present refugees and immigrants taking on active social and political roles.

By hearing alternative voices and narratives that differ from the common media representations often imbued with stereotypes and prejudice, the audience's consciousness is transformed by the opportunities to engage in open dialogue that these scripts afford in both their textual and theatrical forms. Furthermore, the post-production discussions held by the theatrical companies for both *MLB* and *Bashir Lazhar* may even prompt citizens to take action on the issues raised by these texts, or at the very least, shift preconceptions, beliefs and attitudes by increasing knowledge based on lived experiences.

The characters in *MLB* and *Bashir Lazhar* enact Viktor Shklovsky's classic formula of estrangement, where in exile, one "is forced to learn the skills

of making unfamiliar things familiar” (Meerzon, 2011). In these plays, everyday life and stage performances overlap, whether through verbatim testimonials or fiction inspired by actual cases, blurring the lines of the real and the represented, yet conjuring up voices that are not sufficiently heard.

Conclusion: Pathways towards inclusion

“In a few sentences, collected outside official places, in the temporary quietness of a reception centre beyond the formalities of official settings, cracks can emerge, invisible depths become visible: just like the secret geography of unknown passages and restless customs. Inside these cartographies of pain and anxiety, along the boundaries keeping poor apart from rich, hell from peace, life from death, *passeurs* – the new entrepreneurs of bodies and dreams – operate as the factual masters of the destinies of those hundreds of thousands of men and women trying to run up the sense of History, turning from persecuted people and victims into illegal immigrants, then becoming refugees so as to eventually – and perhaps simply – be turned into citizens again” (Beneduce, 2008, p.507).

Inclusionary routes

In delving into some of the “invisible depths” of refugee claimants’ daily existence, I have argued that individuals in such predicaments do not just wait to be granted official status before carrying out practices usually associated with citizenship. Not only did my research reveal that refugee claimants do manage to carve out their agency within Montréal’s unique social fabric, the project also proposed new ways to look at the re-settled refugee presence in the city and conceptualized the contributions refugees make to the community before acquiring citizenship.

Using an interdisciplinary approach, this dissertation considered the multiple facets of urban refugee re-settlement in Montréal, based on refugees’ experiences of everyday life in the city. I demonstrated that refugee presence in

the city and the contributions they make to their local communities cannot be overlooked or dismissed. Throughout the project, I assigned particular importance to refugees' voices, as I integrated the narratives that I collected from refugees themselves or found in theatrical texts. It is necessary to examine the actual words and language used by refugee claimants themselves as they express their own predicament. Not only does this approach humanize refugee claimants' experiences, but it breaks away from the tendency of some studies around asylum seekers to be dystopian (Goldring et al. 2009), caught up in reproducing cycles of social exclusion (Philimore and Goodson, 2006), and detached from the intricate realities unfolding on the ground.

This dissertation argues that social exclusion and social inclusion unfold simultaneously and overlap in the everyday lives of refugee claimants who have re-settled in Montréal. Such an approach is a shift from the usual focus on social exclusion, which is undeniably present in the lives of refugee claimants. However, considered together, social exclusion and inclusion offered a more nuanced understanding of refugees' existences. Furthermore, this approach also enabled us to view refugee claimants beyond the usual labels of passive system abusers. I specifically examined the critical period when refugee claimants wait for their immigration status to be reviewed, further delayed, or finally determined. In doing so, I demonstrated that during that time, spatial and temporal "in-betweenness" can become a moment and site that engenders social inclusion, as claimants frequently become politically and socially proactive. I argued that such pathways

of agency and engagement produce informal and alternative modes and practices of citizenship.

More precisely, refugee claimants become proactive social agents through acts such as volunteering, tutoring, and organizing community events. Refugee claimants also become political agents when voicing their rights as asylum seekers, when occupying immigration offices, and while protesting to demand status and basic care. Therefore, despite being devoid of official refugee status or citizenship, claimants become civically engaged, partake in community life and manage to establish a sense of belonging in their new dwelling place. Such instances of inclusivity, where refugee claimants take on legitimate political and social actions, making them informal citizens, destabilizes the negative attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of them as being bogus, passive and abusers of the system.

