Resettlement Experience in Québec:
Arts-Based Approaches to Work with Refugee Girls

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Abstract

Canada has a long history of immigration and has been and remains to be the new home for millions of people from all over the world. From 2016 to 2021, over 1.3 million immigrants settled permanently in Canada and 218,430 of them were new refugees. Over the past five years, Québec has emerged as one of the leading provinces in Canada in terms of accepting a significant number of refugees and is committed to offering respect, equality, and protection to the people who are displaced, persecuted or in danger including refugee girls and young women. The conditions of refugees in Québec can vary widely depending on various factors such as their legal status, access to services, and individual circumstances and the province has implemented initiatives to assist refugees in finding housing, accessing education, and securing employment opportunities. However, there are few programs for adolescent refugee girls and young women. For instance, while a large number of non-profit organizations (NGOs) in the province support the resettlement and integration of refugees, the number of programs that target the specific needs and challenges of adolescent girls and young women is limited. This study examines the resettlement experiences of girls and young women with refugee backgrounds in Québec. The broad question that guides this study is: How do adolescent refugee girls and young women experience resettlement? To achieve this goal, the study has three main objectives. Firstly, it seeks to gain insights into the issues affecting adolescent refugee girls' well-being. Secondly, it utilizes photovoice, as a research tool, to examine their lived experiences and concerns, amplifying their voices. Lastly, it explores the participatory aspect of photovoice beyond data collection by involving the participants in the data analysis process. Situated within the framework of Girlhood Studies, this research aims to provide valuable insights

into the lives of girls and young women with refugee backgrounds. The fieldwork involved nine adolescent girls and young women from Haiti, Venezuela, Congo, and Brazil. The participants were resettled in Québec as refugees between 2017 and 2020. As its methodological approach, the study employed qualitative techniques, including photovoice and individual interviews. The study findings unveiled a range of challenges experienced by the girls in their daily lives in Québec, including experiences of discrimination, mental health issues, financial challenges, and the complexity of integration. By shedding light on the unique experiences and challenges faced by this specific population, this study emphasizes the significance of adopting girl-centred approaches and engaging in participatory research methods to better understand and address the needs of adolescent refugee girls and young women, separate from the category of women or youth more broadly. The insights gained from this study have implications for developing theory, practices, and policies that can effectively support the resettlement and successful integration of refugee girls and young women into Québec society and other refugee destinations.

Résumé

Le Canada a une longue histoire d'immigration. Il a été et reste encore le nouveau foyer de millions de personnes venues du monde entier. De 2016 à 2021, plus de 1,3 million d'immigrants se sont établis de façon permanente au Canada et 218 430 d'entre eux étaient de nouveaux réfugiés. Au cours des cinq dernières années, le Québec est devenu l'une des principales provinces canadiennes à accueillir un nombre important de réfugiés et s'est engagé à offrir le respect, l'égalité et la protection aux personnes déplacées, persécutées ou en danger, y compris les filles et les jeunes femmes réfugiées. Les conditions des réfugiés au Québec peuvent varier considérablement en fonction de divers facteurs tels que leur statut juridique, l'accès aux services et les circonstances individuelles. La province a mis en œuvre des initiatives pour aider les réfugiés à trouver un logement, à accéder à l'éducation et à obtenir des opportunités d'emploi. Le nombre de programmes ciblant spécifiquement les besoins et les défis des adolescentes et des jeunes femmes est limité malgré le grand nombre d'organisations à but non lucratif (ONG) qui soutiennent la réinstallation et l'intégration des réfugiés. Cette étude examine les expériences de réinstallation des filles et des jeunes femmes réfugiées au Québec. La question de recherche qui guide cette étude est la suivante : comment les adolescentes et les jeunes femmes réfugiées vivent-elles la réinstallation ? Pour atteindre ce but, l'étude a trois objectifs principaux. Premièrement, elle cherche à mieux comprendre les problèmes qui affectent le bien-être des adolescentes réfugiées. Deuxièmement, elle utilise le photovoice, comme outil de recherche, pour examiner leurs expériences vécues et leurs préoccupations, afin d'amplifier leurs voix. Enfin, il explore l'aspect participatif de photovoice au-delà de la collecte de données en impliquant les participantes dans le processus d'analyse des données. Située dans le cadre des Girlhood

Studies, cette recherche vise à fournir des informations précieuses sur la vie des filles et des jeunes femmes issues de l'immigration. Le travail sur le terrain a impliqué neuf adolescentes et jeunes femmes originaires d'Haïti, du Venezuela, du Congo et du Brésil. Les participantes ont été réinstallées au Québec en tant que réfugiées entre 2017 et 2020. L'étude a utilisé des techniques qualitatives, notamment le photovoice et les entretiens individuels, comme approche méthodologique. Les résultats de l'étude ont révélé une série de défis rencontrés par les filles dans leur vie quotidienne au Québec, y compris des expériences de discrimination, des problèmes de santé mentale, des défis financiers et la complexité de l'intégration. Indépendamment de la catégorie des femmes ou des jeunes en général, en mettant en lumière les expériences et les défis uniques auxquels est confrontée cette population spécifique, cette étude souligne l'importance d'adopter des approches centrées sur les filles et de s'engager dans des méthodes de recherche participatives pour mieux comprendre et répondre aux besoins des adolescentes et des jeunes femmes réfugiées. Les connaissances acquises dans le cadre de cette étude ont des répercussions sur l'élaboration de théories, de pratiques et de politiques qui peuvent soutenir efficacement la réinstallation et l'intégration réussie des adolescentes et des jeunes femmes réfugiées dans la société québécoise et dans d'autres destinations de réfugiés.

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I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my exceptional supervisor, Professor Claudia Mitchell, for her invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout my Ph.D. journey. Her profound knowledge, extensive experience, constant motivation, and remarkable patience have empowered me to excel in my academic pursuits. Despite the challenges posed by my research on a complex topic, Professor Mitchell made the process remarkably accessible and manageable. She has been an exceptional mentor and advisor, surpassing all expectations. I will always cherish her limitless guidance, which will remain ingrained in my memory for a lifetime.

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in navigating the vast resources available at the library has greatly enhanced the depth and breadth of my research.

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personal goals. I would like to express my gratitude to my parents Tayebeh Shegeft and Mansour Bandarchian, who have always encouraged me to prioritize education and reminded me that I am capable of achieving anything if I choose the right path. I extend my thanks to my amazing sister, Mahsa, for patiently listening to me and giving me advice when I complained about the challenges of pursuing a Ph.D. and being away from family and friends.

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Contributions of Co-authors

This dissertation adheres to the manuscript style, where certain information is expected to be repeated across chapters. It comprises three manuscripts, one of which was co-authored with my supervisor, Professor Claudia Mitchell. The manuscripts and their current status are as follows: Chapter three, 'Refugee girlhoods' has been published in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Critical Perspectives on Mental Health*[1]. Chapter four, 'Adolescent refugee girls and young women in Québec: Telling the stories of resettlement through photovoice' is submitted to the *Journal of Refugee Studies*. Lastly, chapter five, 'Participatory data analysis in a photovoice project with refugee girls' is accepted for publication in an edited book titled *Participatory data analysis in/as feminist research*[2]. As per McGill regulations, I have included each manuscript identical to the published or submitted version without any changes.

Throughout the entirety of this project, I have served as the lead researcher, taking charge of various crucial aspects, ranging from the initial ideation to conducting fieldwork and crafting the comprehensive dissertation. My responsibilities encompassed conducting an extensive primary literature review, designing the research proposal, formulating pertinent research questions and objectives, gathering data through interviews, participatory workshops, and fieldnotes, leading the interviews and workshops, organizing the community-based exhibition, analyzing the data, and authoring the dissertation.

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[1] Bandarchian Rashti, N., Mitchell, C. (2022). Refugee girlhoods. In: Lester, J.N., O'Reilly, M. (Eds) *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Critical Perspectives on Mental Health.* (p. 1613–1638). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12852-4_14-1

[2] Schwarz, K., Hutten, R., & Mitchell, C. (eds) (forthcoming). *Participatory data analysis in/as feminist research*. University of Alberta Press.

Professor Mitchell, my supervisor, has been an invaluable resource, serving as my primary reference for inquiries, consultations, and feedback requests. Her generosity in sharing her time, expertise, and experience has been instrumental in guiding me throughout the aforementioned process. Regarding the manuscripts, Professor Mitchell made significant contributions in various areas. These include assisting in the design of the papers' outlines, meticulously revising the text, and enhancing the overall strength of the arguments presented. In chapter three, she also contributed an introspective section of her own, exploring the well-being of refugee girls through the use of Participatory Visual and Arts-based methods.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Contextualizing the Resettlement of Girls and Young Women

At the end of 2021, more than 89 million people were displaced as a result of war, armed conflicts, persecution, and human rights violations and among them 27.1 million became refugees (UNHCR, 2022). In this situation, while no one is safe from violence, girls and young women are particularly affected because of their gender and status in society (UNHCR, 2008). During war and violent conflicts, the number of single-headed households increases and adolescent girls, as the head of households, become more vulnerable to human rights violations and marginalization (Mazurana & Carlson, 2006). During their journey of displacement, women and girls face additional risks such as physical and sexual violence, kidnappings, early and forced marriages as well as intimate partner violence (Muhoro, 2022). Even though after resettlement girls and young women are protected from war, it is not clear what factors are affecting their experience.

Within the current body of literature, more attention has been given to the resettlement experiences of children or adults (men and women) (Javanbakht et al., 2021; Mitchell & Kamenarac, 2021; Yalim & Critelli, 2022). In addition, in most of these studies the focus has been placed on the psychological aspect of their resettlement experience. For instance, in a study in the UK the quality of life and well-being of female refugees was investigated (Van der Boor et al., 2020). The women's experiences indicate that in order to have a 'good life' in the UK they need personal agency, legal security, and social cohesion (Van der Boor et al., 2020). Further research done specifically on the resettlement experience of female refugees (including young women) show that they face significant challenges after resettlement. In this regard, research by Kimura (2013) has shown there are

barriers to the integration of female refugees (22 to 42 years old) in Pittsburgh. Accordingly, barriers such as changes in gender role expectations within families and overall social connections impede the integration of female refugees into society (Kimura, 2013). However, there is a gap in understanding the experiences of younger female refugees (14 to 24 years old) by hearing their voices.

The goal of this study is to address this gap by investigating the particular needs and challenges of adolescent refugee girls and young women whose families have resettled in Québec, a Francophone province in eastern Canada. While in other provinces of Canada, refugees integrate into an Anglophone society, Québec's case is unique in that refugees need to integrate into "a common Francophone but pluralistic culture" (McAndrew, 2013, p. 1). Moreover, since the 1960s more than any other province in Canada, Québec has attempted to gain more control over the area of immigration (McAndrew, 2013). In this regard, when the Federal government recognizes someone as a refugee abroad the Government du Québec is in charge of reviewing the application and making the final decision (Government du Québec, 2022). In addition, through a series of agreements Québec has gained exclusive responsibility for the integration of newcomers (McAndrew, 2013). Even though previous studies have focused on the social, linguistic, and cultural complexity of integration among newcomers (Barker, 2021; Hanks, 2022), in Québec more attention has been paid to the linguistic integration of newcomers (see for example Allen, 2006; Paquet & Xhardez, 2020).

Québec is also the key entry point for asylum seekers because of its large land border (Roxham Road) with New York in the United States (U.S.) (Ngala, 2021). Roxham Road is the main unofficial entry point of asylum seekers into Canada because of its proximity to urban transportation hubs on both sides as well as a loophole in the Canada-US Safe

Country Agreement (Côté-Boucher et al., 2023). According to this Agreement, asylum-seekers must make their claim in the first safe country and therefore cannot seek asylum in Canada if they are crossing the border from the U.S. (Alrob & Shields, 2019). However, the Agreement has been put into question since Donald Trump's Presidency as in many cases the U.S. deports asylum seekers as soon as they arrive and cannot be considered a safe country (Alrob & Shields, 2019).

While the crossings were banned in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Roxham Road re-opened in November 2021 (CBC News, 2021). Despite Québec's effort to close this unofficial crossing in the South of Montreal, every day 100 refugee claimants are entering the province from the U.S through the Roxham Road crossing (Serebrin, 2022). It is worth mentioning that Roxham Road accounts for a small number of refugees. However, in Québec the media is largely dominated by references to refugees and asylum seekers entering the province at Roxham Road. In January 2023, Fritznel Richard, a 44-year-old Haitian man, tragically lost his life near Roxham Road while attempting to cross the border to see his family in the United States (Radio Canada, 2023). According to Richard's wife due to delays in gaining a work permit and high costs of living they struggled to make a decent living in Montreal (Radio Canada, 2023). She moved back to the United States to deal with a health issue and was waiting for Richard to join her (Radio Canada, 2023). However, his body was found dead a few days after he had been reported missing. Whereas the tragic death of Fritznel Richard has grabbed the attention of the media in Québec, the resettlement struggles of many other asylum-seeking, and refugee families go unreported.

In this situation, being female, refugee, and young can pose additional challenges. According to Korri (2022), research on the experiences of adolescent refugee girls is very

limited regarding the question of how resettlement is perceived by adolescent refugee girls and young women. In addition, as Siko (2018) has suggested more research is needed in learning about the challenges that impede the resettlement experiences of refugees. Gaining an understanding of the resettlement experiences of adolescent girls and young women can help to develop programs and interventions that target the needs and challenges of this particular group. The purpose of this study is to explore how adolescent girls and young women experience resettlement in Québec, Canada. This is particularly important for the province of Québec as one of most popular refugee destinations in Canada. Between 2017 and 2019 more than 85,000 asylum applicants filed claims in Québec (IRCC, 2022a). As a refugee destination, Québec is responsible for providing resettlement services that facilitate the integration of refugees into society. Understanding the experiences of resettled refugee girls and young women is beneficial in discovering themes that could lead to further study of policies on resettlement programs for this group.

Refugee Programs in Canada

The office of UNHCR was established in 1950 to lead international actions to ensure the protection of refugees and address their issues and concerns worldwide. The following year, in 1951 the United Nations High Commissioner Convention was adopted to define who a refugee is, what rights they have, and the responsibilities of the host country which has given them asylum status. According to the UNHCR (1951), the term *refugee* refers to a person:

who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion and is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself

of the protection of that country. or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (p. 14)

In addition to race, religion, and nationality since the 1980s "gender" has been recognized as a factor that can have an impact on an individual's claims for refugee status (UNHCR, 1985). Thus, in order to accurately assess refugee claims it is recommended that the refugee definition be interpreted with an awareness of the gender dimension (UNHCR, 2002).

Eighteen years after the Convention was adopted in 1969, Canada signed the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, committing not to return a person to their home country if they have reason to fear persecution (IRCC, 2017). Between 1980 to 2017 Canada admitted more than 1 million refugees who had a well-founded fear of being persecuted and because of that fear, they could not return to their country of origin (UNHCR, 2018). Canada has three different refugee programs: Government Assisted, Private Sponsorship, and Blended Visa.

1) Under the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) program, refugees are referred to Canada by the UNHCR or other referral organizations and cannot apply individually (IRCC, 2019). This program is entirely supported by the government of Canada or the Province of Québec. Accordingly, refugees receive immediate and essential support for up to one year from the date they arrive in Canada (IRCC, 2019). In 2019, 33% of refugees came to Canada under the GAR program (UNHCR Canada, 2019).

2) Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) program allows Canadians to offer protection and assistance to refugees. Since its establishment in 1976, the PSR program has

resettled approximately 300,000 refugees. Private sponsors are responsible for providing financial and emotional support to refugees they support during the sponsorship period or until the refugee is ready to support themselves (IRCC, 2019). In 2019, the PSR program accounted for 64% of refugees in Canada (UNHCR Canada, 2019).

      3)   Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program has been designed to resettle refugees, identified by UNHCR and referred to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada or IRCC (IRCC, 2023). BVOR program refugees receive support from the government for the first 6 months after their arrival in Canada and for the next 6 months, private sponsors are obliged to provide financial support (IRCC, 2023). Compared to GAR and PSR programs, in 2019 the BVOR only accounted for 3% of refugees in Canada (UNHCR Canada, 2019).

      In Canada, approximately 46 percent of resettled refugees are women and girls (IRCC, 2022b). Through its Women at Risk program, Canada acknowledges the vulnerability of female refugees to various forms of violence and exploitation and aims to protect them by bringing them to Canada (United Nations Women, 2014). Accordingly, in cases where women are at risk of violence or abuse are granted Permanent Residency (PR) after they pass medical exams as well as security and criminal background checks (IRCC, 2005). In addition, Canada's Urgent Protection Program aims to provide emergency resettlement to people who require emergency protection "due to immediate threats to their life, liberty or physical safety" (Moreno-Lax, 2018, p. 9). It is important to note that Canada uses the Urgent Protection Program upon the request of UNHCR only and does not accept more than 100 persons annually through this program (Moreno-Lax, 2018). For instance, in January 2019 the Government of Canada provided emergency resettlement to Rahaf

Mohammed, an 18-year-old woman from Saudi Arabia who fled alleged abuse from her family (Mohammed, 2022). Whereas Rahaf's case grabbed international headlines activists believe many similar cases go unreported (CBC News, 2019). Such programs provide protection to refugee women and girls with a focus on their situation before they resettle in Canada. To protect refugee women and girls Canada, as a host country, is responsible to provide "favourable" conditions including access to education, work, and appropriate services after their arrival. However, to date very few studies have investigated the resettlement experiences of refugee girls and young women.

In one of the studies that explored the occupational transition of Syrian refugee youth to Canada, the findings reveal that occupations and roles are shaped by contextual expectations (Khan et al., 2021). These expectations for some of the female participants meant that they had to prioritize family over education (Khan et al., 2021). In another study, the experiences of African refugee youth in navigating different cultures in Canada were examined (Woodgate & Busolo, 2021). The youth stated that their resettlement journey is impacted by challenges in adapting to various cultures in Canada (Woodgate & Busolo, 2021). In this study a female participant mentioned that one of the challenges lies in the difference between African and Canadian parents; African parents tend to be stricter and more authoritative, and this can lead to conflicts between youth and their parents (Woodgate & Busolo, 2021). These findings are in line with another study in Toronto in which ten focus groups and thirteen interviews were conducted with refugee youth from three communities (Shakya et al., 2012). Using community-based research techniques, the researchers investigated the aspirations of refugee youth (both male and female) for higher education after resettlement in Canada (Shakya et al., 2012). While the findings of the study indicate

that after coming to Canada refugee youth develop stronger aspirations for higher education,
challenges such as educational gaps, financial barriers, and a shift in family responsibilities
prevent them from pursuing their goals (Shakya et al., 2012).

Positioning Myself: A Beginning …

In the summer of 2019 during the second year of my PhD I had been working as a
Research Assistant at the Participatory Cultures Lab and the Institute for Human
Development and Well-being when my supervisor asked me to join the team attached to the
McGill Arts-Hive Initiative (MAHI) to organize a series of arts-based workshops for
asylum-seeking children and youth associated with Maison d'Haïti and Byenvini à Montréal.
Without hesitation, I expressed my interest in joining the team and worked with a group of
students, instructors, and volunteers to facilitate eight workshops in June and July 2019.
While the focus of each workshop was different, their overall aim was to provide an
opportunity for the children and youth to express their emotions, concerns, and challenges
through various forms of the arts such as body mapping, bee-box painting, drawing, and
collage making. Moreover, they offered a safe space for personal growth, cultural
adaptability, and community building. Based on these workshops, the picture book *Art
Connecting: Workshops with children of asylum-seeking families* (McGill Arts-Hive
Initiative, 2019) was developed. After the production of the book the collaboration between
McGill and refugee populations continued for three more years, using art-based activities to
give refugee children and youth a platform to express themselves, we generally refer to this
as Art Connecting Project.

For me, this project was really the beginning of my dissertation project. As an international student from Iran, I was familiar with the general issues 'newcomers' had to struggle with such as living in a Francophone province, studying at an Anglophone university, and being away from immediate and extensive family members. However, during the workshops I realized that for refugees the situation was quite different as they had experienced war and violent conflicts and, in most situations, had been 'forced' to leave their country of origin. I, on the other hand, as a 'voluntary migrant' had willingly decided to move to Québec to pursue a PhD in Educational Studies that I had extensively planned for after I finished my master's in Teaching English.

As a middle-class woman from the North of Iran, formerly known as Persia, I was generally aware that women and girls are not treated equally in society. For 26 years, I lived in a country where women's and girls' rights were severely restricted by the government. While I grew up in an educated family that had always encouraged me to be "independent" and "follow my dreams", I had a certain level of consciousness about the situation of girls and women who were treated as second-class citizens. For example, according to the law in Iran, women need their spouse's written consent to get a passport and leave the country. Similarly, women need permission from their father or paternal grandfather to get married.

I came to Canada with the mindset that it was unlikely for girls and young women in a developed country to experience issues related to their rights as women and girls. To my surprise, during my engagement in Art Connecting I saw that even in a highly developed country such as Canada, well-known for its ethnocultural and religious diversity, not everyone is included. I noticed that one's experiences of Canadian life depend on many different factors including age, citizenship, gender, skin color, formal education, and

sexuality. Therefore, I learned that my experience of being in Canada as a Persian Ph.D. student and Research Assistant with a valid study permit can be totally different from an adolescent girl or young woman who is seeking asylum in Canada and has little or no formal education. This made me think about issues of gender and intersectionality and realized that even in refugee groups some are more disadvantaged than others.

In Art Connecting I noticed that adolescent girls and young women might have to come to Canada on their own in order to increase their chances of receiving refugee status. In addition, after they arrive here, they are often put in the same groups as children or adults, especially women and for this reason, their specific needs and issues are not taken into account in developing resettlement programs. I also realized that there are very few if any specific programs that target adolescent girls and young women's needs and issues after resettlement in Québec. As a result, they are often put in the same groups as children or women even though their needs might be quite different.

In this project, I gained hands-on experience in the use of arts-based activities with asylum-seekers and refugees. Inspired by Art Connecting, I decided to focus on using arts-based methodologies for investigating the issues and challenges of adolescent refugee girls and young women after they move to Québec. My initial understandings of adolescent refugee girls and young women were in line with academic studies that highlight the importance of resettlement programs for this group of refugees. In a broad sense these programs can ease the transition of refugees to their new countries and provide access to essential services such as mental health and education (Morland & Levine, 2016). Mental health is a fundamental human right that empowers individuals to effectively manage the challenges of life, unleash their potential, thrive academically and professionally, and

actively contribute to their communities (World Health Organization (WHO), 2022). Mental health is not just a privilege but a fundamental human entitlement, with significant implications for personal, communal, and socioeconomic advancement (WHO, 2022). However, in many countries, there is a tendency to prioritize physical health over mental health (Jayan & Vishwas, 2023). This discrepancy may arise from the presence of mental health stigma and lack of access to proper treatment (Tesfaye et al., 2021).

While resettlement programs can facilitate the integration of all groups of refugees into society, they are particularly important for adolescent girls and young women for several reasons. First, during adolescence, girls and young women undergo physical changes and begin their journey from childhood into adulthood and in many contexts, they will have to accept new social roles such as spouse, parent, employee, or citizen (Samuels et al., 2017). Second, psychosocial problems begin during this period and can lead to mental health illnesses during adulthood (WHO, 2022). Therefore, if adolescent girls and young women do not receive appropriate treatment, their adulthood will be widely affected by unrecognized mental health issues during adolescence and youth. Finally, adolescent girls and young women are at greater risk of sexual and domestic violence which heightens their vulnerability (Samuels et al., 2017). In a systematic literature review on the Sexual and Reproductive Health of adolescent girls and young women in conflict and disaster-affected populations across the African continents it was found that gender-based and sexual violence is common among this population (Ivanova et al., 2018). In another case study with two 16-year-old refugee girls in Montreal, Canada (Rabiau, 2018) the importance of identity formation and meaning making as well as an indirect expression of anxiety and distress for adolescence was highlighted. In essence, adolescent refugee girls and young women have

particular needs and challenges which can be addressed through appropriate resettlement programs. To develop appropriate resettlement programs that target the specific needs and challenges of adolescent refugee girls and young women it is necessary to hear their own voices.

Research Questions

The broad research question that frames this study is as follows: How do adolescent refugee girls and young women experience their resettlement in Québec? To answer this broad question, I generated several sub-questions.

1) Resettlement for adolescent girls and young women involves settling into a new country to start a new life and at the same time adapting to a new society with very different norms and values. Therefore, their resettlement experience could be compounded with psychological challenges in a state where they constantly need to make a choice between committing to their own norms and values and reaching a compromise between their own and the new cultural values. What other factors affect their mental health and well-being before, during and after resettlement?

2) Québec is the second most popular refugee destination for refugees in Canada and needs to provide gender-sensitive resources to guarantee effective integration for adolescent refugee girls and young women. Gender-sensitive resources can be successful if they target the unique needs and challenges of this specific population. What needs and concerns do girls and young women have after resettling in Québec? How do they visualize these needs through photovoice? What solutions do they offer for their issues and concerns?

3)   Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies such as photovoice have been used with marginalized populations to generate a rich amount of data on their everyday lives, concerns, thoughts, reflections, and experiences. While previous studies have shown the use of photovoice for data collection and dissemination of knowledge, it is not clear how the researcher can have the involvement of the participants in the process of data analysis. Thus, some questions are still unanswered: What does participatory data analysis involve? How participatory does participatory data analysis have to be? What strategies can be used to prepare the data for analysis?

Research Objectives

The main objective of this dissertation is to shed some light on the experiences of adolescent refugee girls and young women after resettlement in Québec. In particular, this dissertation aims to:

1)   Deepen an understanding of the risks that have an impact on the well-being of adolescent refugee girls and young women before, during, and after resettlement.

2)   Use photovoice, as a research tool, to examine the lived experiences, concerns, thoughts, and reflections of adolescent refugee girls and young women and amplify their voices.

3)   Consider the participatory aspect of photovoice beyond data collection by encouraging the involvement of the participants in the process of data analysis and examine what participatory data analysis involves.

The general population of interest was adolescent girls and young women resettled as refugees in Québec. The target population was adolescent girls and young women attached

to Maison d'Haïti, a community organization in Montreal North that aims to promote the integration of newcomers into society. The sample was a purposive sample of nine adolescent girls and young women who had resettled in Québec as refugees between 2017 to 2020[3] (Appendix A). The adolescent refugee girls and young women were between the ages of 14 and 24 and came from a number of different countries: Congo, Haiti, Venezuela, and Brazil which in and of itself offers a richly diverse representation even though there were a number of commonalities. All the girls in this study identified as Black and sought refuge in Québec due to various reasons including ongoing armed conflicts, political instability, persecution and human rights violations, and economic hardship.

Framing the Study

In this study, I locate my work with refugee girls and young women in Girlhood studies as an interdisciplinary area that uses a feminist perspective to examine the childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood of young women. Girlhood Studies is closely linked to feminist studies, women's studies, childhood studies, and youth studies (Nyariro, 2021). In addition, it addresses the unique experiences of girls and young women in terms of other factors such as race, gender, age, class, status, and sexuality (Nyariro, 2021; Rivard & Mitchell, 2013). Girlhood Studies amplifies the silenced voices of girls and young women by contextualizing their lived experiences and acknowledging their power and agency (Rivard & Mitchell, 2013). This theoretical framework is an ideological orientation reflected

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[3] Ethical Considerations: This study was reviewed by McGill Research Board Office and received the Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans in June 2021 (File number 21-06-034). Please see Appendix A for the Ethics Approval Certificate.

in the main characteristics of this study. First, in working with adolescent refugee girls and young women this study sees them as "full participants in mapping out the issues in their lives" (Mitchell, 2011, p. 52). Second, this study aims to seek social justice by amplifying the voices of adolescent refugee girls and young women in Québec society. In other words, this study emphasizes that girls, young women, and other marginalized populations should not be exploited by research and that their voices should not be suppressed in either the process or products of research. By listening to and amplifying the voices of adolescent refugee girls and young women, this study is able to offer recommendations for improving the resettlement experiences of this specific population.

Drawing on this framework and to answer the research questions, I employed photovoice, as a Participatory Visual and Arts-based Methodology, with nine adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 14 to 24. The participants had resettled in Québec as refugees between 2017 to 2020. The study was conducted in four phases between June 2021 and January 2022 at Maison d'Haïti, a community and cultural organization with the mission to educate, integrate, and improve the living conditions of newcomers (Maison d'Haïti, 2022). In phase one, nine adolescent refugee girls and young women participated in a series of five photovoice workshops to explore their issues and challenges after resettlement in Québec. They took photographs to represent the barriers to their resettlement. With the use of photographs, they created three poster-narratives to better convey their messages. In phase two, in collaboration with the participants, I curated a community-based photovoice exhibition at the Arts Centre of Maison d'Haïti to display the photographs and poster-narratives of the previous phase. The purpose of this exhibition was to raise awareness of the challenges that adolescent refugee girls and young women have to deal

with after they resettle in Québec. The audience included members of the community, parents, educators, and some of the girls from phase one of the study. The exhibition began with a video providing an overview of the project's goals, process, and the production of photographs and poster-narratives. After watching the video, the audience had the opportunity to explore the exhibition space and observe the photographs and poster-narratives. The audience was also prompted to share their reflections on the most impactful photograph or poster-narrative that captured their attention. At the conclusion of the exhibition, the audience was provided with dedicated time to express their thoughts, comments, and feedback regarding the exhibition. This opportunity allowed individuals to share their impressions, offer insights, and provide valuable feedback on their overall experience and the exhibited works (Appendix B).

In phase three, the same nine adolescent girls and young women were also interviewed to share their stories and experiences individually (Appendix C). In phase four, the data analysis was conducted at two levels: 1- participatory data analysis and 2- Reflexive Thematic Analysis. At the first level, participants attended a final workshop on participatory data analysis to go through the photographs and poster-narratives. In this session, participants identified the following themes: financial issues, lack of mental health support, discrimination, and the high cost of colleges and universities. At the second level, I used Reflexive Thematic Analysis to analyze the transcripts from all the workshops and interviews as well as the captions of the photographs and poster-narratives. Six themes including four issues and two recommendations emerged from this analysis. The issues were: forms of discrimination, complexity of mental health and well-being, intricacy of integration, and financial issues. The recommendations revolved around education and the

importance of creating what they referred to as a circle of trust. As participants mentioned, in this circle they are able to discuss their issues and be listened to.

Overview of the Thesis

I have organized this thesis into six chapters. In chapter one I have provided an overview of the context in which refugee girls and young women resettle particularly in Canada. I also demonstrated the ways that Québec, as one of the main refugee destinations in Canada, is different from other provinces in Canada. I further indicated the purpose of the study and the research questions that guide the fieldwork with a group of adolescent refugee girls and young women attached to Maison d'Haïti.

In chapter two, I explore the theoretical and methodological frameworks that are guiding this study. I present a comprehensive literature review on the topic of adolescent refugee girls and young women's issues after resettlement. I also include a summary of the understanding of the current body of knowledge and the justification for the current research study. In the same chapter, I delve into the concept of intersectionality in relation to the emerging field within feminist research and girlhood studies known as Black girlhood studies.

Chapter three is the first of my three manuscripts: 'Refugee girlhoods'. This manuscript (co-authored with my supervisor Dr. Claudia Mitchell) answers the first research questions on the risk factors that affect refugee girls' well-being before, during and after resettlement. In the same chapter, I delved into the realm of Participatory Visual and Arts-based approaches as potential interventions for enhancing the well-being of this particular population. The chapter served as a foundation for adopting girl-centered perspectives in

understanding refugee girlhood. This chapter has been published in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Critical Perspectives on Mental Health.*

Chapter four is the second of my three manuscripts: 'Adolescent refugee girls and young women in Québec: Telling the stories of resettlement through photovoice'. Inspired by the work of Mitchell (2016) and other girlhood scholars this manuscript aims to answer the following question: What does resettlement look like if we saw it through the eyes of adolescent refugee girls and young women in Québec? In this manuscript, I explain the findings of my study in relation to the Reflexive Thematic Analysis and intersectionality. This chapter is submitted to the *Journal of Refugee Studies*.

Chapter five is my third manuscript: 'Participatory data analysis in a photovoice project with refugee girls'. Drawing on the ideas within Girlhood Studies, this manuscript focuses on different phases of my photovoice project with refugee girls and young women and in particular discusses the role of the participants in analyzing the photos and poster-narratives as part of the participatory data analysis. In this chapter, I discuss the benefits and challenges of involving participants in data analysis. This chapter is accepted for publication in an edited book *Participatory Data Analysis in/as Feminist Research.*

Chapter six offers a comprehensive analysis of the three manuscripts, providing an overview and detailed discussion of the research study. It explores the implications for theory, practice, policy, and further research while acknowledging the study's limitations. The chapter concludes with my final thoughts, encompassing reflections gained throughout the research process.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The focus of this chapter is on the theoretical and methodological frameworks that informed this study as well as the themes found within the extensive review of the literature. This chapter has three main sections. In the first section, I discuss Girlhood Studies as central to the theoretical framework that guided the whole dissertation inquiry and had significant implications on every decision I made in the research process. Drawing on the work of Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2007) and Black Girlhood scholars I explain that in working *with* girls, *for* girls, and *about* girls, we should go beyond age and gender to consider other intersecting factors such as race, status, class, and religion. The second section focuses on the methodological framework that guided the process of data collection. Building on Feminist Perspectives and Participatory Visual and Arts-based Methodologies I argue that research with girls and young women should amplify their voices through appropriate tools such as photovoice. In the last section, I discuss the existing body of knowledge on refugee girls and young women, paying close attention to social structures including family, school, peers, and settlement services. I end the chapter by drawing attention to the gaps that my study aims to address.