In Chapter One, I argued that social exclusion of refugee claimants in Montréal is characterized by systemic and symbolic exclusion. Based on my research respondents' experiences I outlined some of the regulations of the immigration and refugee determination system, and highlighted the barriers and obstacles that arise, namely on the administrative levels in terms of securing status, employment, health care and education. It became evident that refugee claimants who seek the rights which they are entitled to experience interminable delays, and, at times, are simply denied their rights, due to unnecessary bureaucratic complexity and obstacles. As a result, what I called the material conditions of refugee social exclusion are a significant challenge to overcome. I then considered aspects of non-material social exclusion that emerge in refugee

claimants' everyday lives, namely the respondents' accounts of their experiences with xenophobia. Due to a lack of status or language skills, a different accent, name or physical traits, some refugees are marginalized: they are treated with hostility, made to feel foreign, inferior or as if they do not belong in Québec and Canada. Xenophobia is not confined to everyday interaction between individuals: the first chapter culminated in an examination of examples of Canadian refugee policy and exclusionary practices during the 20th century, particularly post World War II. The historical facts examined in the chapter solidified patterns of systemic and symbolic exclusion experienced by refugees currently living in Canada.

Chapter Two demonstrates my project's main argument that social exclusion and inclusion unfold in tandem and overlap in the everyday lives of refugee claimants during the critical time they spend waiting for their status to be determined. Having isolated social exclusion in the first chapter, Chapter Two considered how refugee claimants frequently create instances of inclusivity in their everyday lives, as they institute their agency, civic engagement and belonging in the city. I draw on interviews I conducted with my research participants, to argue that refugee claimants become proactive social and political agents, while "in-between," awaiting decisions on their cases. This in turn produces modes and practices of informal citizenship. Very often with strong social support networks in place, refugees experience instances of leisure, reprieve, and community involvement through volunteering in the community. Such legitimate social acts help break the uncertainty and isolation that accompanies the process of claiming refugee status. Moreover, these occasions of

social participation and conviviality are combined with moments of political mobilization in the city, and I addressed some of the workings of the refugee activism networks in Montréal. Although regarded as civil disobedience by some, occupying the space of immigration offices or street space in front of these buildings during protests, are actions which can be viewed as tactics that help refugee claimants' defend their own right to the city. Therefore, examining refugee claimants' individual and collective contributions, as well as their proactive attitudes and actions (a less explored facet in urban re-settlement) is a constructive way to counter the negative beliefs and stereotypes that still surround refugee claimants.

Chapter Three examined other forms of refugee presence and movement in the city, as expressed in the claimants' own words, seen from the angle of urban theories of everyday life. By inverting Sayad's immigration notion of "double absence" into "double presence," I examined apparently trivial everyday activities, like walking in the streets, as alternative ways to reflect on refugee presence in the city. First, I argued that everyday activities offer refugee claimants creative ways to re-write their routes, thus claiming agency and re-affirming their presence in the city. This argument was based on their actual physical presence and movement around the city, specifically the way they narrate their pedestrian experiences around the city. Secondly, refugee presence is expressed in the city, through their attachment to another place. They actively carry memories of other places—their homelands—with them in the city, as they attempt to establish another home in Montréal. This comes to light especially when respondents

describe their experiences in certain highly plural neighborhoods, such as Côte-des-Neiges. For some of the respondents, walking around this particular neighborhood is like being at “home.” I argued that such areas become the city’s comfort zones for refugees who feel they can belong to these spaces when other systems, mechanisms, or even people do not necessarily want them here. Another important theme I discussed in this chapter is departure and the realities associated with it. Some of the recurring themes around departure that emerged in the interviews include the refugees’ unwillingness to leave their countries of origin, drawing comparisons between their previous home and new dwelling place, and the difficulty of obtaining the documentation required for crossing borders. My approach centered on everyday activities often considered trivial, challenged the notions of absence and exclusion commonly associated with the refugee predicament, and offered new avenues to explore the less conspicuous intersections of urban refugee presence.

The fourth and final chapter is based on the refugee narratives found in urban cultural productions, more precisely in theatrical scripts. These texts come to mediate, witness, and respond to the challenges of displacement, as experienced by various migrants in Montréal. By conducting a textual analysis of *Montréal La Blanche* and *Bashir Lazhar*, I argued that immigrant and refugee voices, emanating from these scripts, come to critique the xenophobia that exists towards “others” within the urban Canadian landscape, and destabilize the stereotypical representations of the migrant. As such, these texts offer audiences a number of alternative

voices that I argued represent experiences of social inclusion and exclusion, as well as the “in-betweenness” associated with the complexity of the refugee condition in the city. These scripts containing elements of documentary theatre are in part based on actual refugee testimonials in the city (particularly in *Montréal La Blanche*). Furthermore, the plays in question were accompanied by on-stage discussions following the productions, as dialogue around issues related to refugees offers deeper insight into the production’s themes. Even though these examples of urban cultural production at times blur the lines between what is real and what is represented, they conjure up voices that are not often heard.