Section I: Theoretical Framework

Girlhood Studies. The theoretical orientation of this dissertation is shaped by the main concerns of Girlhood Studies that use a feminist point of view to look at the childhood and adolescence of girls as well as the adulthood of young women. I chose this framework because it sees girls and young women as active independent individuals who have the agency to narrate their stories. I begin this section with a brief history of Girlhood Studies and then focus on the significance of what Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2007) refer to as 'girl-methods.' Taking into

consideration the group of refugee girls with whom I worked and the significance of racialization I draw from Black girlhood studies to explore intersectionality and its various categories in relation to the emerging field within feminist research and girlhood studies, Black girlhood studies.

      Girlhood Studies: history and key concepts. As Mitchell et al (2008) highlight Girlhood Studies sees the childhood, adolescence, and adulthood of girls and young women from a feminist perspective and is intricately linked to Childhood Studies and Youth Studies in theory, practice, and policy as the three fields focus on marginalized populations (Mitchell et al., 2008). These studies, although distinct by nature, recognize that children, girls, and youth are autonomous and active individuals who can make their own decisions and choices, participate in creating their own narratives, address issues of self-representation and participation, and have the ability to voice all of this (Mitchell et al., 2008). According to Mandrona (2016), Girlhood Studies:

> is framed by theories that conceptualize girls and young women on the one hand as distinct, yet diverse groups whose members have been systematically discriminated against but also, on the other, as capable social actors who influence and are influenced by the world in which they live. Despite, or perhaps because of, the differences between these two frameworks, the starting point of Girlhood Studies should be research and engagement with girls, for girls, and by girls that aim to draw attention to their literal absence and voicelessness in initiatives that affect their lives. (p. 1)

      Much of the work on Girlhood Studies dates back to Angela McRobbie and Carol Gilligan, two of the foremothers of Girlhood Studies. During the 1970s McRobbie pointed out

that the early studies on youth culture were exclusively on boys and did not include girls. McRobbie's own work, on the other hand, combined feminist and cultural theories and overcame this omission by paving the way for a growing number of feminist scholars who concentrated on girl culture. In Girls and sub-cultures, for instance, McRobbie collected eight essays on female youth culture in *Feminism and youth culture* (1990) to discuss topics including the changing role of romance in girls' comics and magazines, the everyday culture of working-class girls, the appeal of dance narratives for pre-adolescent, adolescent mothers and feminist criticisms on subcultural theory.

With the publication of *In a different voice* by Carol Gilligan (1982), a new wave of feminist scholars from a range of different disciplines including education, psychology, communication, and politics turned their attention to the unique experiences of girls and young women. In this ground-breaking book, Gilligan argues that psychology has systematically misunderstood the motives, moral commitment, and development of women and emphasizes the importance of recognizing women's rights and voices. Since then, Gilligan and her colleagues have produced a large body of work on the unique identity formation issues, communicative strategies, and learning practices of girls and young women (Gilligan, 1982). For example, in *Meeting at the crossroads* Brown and Gillian (1992) invite the readers to listen and hear girls' voices that are often ignored and misunderstood. In this foundational book, based on their five-year research with one hundred girls the authors develop a Listener's Guide to follow the pathways of girls' thoughts and feelings. This work offers new insights into girls' development and women's psychology and at the same time provides women with the means of connecting with girls at the critical crossroads of adolescence, of hearing the voices of girlhood and maintaining their sell-affirming notes.

While Gilligan, grounded in social science, presented the concept of adolescents and young women who speak in a different voice, McRobbie, grounded in cultural studies, made the invisible visible and brought girls' studies to the foreground where the lives of young girls and the centrality of popular culture are central in creating and negotiating feminism and femininity (Mazzarella & Pecora, 2007).

Drawing on psychology and cultural studies, in the late 20th century, studies on girls emerged as an interdisciplinary response and changed to "girl studies" as Gayle Wald (1998) dubbed it. According to Wald (1998), girl studies is a "sub-genre of recent academic feminist scholarship that constructs girlhood as a separate, exceptional, and/or pivotal phase in female identity formation" (p. 587). Catherine Driscoll's work in particular has been keen on this emerging area. In 2002 Catherine Driscoll used Foucault's genealogy to identify the increasing public visibility of girls in Western and Westernized cultures to the evolution and expansion of theories about feminine adolescence in different disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychoanalysis, history, and politics (Driscoll, 2002). As Currie (2004) puts it, Driscoll makes a conscious effort to "show how knowledge about girls has shaped what it means to be a girl and how girls experience their own positions in the world in relation to diverse ways of talking about and understanding girls" (p. 260). Driscoll also argues that the concepts of girls and culture are too elusive to fulfill any useful role in speculating about the appearance of feminine adolescence in popular culture (Driscoll, 2002). Similar to McRobbie, popular culture was central to the work of Driscoll.

In the introduction to their book *Seven going on seventeen*, Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2005) trace historical work related to the emergence of Girlhood Studies. In particular, in their introduction to the book they discuss the way that female adolescence was portrayed in

the 18th and 19th centuries in the work of famous female writers such as Jane Austen. In *Mansfield Park*, for example, Austen discusses the difference between the behaviour and attire of the girls who have entered the outside world and those who have not (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005). While girls of the lower classes lived in a "binary system of child and adult," those from the middle and upper classes were explicitly and implicitly taught a set of standers to become eligible for marriage (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005, p. 11). In the same chapter, Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2005) introduce the idea of 'girl-method' to describe methodologies and methods in girl-centered research in which "women engage in *with* girls, *for* girls, and *about* girlhood" (p. 16).

In Girlhood Studies, the heterogeneity in voice and agency is highlighted by defining girlhood as socially constructed, constantly negotiated and evolving, and comprised of a myriad of gendered experiences shaped by individual and socio-cultural discourses of femininity intersecting with other identity categorizations including race, nationality, social class, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability (Aapola et al., 2005; Moletsane et al., 2008; Rivard, 2015).

In the chapter "Placing the girlhood scholar into the politics of change: A reflexive account", Caroline Caron (2016) draws on her work with girls in Québec, Canada to offer a critical perspective on listening to girls' voices. According to Caron (2016), girlhood scholars are required to constantly engage with self-reflection to evaluate their representations of girls. Thus, if one of the main objectives of Girlhood Studies is to represent girls' voices and ideas about social and political issues then we, as girlhood scholars, need to integrate more self-reflexive modes of evaluation about what political work our research does or does not.

Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2007) note that girl-methods extend the limits of studying girl culture and identify four themes within research methodology for researching girl culture including age disaggregation, historical context, intergenerationally, and participatory process.

1) Age disaggregation: A key concept in girl-method is age-disaggregation which poses the questions: who is a girl, and how old is she? (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2007).

According to girlhood scholars disaggregating girls by age groups allows us to better understand their experiences and positions within the social and cultural framework of the society in which they live (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2007; Moletsane et al., 2008; Vanner, 2019). For example, Moletsane et al. (2008) use South Africa as a case study to emphasize the role of age and gender in the relationship between the researcher(s) and the girls. Moreover, the authors highlight the importance of recognizing the "unequal power dynamics between researchers and the girls as participants" in the research process (Moletsane et al., 2008, p. 106).

2) Intergenerationally: There are many ways to define intergenerationally (Moletsane et al., 2008). However, in girl-methods it refers to the links between the experiences of women and the experiences of girls (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2007). Girlhood scholars have highlighted the significance of retrospective accounts by using memory work, literary text, and memoir. For example, in one study Mitchell and Weber (2003) used memory work with 10- and 11-year-old girls in the fifth and sixth and asked them to share their experiences of schooling through their first-grade photographs. Moletsane et al., (2008) also explored the ways in which two adult women reflect on their own girlhoods and their experiences of violence in families and larger communities through narrative inquiry. According to the

authors, compared to conventional research methodologies, stories written by these women have the potential to reveal girlhood issues that would otherwise be difficult for them to discuss and can result in policies and interventions for girls regarding gender-based violence (Moletsane et al., 2008).

       3) Historical context: Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2007) refer to the work of feminist literary critic bell hooks, who has emphasized the need for historical approaches in feminist work. According to hooks (1994), feminist researchers need to acknowledge history particularly if it has been negative. In the context of relationships between black and white women, for instance, hooks (1994) points out:

> Until white women can confront their fear and hatred of black women (and vice versa), until we can acknowledge the negative history which shapes and informs our contemporary interaction, there can be no honest, meaningful dialogue between the two groups. (p. 102)

       Other feminist scholars including, Kirk and Sommer (2006) and Vaughan (2017), have also highlighted the importance of considering context in the study of girls and young women.

       4) Participatory process: In the study of girls, "girls' voices" is a significant concept (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2007, p. 20). While many researchers claim that "girls' voices" are heard, the participation of marginalized populations such as girls and young women could be affected by the researchers' interpretations because of ethical issues, level of participation, and tokenism (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2007). In a follow-up publication *Methodologies for mapping a South African girlhood in the age of AIDS* co-authored by Relebohile Moletsane, Claudia Mitchell, Ann Smith, and Linda Chisholm (2009), the authors argue that the notions

embedded in working *with* girls, *for* girls, and *about* girls are complex in that they challenge

the concepts of participation and listening to girls' voices as well as the power relationship

between the researcher and participants. In essence, they argue that listening to voices

involves creating social spaces for girls to share their concerns and issues and for researchers

to listen to them. Girlhood scholars have paid particular attention to the "voice,"

"participation," and "agency" of girls and young women in order to demonstrate girls'

ability to participate in research, express their issues and concerns, and provide relevant and

valuable knowledge and analyses (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2007; Vanner, 2019). This

emphasis is an effort to see girls beyond the typical categorization of vulnerable or victims

of the society where they live (Rivard, 2015). Although there are many references to

participation and the need for girl-centredness in the literature on girlhood, at the time, the

authors noted that there was a limited body of literature that addressed methods for working

with girls or for empowering girls to do their own research (Moletsane et al., 2008). Mitchell

(2011a) later highlights girl-method:

> takes on an advocacy role in defending the rights of girls (for girls), that
>
> acknowledges the unique positioning of contemporary girls as full participants in
>
> mapping out the issues in their lives (with girls), and that seeks to make visible
>
> girlhood itself as a critical space (about girls). (p. 52)

It is evident in the work cited above working *with* girls, *for* girls, and *about* girls,

girlhood scholars should go beyond age and gender to consider other factors such as race,

class, and religion to mention only a few. In this regard, Vanner (2019) emphasizes

intersectionality to recognize that "varying social processes" shape the experiences of

girlhood (p. 120). In addition, Vanner (2019) argues that these processes are more complex

and oppressive for girls of color and other marginalized or racialized populations. Following this, Halabi (2021) explores the ways that Muslim girls' intersecting identities shape their family, school, and community experiences in Ontario, Canada. The findings of this study show that anti-Black racism is central to participants' experiences which intersect with religion, gender, class, and immigration status.

Black Girlhoods and intersectionality. Intersectionality is of course critical to my study with racialized refugee girls and young women from Haiti[4], Congo[5], Venezuela[6], and Brazil[7]. As can be seen in recent work on intersectionality in Girlhood Studies, Black Girlhoods has become, in and of itself an area of study (Halliday, 2018; Newhouse, 2022; Ohito, 2022; Rogers, 2022; Scott, 2022; Smith, 2022). This recognition of the role of intersectionality in relation to age, gender, race and so on dates back to the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw. In 1989 in an effort to develop Black feminist criticism, law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality. In her paper, Crenshaw (1989) draws attention to employment systems and the exclusion of Black women in industrial plants.

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[4] Four of the participants were among thousands of Haitian asylum-seekers who crossed the border from the United States to Québec in the summer of 2017 as a result of a May announcement by the Trump administration that Haitians could lose their temporary status in the United States, given after the 2010 earthquake that devastated their country.

[5] Three of the participants were from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Congo gained its independence in 1960 but since then there has been ongoing conflict throughout the country. Even though the civil war ended in 2003, violence continues to plague regions of the DRC and has forced millions of Congolese to flee from their homes (UNCHR, 2020).

[6] One of the participants was from Venezuela. According to Immigration Canada (2023), one of the main sites of geopolitical unrest and instability in the Western Hemisphere is Venezuela. Venezuela's institutions are under the grip of the Maduro government which has judicial, executive, and legislative power in the country. By detaining and harassing political elites and social influencers, including human rights activists and aid workers, Maduro has criminalized opposition and put it to rest. As stated by the UNHCR (2023) the brutal repression of Maduro as well as the economic catastrophe has led more than 7 million people to leave the country, making this the second-largest external displacement crisis in the world.

[7] One of the participants was from Brazil. Over the past few years due to profound inequality and a lack of public safety, many Brazilians are losing hope in the country and emigrating, including high-skilled workers. While many Brazilian immigrants to Canada are individuals arriving as skilled workers (Mata, 2022) in 2021 Canada admitted permanent residence to more than 11,000 refugees from Brazil (Statista, 2023).

According to Crenshaw, Black women face intersectional discrimination and domestic and national violence because of their race and gender. In addition, she rejects a single-axis framework by focusing on the "multidimensionality" of marginalized populations' experiences (p. 139). Crenshaw's focus on intersectionality highlights the need to "account for multiple grounds of identity" when reflecting on the way that "the social world" is built (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245). To help us understand the concept of intersectionality, Crenshaw (1991) provides three categories: 1- structural intersectionality, 2- political intersectionality, and 3- representational intersectionality.

The first category of intersectionality refers to the way that Black women are positioned within intersecting structures of subordination (Crenshaw, 2017). In this situation, any particular disadvantage is exacerbated by another disadvantage emancipating from a separate system of subordination. An illustration of structural intersectionality, according to Crenshaw (2017), can be seen in the way that immigrant women's vulnerabilities were exploited in 1986 by the Immigration Marriage Fraud Amendments in the United States. The Amendments imposed a two-year wait for women who had moved to the country to marry a US-citizen or permanent resident and required that both spouses file a permanent-resident application for the wife at the end of this period. Under these circumstances, many immigrant women were hesitant to leave even the most violent and abusive partners for fear of being deported (Crenshaw, 1991). The amendment waives the two-year wait period for those who are able to provide evidence of assault from authorities such as police officers, school officials, or psychologists (Crenshaw, 2017). However, immigrant women's lack of knowledge of English, cultural barriers to asking for help, or

privacy at home can prevent them from seeking help from authorities or using such services (Crenshaw, 2017).

The second category of intersectionality refers to the ways that Black women are situated within two subordinated groups of race and gender that often pursue contradicting political practices (Crenshaw, 1991). According to Crenshaw (2017), this oppositionality can be found in antiracist and feminist discourses that implicitly or even explicitly legitimize the dynamics of racial or gender subordination. An illustration of political intersectionality can be seen in a rhetoric that denies gender violence exists as a problem in Black communities and describes any effort to politicize gender subordination in Black communities a problem itself (Crenshaw, 1991). This is the position Shahrazad Ali takes in her controversial book *The Blackman's Guide to Understanding the Blackwoman* (1989) where she argues that there is a positive correlation between domestic violence and the liberation of Black women (Crenshaw, 1991).

The third category of intersectionality refers to the way that race and gender images intersect to create unique and specific narratives for Black women (Crenshaw, 2017). Crenshaw (2017) adds that media images provide cues to understanding the ways that Black women are imagined in society. The images of African Americans, Latinas, and Asian Americans for example, are created through the combinations of available race and gender stereotypes (Crenshaw, 2017). The illustration of representational intersectionality can be seen in the way that Black women are portrayed in the media as exotic and sexualized people who are also humiliated and demeaned for the same reasons (Moore, 2017).

Whereas Crenshaw's pivotal framework of intersectionality situates several factors that intersect to influence Black women, predominantly in white-dominant societies, using

this framework in the case of Black girls allows the analysis of age in relation to other factors such as race and gender (Halliday, 2019). During the 1990s, Annette Henry (1998, p.233) examined the notion of "coming to voice" in her work with African Caribbean girls between 14 to 15 years old. In this study, Henry argued that "Black girls' schooling experiences and cultural constructions of femininity cannot be conflated with those of other cultures, and that their own voices need to be heard" (1998, p. 238). In addition to Henry, other Black feminist scholars have made a clear argument for a broad and intersectional approach to studying the lives of Black girls. In an effort to provide an intersectional framework bell hooks (1992) in "The oppositional gaze: Black female spectators" explores the power of the "gaze". According to hooks, the gaze is:

A site of resistance for colonized black people globally. Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that "looks" to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating "awareness" politicizes "looking" relations—one learns to look a certain way to resist. (p. 116)

Hooks presents the concept of the "oppositional gaze" as a way for Black women and girls in subordinate positions to resist the dominant images and representations that indicate their devalued status. According to hooks (1994), looking can function as an act of resistance and even rejecting. Building on hooks' idea of oppositional gaze, Jacobs (2016) draws on qualitative data to examine how adolescent Black girls employ critical lenses to understand their experiences of race, gender, and class in independent schools. The findings of the study reveal that Black girls develop their oppositional gazes of resistance and resilience in relation to media images and messages (Jacobs, 2016). In this regard, Jiwani

(2006) discusses the importance of considering "intersecting vulnerabilities" experienced by refugee girls of color. As a result, racialized girls who are marked as different by virtue of their skin color or religious/cultural differences, are othered and essentially devalued through socialization process. This is exacerbated by differing roles and responsibilities and health concerns that are specific to the female population (Arafah, 2016).

Black feminist scholars also show that perceived negative representations around stereotypes on issues such as attitude towards education, sexual behaviours, and aggression requires Black girls to act against stigma and labels (Halliday, 2019). In a qualitative study with Black girls Muhammad and McArthur (2015) found that there is a sharp contrast between the ways the girls desire to be portrayed and the ways they feel society and media represent them. The findings of the study show that participants believe Black girls are often stereotyped as loud, aggressive, and violent in the media. According to Muhammad (2012), media representation is a highly important issue in the lives of Black girls and young women as they have a long history of others narrating their stories. Jacobs (2016) notes that the "othered" status of Black girls is present in the media (e.g., internet, magazines, television, film, and music) that they regularly consume. Exposure to these negative representations leads to the experiences of cultural dissonance where they see themselves devalued by society because of their race and gender. Research suggests that Black mothers and Black women role models intentionally attempt to socialize their daughters to counter the dominant norms and protect themselves from the potential psychological effect of negative representations (Jacobs, 2016). For example, Belgrave (2009) believes that Black mothers teach their daughters to be compassionate and caring while yet being aggressive and independent. As a result, Belgrave argues, Black girls develop androgynous characteristics,

like nurturing, compassion, and warmth, as well as male features like independence and assertiveness. However, as she notes, not all Black girls are exposed to positive role models, and some are exposed to harmful behaviors. For instance, mothers and other significant women might imply that it is ok to be in dysfunctional and unhealthy relationships, use drugs, and be financially irresponsible. They might also model poor partner choices when they stay in abusive relationships (Belgrave, 2009). Intersectionality is therefore a crucial aspect of understanding girls' and young women's experiences in the context of resettlement in this study. The nine adolescent girls and young women from Congo, Haiti, Brazil, and Venezuela had to deal with various aspects of marginalization, racialization, and their interaction because of being female, being Black, and being refugee. In addition, in working with this group I saw that other social locations such as religious, ethical, and national factors may lead to further discrimination and vulnerability. As a result, in this study intersectionality is a cornerstone aspect for thinking about the ways in which these personal identities intersect with systems of subordination and of oppression in Québec society.

It is worth mentioning that Black girlhood experiences can differ based on historical, cultural as well as socio-political contexts. While it is necessary to identify the shared experiences and challenges faced by Black girls globally, it is equally important to recognize the diverse realities they face. For instance, Haiti, Congo, Venezuela, and Brazil have distinct and unique cultural traditions, languages, histories, and colonial legacies and these factors can shape the experiences of Black girls differently. In this regard, African Girlhood Studies values diversity within Black girlhood by highlighting the complex and intersectional nature of girls' lives (Jaksch et al., 2023). African Girlhood Studies also

emphasizes the significance of centering the voices of Black girls themselves in research in order to gain insights into their realities, experiences, and aspirations (Ncube, 2023).

The upbringing, socialisation, and expectations of Black girls from Haiti, Congo, Venezuela, and Brazil can be influenced by a variety of variables, including religious beliefs, traditions, and societal norms. Additionally, the socioeconomic circumstances in these countries can directly impact the opportunities, availability of resources, and well-being of Black girls. For example, different infrastructure, school systems, healthcare services, and poverty can impact how they live. Therefore, to better understand these issues, we need to engage in intersectional and context-specific research highlighting Black girls' voices and experiences. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse realities and challenges they encounter while recognizing the shared struggles and strengths within Black girlhood globally. In other words, a universal Black girlhood acknowledges that Black girls might have similar experiences and shared difficulties due to racism, sexism, discrimination, and other overlapping forms of oppression. However, similar to any other groups Black girls are not a monolithic entity and they have diverse experiences which are influenced by multiple factors, including individual circumstances, socioeconomic situations, religion, and language.

Section II: Methodological Frameworks

Building on my previous experience with refugee populations and mindful of the critical need to find ways of 'engaging' girls and young women as an approach to respecting issues of agency, I approach this work through two overlapping frameworks: 1) Feminist Perspectives and 2) Participatory Visual and Arts-based Methodologies. These perspectives are ideological orientations indicated by the main characteristics of this study. First, in

researching adolescent girls and young women this study "presumes the importance of gender in human relationships and societal processes" (Patton, 2002, p. 129). In essence, I was inspired by a passion for gender equity and the position that available services for adolescent refugee girls and young women should be based on their experiences and needs. Likewise, feminist perspectives seek "social justice, to enhance women's voice and influence in society, and to explore alternative ways of understanding the world" (Gergen, 2008, p. 280). At the same time, Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies highlight that girls, women, and other marginalized groups should not be exploited by research and that their "voices" should not be silenced in either the process or products of research.

Feminist perspectives. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, female scholars and students became acutely aware of the significant gap between their lived experiences and mainstream research studies and findings (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2014). According to the sociologist Dorothy Smith students reported that the theories and methods they were learning "did not apply to what was happening as they experienced it" (Smith, 1987, p. 86). For this reason, early feminist scholars devoted themselves to creating new research models to give voice to women's perspectives and experiences and seek solutions for their omissions from theoretical and methodological techniques (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2014). In doing so, they criticized the central principle of positivism that there is one single reality or truth separate from the researcher which can be discovered through the "right methods of discovery" (Dankoski, 2000, p. 8). In other words, in positivism a high value was placed on objective methods, which could remove the dangers of being biased. Feminist researchers, on the other hand, emphasize the unconscious bias in these seemingly value-free research

approaches and the distorted conclusions that emerge from the notion that researchers can stay unbiased and external to any study process (Jenkins et al., 2019). Harding (1986) argues that "feminist postmodernism" is one of the main epistemologies around which the critiques of positivism are organized (p. 188). This perspective rejects the idea of universal truth and values multiple methods of knowing (Dankoski, 2000). Since there is no single objective reality, reducing and quantifying knowledge is useless and can mislead individuals (Dankoski, 2000). Moreover, as the building block of feminism, gender is recognized as a socially constructed concept in postmodernism and can only be defined within a specific social, historical, and political context (Wolff, 2007). In essence, postmodern feminists believe that women's oppression and marginalization result from social, political, and historical factors.

It is evident that feminism and feminist practice encompasses a broad range of perspectives and feminist researchers do not always agree on the core principles of feminist research. However, they converge on acknowledging "the centrality of gender, power, and opportunities for social change in their research" (Krause et al., 2017, p. 212). In doing so, feminist research empowers women and girls' silenced voices in the social world and in the production of knowledge. In feminist research, a key concern is over the dominance of quantitative research methods and the dominance of men in constructing knowledge about the world (Kiguwa, 2019). By engaging with multiple methodological methods, feminist research challenges the dominance of one method in gathering and understanding world knowledge.

The current study sees feminism as a political practice and seeks to provide a space for girls and young women to express their voices and power. Inspired by Ellsworth (1989)

and Mitchell (2018), in this study, participants' voices are not constructed by others to serve the interests of those who subordinate them, and power is awarded to them to produce knowledge, influence history, and participate in decision-making. Through photovoice, this study emphasizes the importance of prioritizing girls' and young women's voices and narratives about their resettlement experiences in Québec.

   Girl-method and participatory visual and participatory visual and arts-based methodologies. As noted above in the discussion on Girlhood Studies, the term 'girl-method' describes methodologies and methods in girl-centered research and is complementary to and overlapping with feminist visual methodologies (Mitchell, 2011). As Mitchell notes (2015), in line with feminist visual methodologies, participatory visual approaches allow girls and women to become aware and engaged with issues of importance to their lives and, at the same time, make them visible to the community and policymakers. This inquiry falls within Maguire's feminist participatory research as an approach in which ordinary women move from "being object to being the subjects of and beneficiaries of research" (1987, p. 43). Not only does feminist participatory research acknowledge the perspectives of young women and girls in identifying the issues that concern them, but it recognizes their ability to provide viable solutions at the community level (Mitchell, 2015). Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies provide one approach to feminist participatory research. In this approach, different forms of art, such as drawings, murals, photographs, cellphilms, collages, and digital stories, are employed to allow participants to express their ideas about challenging topics (Mitchell et al., 2017). As a critical and transformative paradigm, these methods also provide opportunities to build local capacity and continuous support for community members and stakeholders to act on the generated

knowledge. Arts-based research are classified into five forms: visual art, sound art, literary art, performing art, and new media, and each general form can include several sub-forms (Wang et al., 2017). For instance, the sub-forms of visual art are photovoice, photocomics, paintings, drawings, digital storytelling, quilt, and animation (Wang et al., 2017). Despite the variety in forms, the arts play a prominent role in all of them. Arts-based research has evolved to cover a broader array of methodological approaches that fulfill different purposes (Greenwood, 2019). In particular, it has been defined as "research that uses the arts, in the broadest sense, to explore, understand, represent and even challenge human action and experience" (Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014, p. 1). The idea that the arts can be used to explore human action has primarily changed arts-based research to a popular tool to investigate important social issues such as women's rights, experiences of marginalized populations, or cross-cultural encounters (Greenwood, 2019). Of particular relevance to my study, there is an emerging body of work on arts-based research with refugee youth. Akesson and associates (2014) note that Participatory Arts-based methodologies such as photovoice, drawing, and drama are particularly beneficial in working with war-affected children as they create opportunities for them to understand and construct meaning and, at the same time, present their experiences in challenging settings. Linds et al. (2023) state that arts-based approaches are beneficial in working with war-affected youth as they can act as tools for coping, healing, integration, intercultural conversation, peacemaking, social change, resistance, empowerment, and self-advocacy. In addition to these advantages to the participants' individual lives, these approaches can help society as a whole (Linds et al., 2023). As Caroline Lenette (2019, p. 40) highlights researchers intentionally use arts-based methods in refugee studies to "generate alternative storytelling and redress injustice".

Lenette (2019) argues that such methods are used in refugee studies because of their potential to lead to social change. Moreover, Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies draw on their voices to deepen our understanding of children's rights violations in war and migration (Denov et al., 2023). Khan (2023), for instance, uses war-affected girls' drawings to explore their experiences in refugee camps in Bangladesh, Burundi, and Lebanon. According to the researcher, such methods allow girls to become visible by expressing their hopes, optimism, fear, and despair. Similarly, Mandrona et al. (2023) in their Picture Book Project, explore the way that war-affected boys and girls between 7 to 18 express themselves through artmaking and narratives. The findings of this pilot project reveal that the participants touched on a wide range of themes and issues, such as love, creativity, collaboration, family, and destruction. In addition, the researchers call for a broader discussion in the academic and activist communities about the use of participatory arts-based research methods as such methodologies navigate "the media landscape" and develop "mechanisms for meaningful change" (Mandrona et al., 2023, p. 275).

Photovoice. In my study I was particularly in interested in photovoice as a Participatory Visual and Arts-based method. Although photovoice methods predate digitization, we now know that digitalization of societies has led to the development and mass availability of various tools, such as smartphones, digital cameras, tablets, and other multimedia devices, which have encouraged researchers to use arts-based research to conceptualize and disseminate research (Wang et al., 2017).

In the early 1990s, photovoice was developed by Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris in the field of public health (Wang & Burris, 1997). Photovoice combines feminist research theory, photography, and empowerment principles inspired by Paolo Freire, a

Brazilian adult educator and philosopher (Saksena & McMorrow, 2019). Following the

ideas of Hegel, Marx, Teixeira, Dewey, and Gramsci, Freire emphasizes the necessity of

developing students' critical consciousness "in an active, dialogical, critical, and criticism-

stimulating method" (Freire, 1974, p. 40). Instead of seeing learners as passive recipients of

knowledge, Freire's pedagogy focuses on a collaborative educational approach in which the

learners will actively construct knowledge (Freire, 1984). Critical consciousness is Freire's

path to liberation, where an individual reflects on the society in which they are situated,

becomes aware of their relations with the society and the sociopolitical conditions, and

determines how one's position in the society might change (Freire, 1974, 1984). In this

process, the individual becomes aware of their agency and can create their own reality.

Although Freire's work deals with self-transformation, his critical consciousness occurs as a

social and collective act in a rigorous dialogue (Freire, 1974). Freire believes developing

critical consciousness should be democratic, participatory, and dialogic (Freire, 1984).

Additionally, Freire sought to facilitate a new awareness of self-in-context that could lead to

social change. In doing so, he used documentary photographs as a mirror to communities,

reflecting everyday social and political realities that could impact and shape people's

everyday lives. He also argued that in discussing the content of photographs people are able

to step back from their everyday lives and become involved in the abstract. Freire adds that

(1972, p. 65), "only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is capable of generating

critical thinking. Without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication,

there can be no true education." He further argues that critical thinking is generated via

collective discussions of photographs within groups.

Similarly, in photovoice Wang and Burris (1997) use photography to encourage reflection among participants, raise discussion and awareness about critical issues and inform policymakers about these issues that concern communities. Numerous girlhood studies have used photovoice in different contexts in the Global South and Global North. These studies have aimed to deepen an understanding of the perspectives of girls and young women on various issues central to their lives. For example, Sajan Virgi and Mitchell (2011) used photovoice with a group of ten girls between 10 to 14 years old in Maputo, Mozambique to examine their issues, challenges, and strengths with regards to access to water and sanitation. They found collecting water has a direct impact on the quality life of girls as it takes 25 to 30 percent of their light hours during which they do not need electricity to study their lessons. In another study, Rivard (2015) used photovoice with schoolgirls between the ages of 11 to 18 to capture their perspectives and experiences on physical activity and sports in a secondary school context in Rwanda. A particular feature of this study was the development of photo-based outreach tools for reaching policy makers. Nyariro (2021) used photovoice in Kenya with fifteen young mothers and pregnant teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19 years who took pictures of the challenges they faced in their community. The findings from this study show that a variety of social, economic, and cultural factors interact to create barriers to school continuation and re-entry of young mothers and pregnant teenagers to school.

Specific to my study, photovoice has also been used with war-affected populations including children, adolescents, and youth in a variety of settings. Miled's work (2020) with a group of Muslim girls between the ages of 14 to 19 with refugee backgrounds in Western Canada is particularly relevant to my research. In this study, Miled (2020) uses photovoice

to explore the participants' feelings about identity, displacement, and belonging. According to the researcher, the project emphasized the important role of race in shaping Muslim and/or Canadian identity of the participants. In addition, the photographs helped to see the world from their lenses and capture the nuances of their lived experiences.

It is also worth pointing out that as early as 2009, Green and Kloos (2009) used photovoice with internally displaced youth (12 to 16), who were residing in a camp in Uganda. Over the course of six weeks, twelve photovoice participants used digital cameras to take photos of everyday life in their communities. The participants and facilitators met weekly to discuss the photos, which led to identifying and reflecting on community issues. The photos were later used to improve individual and community well-being. Based on the findings, it was suggested that with appropriate consideration of the context, photovoice could be a valuable method for constructing knowledge about the experiences of forced displacement.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate when, how, and why photovoice can provide insight into the ways refugee youth and children perceive their life experiences after resettlement. Additionally, it was revealed that photovoice could serve as a constructive tool to assist refugee children and youth, as social actors, to describe and analyze their situation and experiences. Photographs and narratives facilitate "knowledge production, as opposed to knowledge gathering" (Veale, 2005, p. 254). Photovoice is therefore an appropriate tool for privileging the voices of girls and young women through engaging them with photographs to gain insights into their lives, find solutions for their challenges, and initiate conversations with policymakers.

Section III: Literature Review: Understanding the Experiences of Refugee Girls and Young Women

From 2016 to 2021, over 1.3 million immigrants settled permanently in Canada mostly in Ontario, British Columbia, and Québec (IRCC, 2023). The most recent report of IRCC (2023) shows that immigration accounts for 100% of Canada's labour force growth and that by 2036 immigrants will represent up to 30% of Canada's population, which is 10% higher than in 2011. While most immigration policies and initiatives at federal and provincial levels focus on economic immigrants and the benefits they bring to the country, other categories of newcomers such as refugees, have received little attention in the immigration policy processes (Pontes, 2018). In the last two years in Québec, the immigration policies attracted more than 62,000 immigrants to the province. However, studies have shown that most cohorts of Anglophone immigrants are likely to leave the province (Haan et al., 2017). Therefore, these policies were not able to retain the new immigrants. Whereas there is little information on the retention of refugees at the city level due to a variety of linguistic, economic, and administrative factors the refugee retention capacity of Québec is limited (Mata, 2017).

Despite a large body of work on migration issues, to date, very few studies have focused on refugee girls and young women in Canada. As Kohli and Kakko (2018) state "refugee research mainly presents the voices of male asylum seekers as a norm and leaves the gendered aspects of forced migration untouched" (p. 3). Vromans et al. (2018) also emphasize the need for gender-specific research with various cultural groups after resettlement. This gap is acknowledged in UNHCR's Global Compact on Refugees (2018) that requests international organizations, partners, and States to "take account of the rights,

specific needs, contributions and voices of women and girl refugees" (p. 44). International organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organization (WHO), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as local NGOs, have captured some of the issues of refugee girls and young women in various parts of the world with a focus on their sexual and reproductive health, education, and protection from violence.