In fact, the need for alternative voices and action from refugee claimants themselves is crucial to dispel the myths and humanize asylum seekers amid the heightened trend towards criminalizing migrants. With the gradual implementation of Bill C-31, aimed at “protecting” Canada's Immigration System Act, the recent federal health care cuts that compromise refugee claimants’ well-being, and now a reality television show on Border Security¹ approved by the current Federal government that risks further dehumanizing refugee claimants, it is important to consider the complex place refugees occupy once re-settled with

¹ In 2011, the Federal Government approved a reality TV show called *Border Security: Canada’s Front Line*, which is based on the daily activities of the Canadian Border Services Agency. However, this show risks degrading and dehumanizing migrants, especially refugee claimants, who are often already in a vulnerable position, turning them into a spectacle, and even worse, reducing them to the status of criminals. Certain language and imagery linked to deportation and detention used in the show can contribute to the heightened trend of criminalizing migrants, particularly refugee claimants, who are often labeled as “queue-jumpers”.

more care than ever, and especially the proactive existence of refugee claimants within our cities.

I started this project thinking that talking to refugee claimants about the period of the time during which they wait for their status to be determined, a phase I called “in-betweenness”, would make for an interesting and original project. However, after actually conducting the research, collecting and analysing data and writing up my findings, I came to realize just how essential this period of time is for refugees. Paying particular attention to refugee narratives that describe this lengthy timeframe revealed some of the obstacles and gaps, the reasons behind numerous unnecessary delays in obtaining status and accessing rights, and even why refugees’ rights are at times flatly denied.

Over the last decade, the Canadian refugee system has undergone significant changes in order to increase security within a climate where threats of real terrorism exist. Changes have been also introduced in order to deter bogus refugees from entering the country (such as entry visa requirements for individuals from Mexico and Hungary). More recently, access to certain rights has been cut (such as reduced health care benefits for refugee claimants). Amid such changes, the importance of a rigorous yet fair and efficient system is fundamental, as individuals undoubtedly do abuse the system. Nevertheless, bona fide refugees who take significant financial and personal risks to flee life threatening situations continue to fall through the cracks of the system. This raises the question of whether Canada can retain its global reputation as one of the more generous countries vis-à-vis refugees. The system must undoubtedly change and adopt new

policies that reflect current global and national realities. However, such adjustments should not be made to the detriment of refugee security in Canada, as well as their physical and mental well-being.

Like any immigration determination system, the Canadian refugee system has strengths and weaknesses. Former IRB board member and Chairman Peter Showler has outlined ways to improve the refugee determination system using the words “fair, fast, effective, efficient, and final” to formulate new reforms to Canada’s refugee system (Showler, 2009, p.20). While managing the flow of individuals into a country for any given reason is a difficult feat, national security must be balanced with humanitarian concerns. This has several potential policy implications that this project has shed light on. Further in-depth research during this “waiting” time frame can ultimately be used to consider improvements and adjustments to the overall system. At the very least, reducing miscommunications within administrative structures, minimizing the complexity of the system, addressing negative attitudes towards refugee claimants and shedding light on the positive contributions refugees make could drastically reduce the countless unnecessary negative impacts on refugee claimants’ everyday lives. Most importantly, looking closely at this period of time could provide detailed understanding of the situations at hand for front line workers involved with refugee cases, such as health care providers, social workers, psychologists, and individuals dealing with immigration at the administrative and policy levels. More recent and extensive research on refugees’ everyday life experiences has yet to be compiled and analysed, with a particular focus on various aspects that expose the

limitations and possibilities unfolding within their everyday lives. For instance, what impact will the health cuts have on the well-being and lives of refugee claimants in the years to come, in Québec and across Canada? Will the provisions proposed in Bill C-31 allow decisions to be made more quickly without compromising refugees' right to a full and fair hearing? Methods of collecting refugee claimants' experiences on a wider scale are therefore essential. In the case of refugee access to health care, for example, it is imperative to collect data, but also to create platforms where information is shared on whether claimants are receiving the level of care they are entitled to. It is also imperative to develop tools to inform physicians and other health care workers about the realities refugees confront when trying to access care.