Good sexual and reproductive health implies that individuals have "a safe and satisfying sex life, the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so" (UNFPA, 2016). Under international laws, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, women and girls have the right to sexual and reproductive health (WHO, 2015). Furthermore, good sexual and reproductive health is one of the cornerstones of the transition from childhood to adulthood. The Interagency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crisis published a briefing paper on reproductive health care. It highlighted the urgent need to strengthen the sexual and reproductive health rights of refugee Rohingya girls by providing appropriate healthcare services such as safe abortion care, private sexually transmitted infections treatments, safe contraception methods (Interagency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crisis, 2018). Likewise, UNICEF (2018) has acknowledged the necessity of providing refugee girls with comprehensive programs that target informing this group and empowering them to protect themselves from violence and sexually transmitted infections. In 2019 under "My Body, My Life, My World," the UNFPA (2019) put special emphasis on the importance of providing "responsive, respectful, confidential and affordable" sexual and reproductive health services for this population (p. 18).

In addition to the sexual and reproductive health of refugee girls and young women, local and international organizations have paid particular attention to their protection from violence (UNICEF, 2015). In 1993, the declaration on the elimination of violence against women and girls defined violence as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering …. including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty" (UN, 1993, p. 2). Even though national and international laws prohibit violence against women and girls, 35% of women experience gender-based violence in their lifetime (World Bank, 2021). Refugee girls are even at greater risk of different forms of violence, including gender-based violence, child marriage, and female genital mutilation (Stark et al., 2018). According to the UNHCR (2021), the financial stress and a lack of food in households during the COVID-19 pandemic put women and girls at greater risk of gender-based violence. In this situation, education can provide adolescent girls and young women with physical protection since it reduces their vulnerability to sexual exploitation, child marriage, gender-based violence and unwanted pregnancy (UNICEF, 2022). In addition, in low and middle-income countries investment in girls' education has a high average rate of return (World University Service of Canada, 2017).

Adolescent girls and young women in refugee camps have to overcome too many obstacles to attend school. In Nduta refugee camps, for instance, one of the main barriers to refugee girls' attending school is the cost of transportation, uniforms, books, other supplies, and school tuition (UNHCR, 2018). Although refugee boys and girls face similar barriers to attending school, girls are often at a greater disadvantage in terms of opportunity costs (Sperling et al., 2016). Many families think that when their daughter attends school, they

will lose the services offered by her, such as taking care of younger siblings, cooking, or washing the dishes. In this situation, when families are forced to choose which child to send to school very often, they have a preference for boys. Education is a fundamental human right for refugee girls and young women and can protect them from physical and mental vulnerability and secure their economic independence and employment in adulthood (UNCHR, 2018). However, it has been shown that access to primary and secondary school after resettlement in different settings is limited. The global gross enrolment rate for refugee girls is 67 percent at the primary level, and at the secondary level, the rate is 31 percent (UNHCR, 2021).

Integration of refugee girls and young women in Canada. Integration is a complex concept and lacks a shared definition in academic or policy discourse. For most scholars in Canada, integration is "a dynamic, multi-faceted two-way process which requires adaptation on the part of the newcomers, but also the society of destination" (Yu et al., 2007, p. 17). Therefore, as opposed to one-way assimilation, integration is accepted as a mutual process involving refugees and host countries (Yu et al., 2007). This is well-reflected in Canada's domestic policies. One of the core responsibilities of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) is to support immigrants and refugees' integration into Canadian society by providing appropriate settlement support services (Government of Canada, 2019) while recognizing that the integration process involves a two-way obligation for newcomers (immigrants and refugees) and Canadian society.

In Canada, formal settlement support services are provided mainly by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are involved in addressing a variety of issues related to youth, addiction, violence, and homelessness (Nourpanah & Poteet, 2016). At the

same time, these NGOs are trying to help different populations of newcomers, such as immigrants, international students, asylum seekers, and refugees. Hence, they often lack enough services and funding despite their willingness to support refugees. According to Poteen and Nourapanah (2016), the inability of formal settlement services to fully support refugees, informal settlement support and agency plays a significant role in refugees' integration.

The availability of formal and informal settlement support services depends on the government's policies and practices toward refugees. In Canada during former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper's tenure (2006-2015), the discourse and practices towards refugees were particularly hostile (Smyth, 2015). The current federal Liberal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is committed, at least on paper, to continue its support to resettle more refugees as part of its overall immigration growth plan (Boynton, 2023)[8]. As noted by Portes and Rumbaut (2014), "in every instance, governmental policy represents the first stage of the process of incorporation because it affects the probability of successful immigration and the framework of economic opportunities and legal options available to migrants once they arrive" (p. 208). While a continuum of possible governmental responses toward newcomers exists, the three main options are exclusion, passive acceptance, or active encouragement (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). When the first exclusion is enforced, it impedes immigration or forces newcomers into an entirely clandestine existence. The second

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[8] It is important to note that Québec was a key entry point of asylum seekers because of its large land border known as Roxham Road, with New York in the U.S.(Ngala, 2022). In March 2020 the crossings were banned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Roxham Road re-opened in November 2021 (CBC News, 2021). According to a joint statement from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and U.S. President Joe Biden in an effort to deter irregular crossings at Roxham Road as of March 25, 2023, police and border officers would return irregular border crossers to the closest port of entry with the United States (Boynton, 2023).

alternative is characterized by granting explicit or implicit access without any additional effort to facilitate or preclude the integration process. The third governmental alternative occurs when authorities actively encourage a particular inflow or facilitate its resettlement.

Regarding government reception, the legal status of the newcomers is a determining factor as it affects their access to benefits and services (Gisselquist, 2019). For example, those granted refugee status in Canada may be eligible for resettlement aid, including accommodation and job training. However, those with no legal status, such as asylum-seekers or undocumented migrants, do not have access to such services. It is important to note that although governmental support can give refugees access to various resources, the interaction of this contextual aspect with individual characteristics can have hugely different outcomes (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). For instance, for refugees who have professional skills, governmental assistance can represent a means to facilitate integration and economic advancement, and for those who lack such skills, it can be a means to achieve family reunification, but it can also prolong welfare dependence and economic marginalization (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

While it is widely accepted that greater public awareness of war, conflicts, humanitarian crises, and refugee issues could imply more active public support, refugees face considerable antipathy. In this regard, the media[9] including traditional broadcast, press, online news platforms, and social media plays a prominent role in shaping public attitudes towards refugees (Dempster & Hargrave, 2017). The latest *Focus Canada* research

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[9] The majority of news images in Western media depict refugees as anonymous faceless masses (Nester, 2022). Previous studies have shown that compared with images depicting refugees in small groups, seeing images of large groups resulted in greater implicit dehumanization (Azevedo et al., 2021).

(Neuman, 2022) shows that the public supports the government's welcoming path regarding immigration and refugees. While seven in ten Canadians support the current immigration growth plan even as the country is accepting more than 400,000 newcomers each year, many continue to be concerned about the legitimacy of some refugees being accepted (Neuman, 2022). Although this research reveals that Québecers are supportive of immigration and welcoming refugees as Canadians elsewhere in the country, other studies show that refugee youth experienced prejudiced attitudes and discrimination. For example, in a qualitative study with 22 war-affected youth in Québec (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2017), the participants feel that the teachers and school staff overlook their pre-migratory lives and post-migratory realities, and for this reason to facilitate resettlement, they seek connections beyond school. As shown by Nsouli (2020), in Québec educational policies have prioritized the acquisition of French. Nevertheless, it is necessary to broaden the emphasis to consider other significant factors in developing children who have experienced war, violence, and trauma.

Social structures: family, school, culture, and settlement services. Previous research indicates that multiple social structures, including family, school, peers, and settlement services have a direct impact on the integration of refugee girls and young women. In this section, I will examine these social structures in detail and show how the current study emerged from the existing knowledge gaps. In reviewing the literature on refugee girls and young women in Canada I examined various databases including EBCO, ProQuest, Google Scholar, Erudit, PsycInfo, and Scopus. Besides, in consultation with McGill librarians I utilized many search terms with different combinations such as young women" or girl* or adolescent*, refugee* or immigra* or asylum, identity or belonging or integration or settlement to name only a few. The following section discusses the active roles of these social structures in the lives of refugee girls and young women based on the studies conducted between 2000 and 2023. At the same time, I would like to highlight several issues I faced in conducting this literature review:

First, I find it problematic when authors that authors put *refugees*, *immigrants*, *newcomers*, *asylum seekers*, and *stateless persons* in the same category. Whereas these people can indeed have similar experiences, such as losing friends and social networks, feeling excluded and isolated, and facing language barriers and culture shock, they have their particular needs and challenges. For a refugee, for instance, finding a job can be a priority upon arrival in Canada, however, for an immigrant who comes to Canada as a skilled worker and has a job offer, other issues matter. To tackle this issue, I sought out studies and research that specifically focused on refugee girls and examined the findings in relation to the broader literature on *immigrants*, *newcomers*, *asylum seekers*, and *stateless persons*.

The second issue was the terms *adolescent and youth*. Although the United Nations (UN) defines adolescents as individuals between 10 to 19 years old and youth as those between 15 and 24, I realized that many authors used other words such as *children, teens, and young people* for a similar age range (12 to 19, 13 to 19, or 15 to 24). Therefore, after my initial searches, I added *child* and *youth* to the key terms to ensure the search was thorough.

Finally, many studies in Canada have investigated the mental health of adolescents and youth with a focus on their experiences of war and trauma before resettlement. However, new conceptual frameworks emphasize the importance of different resource domains that affect adolescent girls' and young women's mental health and well-being (Samuels et al., 2017). Thus, resettlement services need to consider all the above-mentioned factors that affect an individual's mental health at various levels, including an individual's capacity for mental and physical skills, social ecology, material and physical environment, and local values and culture. To address this issue, I decided not to limit my search to mental health services and include all the other available services to increase adolescent girls' and young women's mental health.

Family. Family is the most immediate social institution and can provide a foundation for refugee girls and young women to learn how to navigate and integrate into society (Paat, 2013). It is important to note that in today's modern world, we need to be more careful about the conventional notion of family (Denov & Shevell, 2019). As Denov and Shevell (2019) highlight this is particularly true when dealing with war-affected youth who may have lost their family members and created new family structures that are not necessarily "based on traditional bloodlines and kinship structures" (p. 6). According to Caxaj and Berman (2010)

families play a significant role in constructing a sense of "home" and "belonging" for refugee youth in Canada. However, multiple roles assigned to newcomer girls reflect the reinforcement of gender-specific and traditional norms and, at the same time, the privileging of boys within the family (Khanlou & Crawford, 2006). As the authors note, these practices may contradict those of the host country, placing additional pressure on newcomer girls to effectively negotiate their identities within the family and the wider society.

Dating back to almost two decades ago, Rousseau et al. (2004) investigated the impact of family environment, gender and acculturation on the mental health and well-being of Cambodian refugee youth in Montreal. The results of the quantitative study show that Cambodian girls and boys respond differently to the challenges in the host country, adopting traditional strategies and even borrowing new ones from the host culture. Moreover, it was found that girls in early adolescence are more at risk of internalizing symptoms such as anxiety and depression. This can be explained through parents' awareness of the way their daughters are changing as they grow up in Canada and their concerns about their daughters adopting North American values (Rousseau et al., 2004). Later Bokore (2013) reported on Somali mothers' concerns with raising their daughters in Canada which has a liberal culture around dating, having sex without marriage, drinking, and going out without permission from parents. According to Bokore, mothers are often worried that their single daughters will become pregnant and bring "shame on the family" (p. 101). Therefore, parents play a crucial role in shaping their daughters' integration process in Canada. While parents have different worldviews from their daughters, intergenerational conflicts and cultural dissonance are less likely to occur when they share the same pace of acculturation and when

their daughters respect their parents' desire to maintain the cultural tradition or beliefs of the family (Paat, 2013).

School. School and peers work along with family to facilitate or impede the integration of girls and young women. A narrative inquiry study in Canada explored the role of school in the sense of belonging of female adolescents from refugee backgrounds (Putten, 2021). The study results show that teacher-student positive rapport, opportunities to get involved within the school community, and the availability of support services can foster their sense of belonging (Putten, 2021). However, it was also noticed that gender-based responsibilities at home may challenge their participation in the school community.

In line with these findings, Parker (2021) emphasized the role of Canadian schools in supporting the integration and inclusion of refugee students. Parker (2021) indicated that teachers are able to support refugee students' integration and inclusion only if they are provided with appropriate tools and strategies. By providing teachers with ongoing support, professional development, and adequate resources, they are able to maintain connections and communications among students necessary for creating strong student communities. According to Parker (2021), many teachers do not feel confident in addressing challenges that may arise from diversity in classrooms that are associated with race, gender, culture, and religion. For example, what politeness looks like in diverse cultures can lead to conflicts between teachers and particularly female students, whose models of politeness are misinterpreted by society. In another qualitative study, Ayoub and Zhou (2021) explored the postmigration experiences of six participants (three males and three females) from Somalia from refugee backgrounds in Ontario. Through semi-structured individual interviews, the participants revealed that as they make an effort to adapt to the Canadian culture and school

system, they experience many socio-cultural barriers, such as making friends and communicating with teachers, leading to learning difficulties (Ayoub & Zhou, 2021). In another study with Syrian refugee students between the ages of 10 to 14, their perspectives on school integration in a city in Western Ontario were investigated (Guo et al., 2019). In addition to difficulties making friends, the participants reported that their experiences of bullying and racism affected their sense of belonging and well-being (Guo et al., 2019). The participants also discussed their concerns with teachers treating them unfairly, particularly in handling issues related to bullying; some participants felt that their teachers did not treat the issue as seriously as they should (Guo et al., 2019). Finally, a lack of religious accommodation and the pressure to fit in threatened their sense of religious and cultural identities, posing further obstacles to their socio-cultural well-being (Guo et al., 2019). The participants in this study believed that because of being Syrian and refugee, they were bullied and experienced racism (Guo et al., 2019). In addition to nationality and status, other factors, such as gender, can impact the experiences of refugee youth at school. A study on the experiences of Syrian refugee children and youth in Jordan (Salem, 2020) revealed that female students felt teachers were not engaged with students equally.

Furthermore, female students' level of perceived racism at school showed negative implications on their school attendance (Salem, 2020). In a scoping review of English and German peer-reviewed articles on the integration of refugee children and youth, it was found that the majority of articles did not discuss gender in their analysis (Pritchard et al., 2019). Thus, there is a need for research on resettlement challenges and educational experiences through a gender lens (Pritchard et al., 2019).

Culture. Families are usually affiliated with the culture of the country of origin; schools can represent the culture of the host society, and the interaction between the two can directly impact the integration of refugee youth into society (Paat, 2003). While many refugee families want their children to integrate into the host society with the hope of having a better future, exposure to other cultures from peers and schools can alter the children's cultural values (McBrien, 2005). Portes & Zhou's segmented assimilation theory (1993) argues for the possible outcomes of the adaptation process to the host society's culture. According to the researchers, three adaptation patterns are possible depending on the social, economic, and political factors (Portes & Zhou, 1993). First, the newcomers assimilate into the White middle-class majority of the host society (i.e., Canada, the United States, Australia, or England) (Rumbaut, 1994). For example, post–World War II Eastern European refugees in the United States. The second pattern is "additive assimilation," in which refugee children adopt cultural values from their school and friends without losing their family's culture (McBrien, 2005, p. 331). The third pattern is unsuccessful acculturation and is associated with cultural dissonance, in which refugee children acquire the language and skills of the new culture more quickly than their parents, resulting in family disputes and conflicts (McBrien, 2005). It is worth mentioning that refugee children have the freedom, in one sense, to choose any of the patterns of adaptation. However, the host society plays a significant role in adaptation and integration. For instance, if the host society is supportive of multiculturalism, refugee children are more likely to choose additive assimilation, and on the other hand, when the host society prefers monoculturalism, refugee children may experience cultural dissonance (Paat, 2003). In the Canadian context, a qualitative study on the cultural distance and emotional problems among refugee youth (Beiser et al., 2015) show that

refugee youth from culturally distant backgrounds are more likely to perceive discriminatory behaviour, and the longer they live in Canada, the worse their mental health tends to be. Likewise, in Miled's photovoice study (noted above) with ten Muslim refugee girls and young women between the ages of 14 to 19 in Western Canada (Miled, 2020), the central theme that emerged from the photographs and discussions was their daily encounters of discrimination. Even though participants indicated that these encounters did not occur at school, they had to deal with verbal and even physical expressions of hate outside of society (Miled, 2020). Thus, the interaction between family and school can determine the experiences of refugee girls and young women after resettlement.

Settlement Services. Formal and informal settlement support services can create a sense of belonging and well-being for refugee youth (McKeon et al., 2022). The availability of these services is particularly important for girls and young women who are vulnerable to distress during resettlement (Killian & Lehr, 2015). Women and girls are also more likely to experience isolation because of Sexual and Gender-based violence (SGBV), female genital cutting, or trauma associated with SGBV leading to increased socio-cultural, structural, and emotional barriers during resettlement (Killian & Lehr, 2015; Zivot et al., 2020). Previous studies show that many girls and women are negatively impacted by gender roles and expectations and gendered health systems that prevent them from accessing mental health services (see, for example, Zivot et al., 2020). As stated by Larkin (2022), resettlement for refugee girls and young women "involves constant navigation and re-negotiation of girlhood itself, of how girlhood is understood and experienced concerning each girl's intersecting identities" (p. 61).

In addition, due to the low utilization of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services, refugee girls and young women have been reported to be at risk of adverse SRH outcomes (Metusela et al., 2017). One of the major barriers to accessing these services is socio-cultural restrictions that discourage girls and women from having open discussions about SRH (Meldrum et al., 2016). Not being able to discuss topics such as menstrual body, contraception methods, sexually transmitted infections, and safe sex prevents women from accessing appropriate services, which leads to traumatic experiences of menarche (Metusela et al., 2017). However, after resettlement, some women are eager to support educating their daughters in preparation for menarche (Hawkey et al., 2018). In other words, in some instances where women themselves had received inadequate SRH education and support want to save their daughters from traumatic experiences at menarche (Al Omari et al., 2016). This highlights a need for service providers to facilitate ongoing SRH education for young girls and their mothers (Meldrum et al., 2016).

Although it is widely accepted that gender is an important determinant of health, existing literature on gender and health during refugee resettlement in Canada is still limited (Zivot et al., 2020). A major criticism of existing refugee health research is its narrow focus on quantitative health outcomes and limited incorporation of refugees' voices in recognizing the barriers and pathways to refugee household health (Guruge & Khanlou, 2004; Rousseau & Kirmayer, 2010).

Discussion and summary. Previous studies show that attitudes towards refugees are based on their intersecting identities of gender, class, and ethnicity (see, for example, Salem, 2020). In addition, giving refugee women and girls a chance to contribute their stories to public dialogues could positively impact societal discussions of their experiences

(Tastsoglou et al., 2014). However, to date, few studies have focused on connecting refugee girls with opportunities to contribute their stories to public dialogues. By drawing on insights from previous studies, this section focused on constructing a better understanding of refugee girls' resettlement experiences in Canada. As it was shown, supportive social systems (i.e., families, peers, and schools) can facilitate the integration of refugee girls. Moreover, these interrelated systems need to work in collaboration to help refugee girls overcome sociocultural and educational challenges. Also, the individual characteristics of refugee girls, such as resilience, enable them to integrate into society despite experiencing pre-migration stresses.

Refugees come to Canada to escape war, violence, and humanitarian crisis. However, after resettlement they still need to navigate different pathways and services to start a new life in Canadian society. In addition, refugee girls and young women face additional barriers and challenges in Canada for several reasons. While systemic barriers and exclusionary policies have a negative impact on the experiences of refugee girls and young women (Miled, 2020), interdisciplinary research can capture the nuances of these experiences and facilitate their integration process.

Chapter 3: Refugee Girlhoods[10]

Definition

Wars are having a significant impact on the peaceful lives of people in various parts of the world. As a result of war and violent conflicts, by mid-2021 global forced displacement exceeded 84 million people, and among them 26.6 million became refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2020). For refugees, resettlement involves settling into a new society, where they will start a new life. However, it also means settling into a society with very different sets of norms and values (Mantei 2016). In reality, refugees' resettlement creates psychological challenges and a state in which they may constantly face a choice between maintaining commitment to their ethnic norms or seeking a compromise between their own and the new cultural values. The challenge is even more acute for adolescents, and especially refugee girls since resettlement occurs during their maturation and identity formation (Samuels et al. 2017). Building on girlhood studies, this chapter provides an overview of the issues and challenges that affect adolescent refugee girls' mental health and well-being before, during, and after resettlement; explores interventions that have been used with this population especially participatory arts-based approaches associated with healing and well-being; and identifies critical gaps in both frameworks and practices that could inform research and service delivery by NGOs and governmental organizations.

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[10] Bandarchian Rashti, N., & Mitchell, C. (2022). Refugee girlhoods. In J. N. Lester & M. O'Reilly (Eds.), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Critical Perspectives on Mental Health* (p. 1613–1638). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-12852-4_14-1

Introduction

Few studies have considered what impact displacement or belonging might mean for adolescent refugee girls or what frameworks would be most helpful in designing appropriate interventions to address their well-being, although clearly as Cetin (2019) notes, participation in social life and having a sense of belonging in the country of resettlement can have a positive impact on their well-being. Previous studies have recognized that adequately resourced health care systems are vital to ensure refugee girls' well-being (Samuels et al. 2017). However, it has also been reported that domains beyond the health system have a significant impact on their broader health and well- being. For example, the UNHCR has suggested that services such as language classes, education, and opportunities for work are also necessary for adolescent refugee girls' well-being (UNHCR 2010). Although resettlement can provide girls with an opportunity to start a new life, its success depends on a variety of factors including access to appropriate resettlement services. At the same time, as transnational perspectives on girlhood highlight, it is clear that a recognition of the fluidity of identities, the potential for revictimization in new settings, and a revisioning of what belonging might mean to an adolescent refugee girl and her family is likely to be complex as are the implications for mental health and well-being. The work of Vanner (2019), Taft (2011), and other girlhood scholars draws attention to the need for frameworks that are girl-centered and that recognize global forces at play. This entry aims to "set the stage" for what we hope will be more girl-focused ways of thinking about "refugee girlhood" particularly in the context of well- being.

Well-being as a Construct in the Lives of Adolescent Refugee Girls

Well-being is a broad and complex concept that has attracted a great deal of attention in the last decade. However, as Thomas argues (2009), it is "intangible" and "difficult" to define well-being (p. 11). Previous studies have suggested that overall well-being refers to a situation "when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge" (Dodge et al. 2012, p. 230). In this definition, well-being is a state in which individuals are able to reach a balance between the available resources and challenges. Individuals' well-being is also closely related to their mental health (Rashid et al. 2012). In its broad sense, mental health is related to a variety of concepts including "subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence, and self-actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential" (World Health Organization (WHO) 2001, p. 5). While mental health is crucial to all individuals' overall health, it is of key importance for adolescents since it is characterized by rapid biological, emotional, psychological, and social transitions (Gilles 2014). During this period, adolescents undergo physical changes, begin their transition from childhood to adulthood, and in many settings accept new roles such as spouse, parent, worker, or citizen (Samuels et al. 2017). Although these transitions carry potential risks such as emotional and behavioral problems (Orrnert 2019), they also present important entry points to positively affect the mental and physical health of young people (Gilles 2014). In this regard, it is crucial to provide adolescents with opportunities to acquire key skills related to health and physical development, social behavior, education, and employment (Samuels et al. 2017).

Despite the necessity of providing these opportunities for all young people, in many settings, gendered social roles place a particular strain on adolescent girls' lives in different domains such as marriage, education, and employment (Samuels et al. 2017). Moreover, during adolescence girls become more vulnerable to a whole range of life-changing experiences such as gender-based violence, discrimination, social isolation, and bullying (Stark et al. 2018). Not only is exposure to gender-based violence associated with long-term health consequences for adolescent girls, but also it increases the risk of poor mental health and suicidal ideation (Olofsson et al. 2012). These risks may be exacerbated during and after war/conflicts since in many societies adolescent girls have a lower status and are not able to access appropriate services (Catani et al. 2008).

Previous research argues that the risk for adolescent refugee girls can lead to mental health and psychosocial issues such as high levels of anxiety, stress, and lower levels of happiness (Neira and Barber 2014; Rousseau et al. 2004; Hadfield et al. 2017; Stark et al. 2018a). For example, in a mixed-method study on the emotional well- being of adolescent refugee girls in Lebanon, the majority of the participants reported high levels of sadness, fear, and anger (Roupetz et al. 2020). In a resettlement context, Rousseau and associates (2004) conducted a quantitative study in Montreal, Canada, in which they investigated the impact of family environment, gender, and acculturation on adolescent refugees' mental health. The findings suggest that adolescent girls are more at risk of internalizing symptoms such as depression and anxiety. The authors speculate that this might be because of parents' awareness of how their daughters are adopting North American values and that this can lead to family conflicts which in turn can affect how refugee girls navigate this pivotal period (Rousseau et al. 2004).

Overall, adolescent refugee girls are among the most vulnerable populations of refugees, and their mental health and well-being is adversely affected by various issues in their pre-migration, migration, and post-migration experiences (Ventevogel and Song 2020). In particular, pre-migration traumatic events can lead to the development of psychological distress (Bennouna et al. 2020). In addition, post-migration daily stressors such as social isolation and discrimination are associated with mental health issues with long-term consequences (Asghar et al. 2018).

Risk Factors for Adolescent Refugee Girls' Mental Health and Well-being

It is generally accepted that in refugee populations, high prevalence of mental health issues is associated with gender, age, and low social status (Mels et al. 2010). It has been reported that posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which often co-occurs with other forms of psychological distress such as anxiety and depression, is prevalent among adolescent refugee girls (Catani et al. 2008). In the following sections, the most important risk factors in pre- and post-migration experiences of this population will be further presented and discussed.

Gender roles and norms. One of the factors affecting adolescent refugee girls' well-being is gender norms. According to Levesque (2014), gender roles generally refer to "a repertoire of emotions, attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions that are commonly associated more with one sex than with the other" (p. 2622). In other words, the term gender roles denote acceptable or appropriate behaviors for an individual (e.g., an adolescent girl) based on their gender.

For adolescent refugee girls, gender plays a salient role in shaping their experience before and after resettlement. Different cultural groups may ascribe certain gender roles to

adolescent girls, such as expecting them to be "keepers of the culture" (Hsin 2018, p. 756). In this sense, they are often responsible for holding the traditions of the source country and passing them to the next generation (Ellis et al. 2010). This may be connected with the roles adolescent refugee girls are assigned in the host country and the fact that they are more closely monitored comparing to the boys (Yip and Fuligni 2002). Research has also shown that adolescent refugee girls are allowed less flexibility to explore the host country's culture (Ellis et al. 2010; Yip and Fuligni 2002). Therefore, they develop a stronger sense of belonging to their source country's culture, which has been associated with ethnic identity and overall well-being.

Gender roles and norms define adolescent girls' daily tasks. For example, in a qualitative study in Lebanon, most adolescent girls from Syria reported that in their families, fathers, as guardians of family norms, dictate the household rules and gender roles (DeJong et al. 2018). Moreover, most girls stated that while they are expected to cook and clean at home, boys are encouraged to work outside to make money. Older brothers may become more controlling and tend to restrict their sisters' mobility after resettlement (DeJong et al. 2018). Parents and caregivers often express feelings of being more protective over their adolescent girls than boys (Sommer et al. 2018). According to Camfield (2012), perceptions of risks and safety are influenced by numerous factors such as socio-cultural norms around gendered roles, perceived safety, and whether girls attend school or not. However, residing in new communities is one of the main reasons that parents and caregivers have to protect adolescent girls after resettlement (Sommer et al. 2018). It is important to note that families' perception of protection has a direct impact on adolescent girls' sense of safety and freedom (Meyer et al. 2019). Feeling safe, along with being optimistic in life, has been identified as

one of the main categories of adolescent girls' well-being (Wiens et al. 2014). For adolescent girls, well-being is a positive experience and has a positive effect on their relationships, living conditions, lifestyle, and environment (Wiens et al. 2014).

These findings suggest that adolescent refugee girls are in many situations obliged to follow traditional social and cultural norms. Often unspoken, these rules or expectations of behavior set the standard for appropriate or acceptable behavior. In addition, based on shared beliefs within a specific cultural or social group closely intersect with violence and discrimination against adolescent refugee girls (Adida et al. 2018). Moreover, gender roles are closely related to the perception of protection and safety for families and in turn affect adolescent refugee girls' well-being.

Gender-based violence. In 1993, the United Nations issued the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. As the first international instrument, the declaration explicitly addresses violence to ensure the safety of all women and girls, in particular those belonging to minority group such as refugees:

...violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men...some groups of women, such as women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, refugee women, migrant women, women living in rural or remote communities, destitute women, women in institutions or in detention, female children, women with disabilities, elderly women and women in situations of armed conflict, are especially vulnerable to violence (1993, p. 1).

In the same declaration, violence has been defined as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering" (UN 1993, p. 2) Accordingly, violence includes sexual abuse and assault, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and forced prostitution (Stark et al. 2018b). Although adolescent refugee girls experience various forms of violence in pre-migration settings (e.g., situations of war and conflicts), the exposure to violence exists even after migration and resettlement (Reed et al. 2012). For instance, child marriage, as a risk factor for adolescent girls' early development, has been shown to happen as a result of challenges families face after resettlement such as separation from family members, financial instability, and weakened or absent community-based protection mechanism (Falb et al. 2016). In a qualitative study, Mourtada et al. (2017) investigated the factors that encourage child marriage practices among Syrian refugee adolescent girls in Lebanon. Their findings suggest that post-migration factors including feeling of insecurity, low economic status, and disrupted education contribute to higher risk of child marriage among this population. In this situation, the families see marriage a way of gaining resources and supplies as well as protecting girls from violence occurring outside the home (UNICEF 2014).

The risk of gender-based violence also exists in refugee camps and mixed-sex shelters. Using a cross-sectional mixed-methods approach, Ivanova and associates (2018) conducted a study on sexual and reproductive health knowledge of adolescent refugee girls in a refugee camp in Uganda. The results suggest that a total of 30 girls from 260 were sexually active, of which 11 had reported forced and transactional intercourse in camps and in migration on the way to the camps (Ivanova et al. 2018). Similarly, drawing on a qualitative fieldwork in Gaza, Liberia, and Sri Lanka, Samuels et al. (2017) show adolescent

refugee girls' sense of insecurity and inadequate protection can directly affect their physical and mental health as well as well-being.

Other risk factors include experiencing violence in their homes, separation of parents, one or both parents migrating to find work, or remarrying. Under such conditions, girls typically find themselves compelled to live with their extended family, resulting in increased domestic responsibilities, diminished assistance for educational pursuits, and heightened exposure to severe discipline and verbal abuse (Samuels et al., 2017).

It is evident that various factors such as a lack of social status, economic problems, and gender inequality make this population vulnerable to gender-based violence before, during, and after migration. Previous studies have found that gender-based violence leads to physical and psychological harm. Unwanted adolescent pregnancy, for instance, is of concern for this population since they might be pressured to become pregnant by their partners as the result of inequitable gender norms and power dynamics, or due to the limited access to contraceptive methods (Ivanova et al. 2018). In addition to unwanted pregnancy, the long-term damaging effects of sexual violence for adolescent girls include vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, increased risk of suicidal ideation, depression, and anxiety (Asghar et al. 2018; Olofsson et al. 2012).

Responding to the number of reports on sexual violence against girls in humanitarian settings and the damaging physical and psychological effects resulting from such violence, there is a need for a greater investment by humanitarian communities of their specific needs (Annan and Brier 2010; Falb et al. 2018). Dating back to some of the early work of Kirk and Winthrop (2006) on ways of addressing these issues in refugee camp settings, organizations such as the Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (Interagency Network for

Education in Emergencies (INEE) 2011) are increasingly seeing the need to examine how prevention programs or interventions can be used to reduce the risk of sexual violence or its effects. However, a great deal remains to be done to locate this work in the context of well-being.

Discrimination. General public opinion as well as media actors can have a direct impact on refugees' sense of belonging (Msefer 2017). A global study by Kaur-Ballagan and Gottfried (2017) has shown that more than half of the 18,000 participants from 26 countries believe the claims from people who seek refuge from war and persecution are not genuine, and these people only want to take advantage of their welfare system. While in many societies the intentional acts of discrimination have become more subtle and elusive (Young and Chan 2013), the negative attitude of the general public, immigration laws and regulations, and the role of the media in portraying refugees' as "enemies at the gate" can lead to prejudice and discrimination toward refugees (Esses et al. 2017, p. 1).

Discrimination refers to any intentional acts or judgment that treats individuals unfairly based on their race, gender, language, country of origin, immigration status, and/or other characteristics (Edge and Newbold 2013). Discrimination has been defined on a number of different dimensions including direct versus indirect, individual versus structural, and acute versus chronic (Agic et al. 2019). However, in academic literature, discrimination against refugees is often addressed at the individual level, which is also referred to as perceived discrimination (Agic et al. 2019; Rousseau et al. 2020).