Overall, how can administrative inefficiencies during the refugee determination process, in terms of securing status, employment, healthcare and education as experienced by the claimants, be documented, corrected, and then overcome? Finally, given that refugees frequently carve out their own agency and partake in their local communities as socially and politically active agents, are there ways to formalize practices of informal citizenship carried out by refugee claimants? Or, are the classical status and practices of citizenship so deeply entrenched in the political and national consciousness that such interventions on behalf of refugee claimants will remain forms of empowerment only on a community level? If so, how can refugee contributions be highlighted and celebrated within the local communities?

What is presented here is far from a comprehensive account of experiences of urban refugee re-settlement. Yet, it is grounded in my initial argument that refugee claimants as active presence in Montréal cannot be overlooked. I hope I have provided the preliminary groundwork for inquiries about the instances of inclusion refugee claimants create with the support of their networks. I also hope to have presented openings to identifying informal modes and practices of citizenship carried out by this segment of the population. In demonstrating how refugee claimants become active social and political agents, despite being marginalized on several fronts, I argued that this “in-betweenness,” seemingly integral to the refugee determination process, can go far beyond just taking a number at the immigration office and sitting down. At the very least, I hope that this project provides new ways to reflect on refugee presence in the city beyond the scope of the usual prejudices, stereotypes, and labels commonly associated with individuals who are forced to flee their homes, seeking to build safer ones.

Appendix

I. Interview questionnaires: English and French

II. Steps in seeking refugee protection in Canada

Lalai Manjikian
Interview Questions Revised- September 11, 2008

*Tentative title: Spaces of Contention: Deconstructing Social Exclusion/Inclusion
and Everyday Refugee Experiences in Montreal*

How long have you been living in Montreal?

How has your overall experience in Montreal been so far?

When you first arrived, what was your general impression of the city, the people?

Which part of Montreal did you live in as a refugee?

Can you describe what your adaptation process was like as a refugee living in Montreal?
(weather, language, interactions with people)

Living as a refugee, how did you move around and across the city? (walking? public transportation? Bus, metro, Car?)
Was it easy to get used to this new urban environment?

What was your day-to-day life like when you were waiting for your status to be determined? (How did you keep busy? Did you go to school, did you work, who did you socialize with? How do you fill your days? Can you describe your daily routine? Where do you go for your shopping needs, like groceries? Where do you go for fun, to have a coffee, to socialize, to play?)

Which parts/neighbourhoods of Montreal were you most comfortable walking through?

As a refugee, have you experienced any form of hostility in general or specifically from any institutions or individuals in Montreal?

While living here as a refugee, did you encounter any difficulty accessing certain services in order to fulfill your basic living needs? (housing, health, etc?)

As a refugee, did you partake in social activities in Montreal? (e.g. Member of a club, a religious group, a cultural association, of any other kind of group which entailed interactions with other Montrealers?)

As a refugee, did you feel safe and protected in Montreal?
(physically? financially?)

Was your overall life experience as a refugee in Montreal a positive or negative one?

How do you see your life in Montreal 5 years from now?

How was your life before you came to Montreal?

Are you engaged with any sort of refugee and immigration rights group?
(which group(s) & what kind of activities do you participate in?)

Personal info

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Status: Refugee/ Permanent Resident/ Citizen

Level of Education:

Trade or Formal Skills:

Occupation in country of origin:

Country of birth:

Languages spoken:

Family status:

Number of children:

Number of children accompanying them:

Date of arrival in Montréal:

Lalai Manjikian

Questions d'entrevues : Révisé le 20 septembre 2008

Projet de doctorat, titre préliminaire: *Spaces of Contention : Deconstructing Social Exclusion/Inclusion and Everyday Refugee Experiences in Montreal*

Depuis combien de temps vivez-vous à Montréal?

Comment se déroule votre expérience à Montréal jusqu'à maintenant?

À votre arrivée, quelles ont été vos premières impressions de la ville, des gens que vous avez côtoyé?

Dans quel quartier de Montréal avez-vous habitez en tant que réfugié?

Pouvez-vous décrire (les phases de) votre adaptation par rapport au climat, à la langue, aux personnes (or aux relations humaines)?

Lorsque vous étiez réfugié, comment vous déplaçiez-vous à travers la ville (à pied, en voiture, en transports publics - autobus, métro)?

Or (En tant que réfugié, comment vous déplacez-vous...etc.)

S'adapter à ce nouvel environnement urbain a-t-il été difficile?

Lorsque vous attendiez de recevoir votre statut de réfugié, comment se déroulait votre vie quotidienne? Quelles étaient vos activités? (Suiviez-vous des cours?

Aviez-vous un travail? Aviez-vous des relations sociales et des amis?)

Décrivez votre routine quotidienne (Où alliez-vous faire vos courses, votre épicerie? Où alliez-vous pour vous divertir ou vous détendre, rencontrer des gens, prendre un café, etc.?)

Dans quelles zones de Montréal vous sentiez-vous le plus à l'aise ou en sécurité (sois pour vos déplacements à pied, pour se balader ou pour y vivre)?

En tant que réfugié, avez-vous ressenti, sous quelque forme que ce soit, de l'hostilité de la part d'une institution ou d'un individu à Montréal?

En tant que réfugié, avez-vous éprouvé des difficultés à obtenir certains services de base, répondant à vos besoins fondamentaux (logement, services de santé, etc.), alors que vous viviez à Montréal?

Avez-vous pris part à des activités sociales (membre d'un groupe, club, association religieuse ou culturelle, ou tout autre formation comportant une interaction avec d'autres Montréalais) lorsque vous étiez réfugié à Montréal?

En tant que réfugié, vous sentiez-vous en sécurité à Montréal (intégrité physique, économique)?

De façon générale, votre expérience en tant que réfugié à Montréal est-elle positive ou négative?

Comment voyez-vous votre vie à Montréal dans 5 ans?

Comment était votre vie avant votre arrivée à Montréal?

Faites-vous partie d'une association pour la défense des droits des réfugiés et des immigrants? (Si oui, laquelle? À quelle genre d'activités prenez-vous part?)

Informations personnelles

Nom:

Sexe:

Âge:

Statut: Réfugié/Résident permanent/Citoyen canadien

Niveau de scolarité:

Métier ou formation professionnelle:

Occupation professionnelle dans le pays d'origine:

Pays de naissance:

Langues parlées:

Statut familial:

Nombre d'enfants:

Nombre d'enfants qui vous accompagnent au Canada:

Date d'arrivée à Montréal:

Steps in seeking refugee protection in Canada

These steps are valid as of 2006 and are based on Figure 1 found in the report *Gendering Canada's Refugee Process* (Dauvergne et al. 2006). In the summary presented here dates and deadlines for certain procedures as legislation and policies are subject to changes and revisions. The following steps simply provide an overall snapshot of the steps as refugee claimants go through the system.

- Refugee protection claim made at port of entry (POE) or CIC office
- Initial Interview (front-end security screening begins)
 - ✓ Found (or deemed) eligible → Referred to IRB, Personal Information Form (PIF) is submitted.
 - X If found ineligible: 1. Removal Order (if no PRRA possible)
2. Pre-removal risk assessment (PRRA):
X Rejected: Removal
 - ✓ Accepted: Person in need of protection (PNP) or stay of removal
- Possible Detention: if found ineligible
 - Release
 - Reviewed: continued detention reviewed each 30 days
- Once case is found eligible → Referral to IRB
Possible outcomes following referral:
 - Withdrawal: PPRA
 - ✓ Accepted
 - X Rejected
 - Failure to meet deadlines for Personal Information Forms
 - Abandonment hearing
 - Reinstated
 - Abandoned
 - Security screening (must be completed before hearing)
 - Full Hearing
 - ✓ Accepted as Convention Refugee or Person in need of protection → Application for Permanent Residency
 - X Rejected
 - 1. Judicial review → Dismissed
 - 2. Pre-removal risk assessment, Humanitarian & Compassionate grounds
 - ✓ Accepted
 - X Rejected
 - 3. Making an appeal (lengthy and has a number of limitations, such as it is mostly paper-based, oral hearing only in exceptional cases)
 - Expedited Process, Interview with Refugee Protection Officer
 - Sent to full hearing
 - Accepted as Convention refugee or Person in need of protection

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