According to Flores et al. (2008), perceived discrimination is the "subjective experience of being treated unfairly relative to others in everyday experiences" (p. 402), typically experienced by ethnic minorities such as refugees. Although many age groups of

refugees experience discrimination in countries of resettlement, compared to adults, the probability of being exposed to discriminatory behavior increases for adolescents since they spend more time outside of home (Brittian et al. 2013). A qualitative study in the United States examined the impact of acculturation and gender in moderating the association between discrimination and mental health among Somali adolescent refugees (Ellis et al. 2010). The findings suggest that engagement of the participants in social activities inside and outside of school with their peers from the resettlement country and integrating into the society increases the likelihood of discrimination based on culture, language, race, and gender (Ellis et al. 2010). However, while continued exposure to discrimination can have a negative impact on adolescents' mental health, it differentially affects boys and girls (Agic et al. 2019) and hence the significance of looking at gender-based discrimination.

Gender-based discrimination as "an adverse action or differential treatment" is derived from biological and sex differences (Kolawole and Adeigbe 2016, p. 7073). Several studies argue that upon resettlement, refugee girls remain at particular risk for experiencing discrimination based on their gender and the fact that they are visible minorities (Ellis et al. 2010; McBrien and Day 2012). In a study looking across the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, the sense of belonging of immigrant and refugee young people was explored (Caxaj and Gill 2017). Through an examination of online blogs and forums, the study revealed that gendered experiences of discrimination were commonly discussed among refugee Muslim girls. In addition, because of cultural barriers, refugee girls might face discrimination and stigma while accessing mental health services (Samuels et al. 2017). For this reason, when experiencing mental health problems, they might delay seeking help

or prefer to use traditional healers (Samuels et al. 2017). Restrictions on adolescent girls'
movement may be a barrier to accessing mental health services (Asghar et al. 2018).

Other studies have found that gendered-based discrimination is an important
determinant for mental health and social well-being of adolescent refugee girls (Kira et al.
2015). In a quantitative study, discrimination against refugee girls in Bosnia, Croatia, and
Austria was associated with psychosocial health problems such as depression, anxiety, and
somatic stress (Sujoldžić et al. 2006). Similarly, a study on Somali refugee girls in the
United States reports that experiencing prejudice, discrimination, and stigma led to higher
levels of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Moreover, discrimination has shown to be
related to the academic success of adolescent girls. According to Roxas and Fruja (2019), a
sense of peer support, friendship, and belonging is central to the adaptation and academic
success of adolescents in educational contexts. In contrast, lack of peer support, friendship,
and exclusion can lead to a sense of isolation and incompetency. These experiences are even
more problematic for girls, leading to a higher rate of drop-out (Roxas and Fruja 2019). In a
participatory action research, Boutwell (2015) investigated how refugee girls' experiences of
resettlement in the United States shaped their understanding of belonging and citizenship.
An analysis of interviews and focus groups revealed that most participants had a diminished
sense of belonging as they distanced themselves from US-mandated citizenship.

Interventions to Address Well-Being

Despite the challenges of migration, once adolescent refugee girls are resettled,
mental health interventions may protect them from long-term consequences of mental health
and well-being issues (Fatusi and Hindin 2010). One such programs is the Creating
Opportunities through Mentoring, Parental involvement, and Safe Spaces (COMPASS), a 3-

year program which aimed to develop adolescent refugee girls' skills and assets in safe

spaces (Falb et al. 2016). The COMPASS program was implemented from 2014 to 2017 in

the Democratic Republic of Congo, Western Ethiopia, and Pakistan. Although the program

was created at a global level, the curriculum was subsequently adapted to each context. The

COMPASS program is based on a theory of change which emphasized the necessity of

establishing a foundation for girls' healthy transition from adolescence to adulthood (Stark

et al. 2018b). The program included (1) weekly 90-minute sessions, where girls discussed

life skill topics such as gender norms, healthy planning, and decision-making; (2) monthly

sessions to engage parents and caregivers and raise awareness of existing risks for

adolescent girls such as violence; and (3) ongoing support for health service to develop the

necessary knowledge to address adolescent girls' needs, particularly after violence (Asghar

et al. 2018).

Several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of the COMPASS programs in

different contexts. The first was a multicountry study that investigated the feasibility and

effectiveness of these programs to respond to and prevent violence against adolescent

refugee girls in Congo, Ethiopia, and Pakistan (Falb et al. 2016). The findings suggest that

the primary outcome of the study was a decrease in the number of sexual violence incidents

in all contexts. The secondary outcomes included decreased physical and emotional abuse,

reduced early marriage, improved gender norms, and positive interpersonal relationships.

Another study in Ethiopia (Stark et al. 2018a) examined the effect of the COMPASS

intervention on economic vulnerability of adolescent refugee girls including being enrolled

in school, working for pay, and experiencing transactional sex. Overall, the results of the

study show that the intervention did not have an impact on the economic outcomes of

interest. In other words, the girls in the intervention program were no more or less likely than those in the control group to attend school, work for pay, or engage in transactional sexual exploitation.

In another program in Jordan, it was reported that the combination of caregiver and school-based interventions provided considerable benefits for refugee girls (Reducing Violence Against Children 2014). The parent and caregiver intervention "My Community Protects Me" included four 2-hour educational sessions to raise the awareness of parents about violence and abuse girls. Weekly school-based intervention "Protecting Myself" focused on increasing children's knowledge and skills in protective behaviors over a 6-month period. The findings suggest that the interventions led to a significant increase in girls' self-confidence as well as an improvement in family's attention to girls' academic achievement. Similarly, the program, TeamUp was developed as a movement-based psychosocial intervention for refugee children and adolescents in the Netherlands between September 2018 and July 2019 (Bleile et al. 2020). The aim of the intervention was to provide a safe space for releasing tension and stress through a wide range of group and individual activities such as dance, body awareness activities, and sports. The authors reported positive results for the program's quality of implementation. In addition, the evaluation of the intervention suggests that TeamUp could contribute to psychosocial well-being of the children and adolescents and provide insight for future interventions. Although the evaluation shows girls joined TeamUp sessions more frequently than boys, there is unfortunately no information on the success rate for adolescent girls.

While empowerment programs can have a positive impact on protecting adolescent refugee girls against violence, it may not change the economic vulnerability of a similar

population. The difference can be partly explained by drawing on a social-ecological model.

Accordingly, in order to see sustainable changes for adolescent refugee girls, programmers

and policymakers might need to address wider structural constraints at various levels (Stark

et al. 2018a). As Samuels et al. (2017) note, a social norms lens puts adolescent refugee girls

at the center and the key areas of well-being around them. In other words, it focuses on

situating girls within their families, their communities, and states, which are characterized

by recent conflicts as well as other health issues.

Research as Intervention: Exploring the Well-Being of Adolescent Refugee Girls

through Girl-Centered Participatory Visual Methods

In recent years, the availability of new technologies such as smartphones, digital

cameras, tablets, and other devices has contributed to the increased interest of researchers in

participatory visual and arts-based methodologies in various disciplines including sociology,

psychology, health, and education. However, apart from technological devices, because of

their emphasis on "voice" and "agency," these methodologies have found their way into the

study of social justice, feminism, and inequality (Gonick 2017, p. 90). They can also play

multiple crucial roles in engaging girls and young women by breaking down or reducing the

power dynamic between the researcher and participants, allowing them to become co-

researchers (Berman and MacNevin 2017). Critically, much of the work in the area of

participatory visual and arts-based methodologies, especially in relation to refugee children

and young people has highlighted the idea of "research as intervention" (D'amico et al.

2016; Linds et al. in press; Mandrona et al. in press) and the potential for arts-based tools

and art making through drawing, performance, Photovoice, digital storytelling and

participatory video to be linked to healing and well-being.

The use of these methodologies aligns well with the girlhood studies framework of "by girls" and "with girls" (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008). Applied to work with adolescent girls and young women numerous girlhood studies have used Photovoice as a research tool in different contexts in the Global South and Global North. These studies have aimed to deepen an understanding of the perspectives of girls and young women on various issues central to their lives: early pregnancy and having to drop out of school (Nyariro 2018); body and sport (Rivard and Mitchell 2013) and abject poverty and access to water (Virgi and Mitchell 2011). Taking into consideration the special needs of refugee girls. Miled (2020) investigated Muslim refugee girls' sense of belonging and their experiences of resettlement in Canada through Photovoice. Ten participants and/or co-researchers captured their daily lived experiences as Muslim refugee girls in Vancouver, Canada. Through narratives and photos, they not only demonstrated how systemic barriers and policies marginalized them as Muslim refugees but also showed their strategies to survive being hopeful and determined to build their homes and identities in Canada (Miled 2020).

Documentary film, digital storytelling, and digital mapping have also been used to understand the lived experiences of refugee youth. For example, "On Tour with Mapping Memories" was the last phase of a five-year participatory media project with refugee youth in Montreal, Canada. The project focused on peer-to-peer dialogue about stereotypes that usually frame refugees such as victims, outsiders or "burdens to the system" (Luchs and Miller 2016). The youth structured their live presentations for different schools, which gave them a unique opportunity to practice public speaking techniques and confidence in sharing their stories. Moreover, this exercise gave facilitators a chance to see how narrating one's past experience as an ongoing and interpretive act has the potential to offer both personal and

professional benefits to the participants. For example, Ayanda, a young woman in the study, could easily develop strong affinities with the audience and was confident enough to present contextual parts of her story.

Drawing is another participatory visual and arts-based methodology to amplify the voices of refugee girls. As a low-tech tool, drawings can help girls' express their feelings, emotions, and hopes. A critical analysis of girls' drawings in three refugee camps in Bangladesh, Burundi, and Lebanon highlighted that drawing is a powerful tool to provide an understanding of refugee girls' experiences in different contexts (Khan in press). While to date the value to the participants remains an understudied area, the extensive work with children draws attention to the potential value to the participants particularly in relation to providing appropriate and gender-responsive services.

Recognizing the significance of these participatory visual and arts-based approaches to providing new perspectives on difficult and sensitive issues such as the perspectives of adolescent refugee girls on their daily struggles. We also see that these methodologies could be effective in giving refugee girls an opportunity to take an active role in the research (and ultimately services and policies) by talking about their resettlement challenges, suggesting appropriate solutions, and informing policymakers through their exhibitions and screenings. As Mitchell (2015) notes, working with girls through their photographs, drawings, and video productions has contributed to what can be described as a "shifting the boundaries of knowledge" from the powerful to those whose words have been silenced.

The goal is to highlight the role that these methods and approaches might have in illuminating new possibilities for looking at well-being through critical frameworks of resistance. As Mitchell and Ezcurra (2017) argue in their participatory visual and arts-based

work with Indigenous girls and young women in Canada and South Africa, these tools offer participants ways to challenge or resist existing social norms in collective. Similarly, Mitchell and Moletsane (2018) write about the ways Indigenous girls and young women might use these various methods to "speak back" to dominant norms. Studying well-being in the context of resistance and speaking back suggests alternative ways to think about what how challenging gender norms could become a feature of well-being for adolescent refugee girls.

Gaps and Emerging Questions

In setting the stage for more nuanced ways of considering the well-being of refugee girls, we are left with a range of questions. The first is a very basic one which asks how we can ensure more gender responsive approaches? Notwithstanding the promising interventions above that point to the significance of centering the perspectives of refugee adolescent girls as a key feature of addressing well-being, a critical gap in the literature remains in terms of a broad commitment to gender responsive approaches. The category of youth or young people masks the particular needs of girls and young women, and the category of girls-and-women can serve as homogenizing, leaving out the significance of age-specific emerging identities of girls and young women between the ages of 12 and 18 in contexts where gender roles, gender-based violence, and discrimination can have a major impact on their health and well- being.

A related question pertains to issues of power. Although power is a hotly contested concern in feminist research, discussions about positionalities and minimizing hierarchies are often absent in the literature on refugee girls and young women. While concepts such as resilience can be helpful to thinking about the needs of individuals and the many services

that take account of trauma, it is important to consider the ways in which the status of the girls and especially their uncertainty in newcomer contexts can be challenged through more collective actions. What would such programs look like and in order to ensure that girls are supported, how could such work also include families?

Finally, we want to raise questions in the context of the changing landscape for refugee girls and young women. In 2020, the world has been gripped by a global public health emergency. As the coronavirus is spreading, it has "profoundly tested" the global commitment to protecting the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, and forcibly displaced people (UNHCR 2020). The COVID- 19 pandemic has also revealed that including refugees in national responses nets to the benefit of all (UNHCR 2020). However, as this report notes, more than 168 countries closed their borders at the height of the crisis, making no exception to refugees and asylum seekers and even pushing them back to their countries of origin. According to Plan International (2020), during the pandemic, many refugee girls and young women have had to drop out of school to care for the elderly and ill family members. In addition, the economic stress on refugee families during the current crisis can put refugee girls at greater risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse. Despite these issues, very little is known about what would this world look like if we saw it through the eyes of adolescent refugee girls and how might that help policymakers to see what programs and supports are required?

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Bridging Statement

In the previous chapter, 'Refugee girlhoods', I explored the risk factors affecting the mental health and well-being of refugee girls before, during, and after resettlement. I also focused on using girl-centred Participatory Visual approaches as interventions that have previously been used with refugee children and youth to heal and improve well-being. Finally, I identified critical gaps in gender-responsive frameworks and practices that could inform research and programs by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the importance of considering the concept of well-being in the lives of refugee girls as they are going through rapid physical, emotional, and psychological changes. Moreover, I explored the impact of gender roles and norms, gender-based violence, and discrimination on the mental health and well-being of this population. Building on previous studies with refugee children and youth, I highlighted the idea of using Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies as interventions. I also argued that arts-based tools such as photovoice, drawing, storytelling, and cellphilming have the potential to protect refugee girls from mental health stressors. In the last section of this manuscript, I raised critical questions regarding the significance of gender-responsive and age-specific programs that can ensure the specific needs and issues of refugee girls in different contexts. While in the previous chapter, I set the stage for more nuanced ways of looking into the well-being of refugee girls and highlighted the significance of employing Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies for centring the perspectives of refugee girls, in the following manuscript I will focus on my photovoice project with nine refugee girls attached to Maison d'Haïti in Montreal North. I will describe the phases of my fieldwork, including photovoice workshops, community-based exhibition and interviews,

and participatory data analysis and will answer three interrelated questions: 1) What needs and concerns do refugee girls have after resettling in Québec? 2) How do they share their perspectives and stories through photovoice? And 3) What solutions do they offer for their issues and concerns? In addition, I will explain the six themes that emerged from the analysis.

The main link between my previous chapter and the next lies in considering girl-centred Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies to amplify the voices, concerns, and needs of refugee girls. These chapters highlight the multiple roles that these methodologies can play in engaging girls and young women and reducing the power dynamic between the participants and researcher. Finally, both chapters highlight girls' agency rather than vulnerability to voice and reflect on their issues and in the decision-making process. While the previous chapter took a more conceptual stance, the next one will present a more methodological perspective to describe the use of photovoice as a Participatory Visual and Arts-based tool, to identify, represent, and enhance the issues and challenges of refugee girls in Québec.

Chapter 4: Adolescent Refugee Girls and Young Women in Québec: Telling the Stories of Resettlement through Photovoice[11]

Despite a large body of research on migration, the resettlement experience of adolescent refugee girls and young women has remained understudied. Inspired by the main tenets of Girlhood Studies and Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodology, the current study aims to shed light on the issues and challenges of this specific population and the solutions to these issues. Specifically, the study examined 1) What are the issues and challenges of adolescent refugee girls and young women after resettlement in Québec? 2) What are the solutions that can address these issues? To answer these questions, nine adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 14 to 24 used photovoice to capture photos and create poster-narratives to share their resettlement stories in Québec. The results show that while the participants feel physically safe after resettlement, they struggle with several challenges, including discrimination, mental health issues, financial issues, and educational barriers.

Keywords: refugee girls, Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodology, photovoice, resettlement

Introduction

By the end of 2023, 117 million people will be displaced or stateless due to war, armed conflicts, persecution, and human rights violations; among them, 29 million will become refugees (UNHCR 2023). While half of the total number of refugees worldwide are women and girls, refugee research has mainly focused on presenting the voices of male

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[11] This chapter is submitted to the *Journal of Refugee Studies.*

refugees (Kohli and Kaukko 2018). Similarly in Canada, where 46% of refugees are women and girls (IRCC 2021), we know very little about the experiences of adolescent refugee girls and young women. Although some of their voices are represented in reports by international organizations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2018), the United Nations Populations Fund (2016), World Health Organization (2014) and United Nations Children's Fund (2014) as well as local NGOs, academic research with adolescent refugee girls and young women is rare. Similar to other populations of refugees, resettlement creates psychological challenges for adolescent refugee girls and young women (Bandarchian Rashti and Mitchell 2022). However, they might require higher levels of determination to navigate these challenges (Larkin 2022). Inspired by the work of Mitchell (2016), Vanner (2019) and other girlhood scholars, the current study aims to address this gap by answering the question: What does the world look like in the eyes of adolescent refugee girls and young women after resettlement in Québec, Canada?

Girlhood Studies use a feminist perspective to see the adolescence of girls and the adulthood of young women. Moreover, in Girlhood Studies girls are seen as active autonomous individuals with agency to narrate their stories and voice their concerns. Therefore, girlhood scholars pay particular attention to girls' voices and agency while highlighting their ability to participate in the research process (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008; Vanner 2019). According to Moletsane and associates (2008) working *with* girls, *for* girls, and *about* girls is an important notion in Girlhood Studies and the notion challenges the concepts of participation and listening to girls' voices as well as the power relationship between the researcher and participants.

In alignment with girlhood studies, Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies such as photovoice, cellphilming, digital storytelling, and drawing provide girls and young women with an opportunity to share their stories and narratives. In these methodologies girls and women use different forms of the arts to engage with issues of importance to their lives and make these issues visible to the community and policymakers. As stated by Linds *et al.* (2023) these approaches are particularly beneficial in working with war-affected youth as they can act as effective tools for coping, integration, healing, peacemaking, intercultural conversation, resistance, empowerment, and self-advocacy.

Building on girlhood studies and Participatory Visual methodologies, this study lies within what Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2008) refer to as working with girls as opposed to about girls. Applied to work with adolescent girls and young women, in this study nine participants from Haiti, Congo, Venezuela, and Brazil captured photos and created poster-narratives[12] to share their resettlement stories in Québec. As a province in the northeast of Canada Québec welcomes 30,000 to 50,000 newcomers each year (IRCC 2021) and under the Canada-Québec Accord has full control and responsibility for the selection and admission of immigrants and refugees (Government of Canada 1991). Moreover, because of its large border with New York, known as Roxham Road, Québec was a key entry point for asylum seekers until March 25, 2023. In this article, I analyze the potential of photovoice for understanding the perspectives of refugee girls in Québec by looking at the findings of the fieldwork that took place in Montreal North in 2021.

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[12] Poster-narratives are typically presented on large-scale cardboard/construction paper featuring the most prominent photos and captions to identify their significance (Mitchell, 2011).

The Use of Photovoice with Immigrant and Refugee Populations

Photovoice is a Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodology that started with the work of Wang and Burris in the 1990s in health research and since then has been used in the fields of education, disability studies, public health, and refugees, indicating its vast applicability. Informed by Paulo Freire's critical consciousness (1972), in photovoice participants use cameras, smartphones, or similar devices to take photos of their issues and experiences. According to Wang and Burris (1997) photovoice has three main objectives: 1) to allow participants to reflect upon their issues and needs, 2) to promote critical dialogue in communities, and 3) To reach decision-makers to enact social change toward community improvement. In this regard, one of the main tenets of photovoice is to 'initiate grassroots social change' (Wang *et al.* 2004, p. 911). An underlying assumption of photovoice is that sharing the project's photographs and corresponding narratives with a public audience can contribute to policy change (Foster-Fishman *et al.* 2005).

By providing opportunities for participants to voice and reflect on their social, cultural, and political issues, as well as ascribing meaning to their lived experience, photovoice transforms 'the researched' into active participants in the research process, rather than simply passive respondents to researcher-led questions (Carlson *et al.* 2006). For this reason, in the last two decades photovoice has been a popular tool for doing research with immigrants and refugees in Canada. In the 'Mapping Vulnerability, Picturing Place' project (Sutherland and Cheng 2009), for instance, photovoice was used to examine how migrant women and international students communicate their experiences in Kingston and Peterborough two small cities in Ontario, Canada. The findings of the study confirm that photovoice enables participants to express their emotions, experiences, and narratives in a

way that others can understand and relate to. (Sutherland and Cheng 2009). In another study with eight refugee women in Alberta in Western Canada and from the South the notion of resilience was explored through photovoice (Pearce *et al.* 2017). The analysis of the data show that the overarching themes that helped participants endure their past traumatic experience, cultivate support in the present, and harness hope for the future included having faith and spirituality, circles of support, and the global community (Pearce *et al.* 2017). In one of the few studies with refugee girls between 14 to 19 years old photovoice was used to capture the experiences of young Muslim women with refugee backgrounds in Western Canada (Miled 2020). Through the photos and narratives, the girls showed that their racial and ethnic differences directly impacted their sense of home and belonging in Canada (Miled 2020).

Photovoice is an ideal research tool for exploring the issues and challenges of adolescent refugee girls and young women. First, photographs and narratives facilitate 'knowledge production, as opposed to knowledge gathering' (Veale 2005, p. 254). Photographs and narratives enable participants to become active in the research process rather than passive respondents. In addition, through discussing the content of photographs participants are able to step back from their everyday lives and become involved in the abstract. Finally, the data from photovoice, such as photographs and poster-narratives can easily be shared with policymakers, community members, and leaders, who may be mobilized to change policies to address the needs and concerns of the participants (Holm 2014). In this study, adolescent refugee girls and young women took photos of their issues and challenges and the solutions for these issues after resettlement in Québec.

The Process of Data Collection

During the data collection phase, I employed photovoice and semi-structured interviews to capture the unique perspectives of the nine girls and young women involved in the study. I initially conducted a series of photovoice workshops, to ensure a participatory approach. In this process, I encouraged the girls to use their cellphones to document their experiences and challenges in Québec through photographs. The girls were actively involved in selecting and discussing the images, which facilitated their engagement and empowered them to share their perspectives through a creative medium. After the photovoice workshops ended, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each girl individually. These interviews served as an opportunity for them to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. I carefully crafted interview questions that encouraged open dialogue and allowed them to share their insights easily.

Throughout the workshops and the interviews, I made conscious efforts to establish a rapport and build trust with the girls. As an 'outsider,' I was aware that my presence might initially impact their responses. However, by maintaining a non-judgmental attitude, actively listening, and showing empathy, I aimed to create a safe space where they felt comfortable expressing themselves authentically. Reflecting on my role and actions during the data collection process, I recognize both positive and negative impacts. On the negative side, as an 'outsider,' there were instances where my presence may have influenced the girls' responses. For example, their desire to please the researcher or conform to perceived expectations could have shaped their narratives to some extent. Acknowledging this, I took steps to mitigate these effects by emphasizing the importance of their genuine experiences and creating a non-threatening environment for open expression. On the positive side, my

presence as a researcher also provided a supportive framework for the girls. They perceived me as a trusted individual who genuinely cared about their perspectives and valued their voices. This, in turn, fostered their willingness to share personal stories and engage in the research process with enthusiasm.

The Present Study

The present study is designed to understand the resettlement experiences of refugee girls in Québec. The study focuses on two research questions (Q).

Q1: What are the issues and challenges of adolescent refugee girls and young women after resettlement in Québec?

Q2: What are the solutions that can address these issues?

Methods

Participants

The participants were 14 to 24 years old and had come to Québec with their families between 2017 to 2020. According to the World Health Organization (2022), adolescence is a unique stage of development between childhood and adulthood from ages 10 to 19. While there is no well-defined age for the term 'young women', the United Nations defines 'youth' as persons aged 15 to 24 (United Nations 2013). In this paper the terms 'adolescent girls' and 'young women' are used to talk about the group of girls that participated in this study.

The fieldwork was conducted in four phases in consultation with participants and Maison d'Haïti. Before starting the fieldwork, I presented the research procedure and the potential benefits of the project for the community in a session with the Director, Executive Deputy, Integration Coordinator, and Youth Program Coordinator of Maison d'Haïti. While

this initial session took place in the summer of 2020, the fieldwork did not begin until the summer of 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, all the phases of the project were conducted in-person and only one of the workshops, where participants preferred to stay at home, occurred online.

Phase 1: Photovoice Workshops

In the first phase with the help of Maison d'Haïti, I recruited nine adolescent girls and young women who had arrived in Québec between 2017 to 2020. In this phase, I organized five photovoice workshops which lasted between one to three hours based on the kind of activities and the engagement of the participants.

Table 1 Overview of the workshops

Workshop 1	Meeting the participants and introducing the project
Workshop 2	Introducing photovoice, its process, and objectives Introducing visual ethics in photovoice Discussing questions on the issues and challenges of refugee girls in Québec
Workshop 3	Introducing the prompts Taking sample photos Discussing technical aspects of photography
Participants had one week to take photos on the prompts	

Workshop 4	Going through the photos
	Creating poster-narratives in groups
	Selecting photos and adding captions
Workshop 5	Planning out a community-based exhibition

In these workshops, the participants learned about photovoice and how it has been used with different population to highlight important and sensitive issues. Before taking the photos, in small groups they discussed some questions related to being a refugee girl in Québec and the available resources which they could use if they needed help. An essential part of these workshops was discussing visual ethics including the 'no faces protocol' that encourages the participants not to take photos of people's faces and respect the rights of people during photography. (Mitchell 2015, p. 49). Participants had one week to take photos in response to the prompts: 1) Take photographs that show your struggles and challenges as a refugee girl in Québec, and 2) Take photographs that show the solutions for these issues.

When they took the photos, I printed all of them, and in three small groups they created poster-narratives to highlight their selected photos and captions to identify their significance. In an individual activity each participant selected one of the photos and wrote a short caption to explain the intended meaning of the photograph and its relevance to the prompts. Participants were encouraged to pose questions and share their ideas, throughout these activities,

Phase 2: Community-based Exhibition

As part of the previous phase, in an online session in collaboration with the participants I planned out a community-based exhibition at Maison d'Haiti. The exhibition was organized in the Arts Centre of Maison d'Haiti in November 2021. The purpose of this exhibition was to 'build momentum and solidarity' between the adolescent refugee girls and young women and the audience (Mitchell 2018, p. 524). In this regard, I benefitted from the framework for Critical Audience Engagement and Dialogue for Social Change (Mitchell *et al.* 2018). The framework is based on the idea that the populations in participatory visual research are typically marginalized, and their visual productions may also be marginalized (Mitchell *et al.* 2018). To tackle this issue, I ensured that the audience, including community members, parents, educators, and girls, acknowledged the purpose and meaning of the photovoice. In addition, the audience also had a chance to reflect upon the photos and poster-narrative and share their thoughts and reflections. Finally, it was ensured that the visual engaged the audience, promoted dialogue, and encouraged social change (Mitchell *et al.* 2018).

Phase 3: Individual Interviews

In this phase, the participants from phase 1 were interviewed individually to share their stories and experiences of resettlement and seeing their photos at the exhibition. The decision to interview the girls was driven by the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of their lived experiences, perspectives, and challenges related to their resettlement in Québec. The interviews aimed to capture the girls' rich narratives, emotions, and thoughts in a more interactive and conversational manner, complementing the visual data collected through photovoice with more in-depth, context-specific information, enabling a comprehensive

analysis of their experiences. While photovoice offered a valuable visual medium for the

girls to express themselves collectively, individual interviews provided a distinct advantage

in several ways. Firstly, interviews allowed for real-time dialogue and follow-up questions,

enabling me to delve deeper into the girls' responses, seek clarification, and explore nuances

in their narratives. This interactive nature of interviews facilitated a more dynamic and in-

depth exploration of their experiences compared to the static nature of photographs alone.

Secondly, interviews provided an opportunity to explore sensitive or complex topics that

might be challenging to capture solely through visual means and in a group setting. The girls

could articulate their emotions, reflections, and personal interpretations more explicitly in

interviews, adding depth and contextual understanding to their experiences. While the

interviews played a crucial role in gathering rich data, I employed both interviews and

photovoice. The inclusion of photovoice data enhances the richness and diversity of the

findings, providing visual representations of the girls' perspectives and experiences. By

triangulating the data collected through interviews and photovoice, I aimed to present a more

comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic.

Phase 4: Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted in two levels. At the first level, participants were

invited to a final workshop on Participatory Data Analysis. Participatory Data Analysis is a

collaborative method of analysis designed to involve participants with varying levels of

research proficiency (Flicker and Nixon 2015). In this workshop, they had an opportunity to

go through the photos and poster-narratives from phase 1 and 2 of the study and identify the

common themes that reflected the challenges of refugee girls in Québec as well as solutions

for these issues. At the second level, I used Reflexive Thematic Analysis to analyze the

transcripts from all the workshops and interviews and captions of the photos and poster-narratives. In the following section, I focus on the steps that I took for Reflexive Thematic Analysis and explain the findings along with the photographs taken by the participants in phase 1 of the study.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis

In 2006, Braun and Clarke introduced Thematic Analysis (TA) as a method for examining qualitative data. In essence, TA serves as a systematic tool for identifying, organizing, and understanding patterns of meaning (known as themes) within a data collection (Braun and Clarke 2006). Rather than identifying unique meanings in a single data item in TA the researcher is able to see and identify 'collective or shared meanings and experiences' (Braun and Clarke 2012, p. 57). Because of its accessibility and flexibility TA has been widely used in various disciplines such as education, psychology, and medicine. Moreover, its accessibility has enabled research teams to conduct analysis in Participatory studies where many involved in the process of analysis are not trained researchers. Compared to TA, Reflexive Thematic Analysis is theoretically more flexible which means it can be employed within a wide range of theoretical frameworks (Braun and Clarke 2021). I have chosen to use Reflexive Thematic Analysis as it allowed me to determine the outcome and focus of the study rather than being restricted to a certain theoretical framework. The data for Reflexive Thematic Analysis came from three sources: 1- transcripts of the photovoice workshops, 2- transcripts of the 9 individual interviews, and 3- captions of the 27 photos and 3 poster-narratives. However, throughout the data analysis they were considered a whole data set rather than separate since they all focused on the resettlement experiences of refugee girls. The five steps of Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis provided

a nuance and complex insight into the experiences of the participants and not a straightforward way to answer the research questions.

Step 1: Familiarization with the Data

While an interpreter was present in all phases of the study to help with English to French and French to English translation, by conducting all the phases of the data collection myself I had the opportunity to develop deep and intimate knowledge of the dataset. Particularly during the workshops, I managed to engage with participants, establish good rapport with them, and understand their stories. This experience was valuable to me during the interviews when participants shared more personal stories and talked about issues related to their family, school, or community. Through the transcription process, while I listened to some sentences or even words multiple times, I was quite familiar with the data since I had previously engaged in the conversations and was aware of the issues that had been raised. Yet, transcribing the data was particularly beneficial as I noticed the things that I had not seen during the interviews. Since the beginning of the data collection and data analysis I also used a reflective journal to make notes of my personal reflections about participants' lived experiences as well as my own assumptions and biases about their experiences.

Step 2: Doing Coding

Coding the data was initially conducted for the workshops and then interviews and photo captions and poster-narratives. The process started with going line by line through the transcripts and highlighting anything that was related to the research questions. In the second round, I applied more summative rather than conceptual codes to the highlighted

sections. However, in the third round, when I re-visited the transcripts, some latent codes were applied to capture the underlying meaning of what participants had stated. While semantic coding involved exploring meaning at the surface of the data and capturing explicitly expressed meaning, latent codes focused on a deeper level of meaning that could sometimes be quite abstract from the obvious content or the data. Throughout the coding process, I constantly reminded myself that my task was to demonstrate meaning and notice shared or similar meaning across the dataset. It is important to note that meaning in TA ranges from inductive (data-driven) to deductive (researcher/theory-driven) orientations (Braun and Clarke 2021) and in my analysis I took a more inductive approach to raise the voices of the participants. Yet, I was aware that I had brought my own perspectives and assumptions to meaning making and for this reason my engagement with the data could not be purely inductive.

Step 3: Generating Initial Themes

While codes capture a single idea or concept, themes capture multiple facets of an idea or concept (Braun and Clarke 2012). To identify patterned meaning I initially considered all the codes from the workshops, interviews, and captions of the photos and poster-narratives and organized them in a way that reflected the commonalities in what participants had said. Each participant had shared a unique perspective and story. However, some commonalities were found in the stories. In this step, I constantly reviewed the codes that I had originally created to ensure that the themes were grounded in the data. For theme-evaluation I used the following questions from Braun and Clarke (2021):

- Does this provisional theme capture something meaningful?

- Is it coherent, with a central idea that meshes the data and code together?

- Does it have clear boundaries?

Step 4: Developing and Reviewing Themes

Through re-engagement with the coded data as well as the dataset as a whole, I evaluated the initial themes. This was mainly because I wanted to ensure a viable theme/pattern in the data and its boundaries could be identified. In this step, I also discarded a few of the initial themes to ensure that I was not trying to generate a pattern that was not actually there or missing an important theme/pattern.

Step 5: Refining, Defining, and Naming Themes

In this step I focused on further development around the themes as well as a more precise analytic work refining the process of analysis. In other words, I wrote the theme definition, including the abstract of the theme and scope of the theme. I tried to clearly state what the central concept in each theme is, what the unique feature of the theme is, and how each theme contributes to the overall analysis. Finally, I named the themes and consulted with my supervisor to check the wording of the themes.

Findings

Six themes emerged from the Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Out of the six themes, four focused on the issues and challenges, and two highlighted the solutions for these issues. Each theme highlighted one aspect of the resettlement experiences of adolescent refugee girls and young women in Québec. An important recurring theme in the workshops and interviews was discrimination that was mentioned by the participants in relation to other words such as 'aggressive', 'vulnerable', 'distrust', 'uncomfortable', and 'racism'.

Direct and Indirect Forms of Discrimination

One of the major issues that participants captured in their photos and discussed in different activities was discrimination. The participants shared their daily encounters with discrimination and how those encounters make them feel 'inferior'. In their photos and narratives, they frequently referred to the death of George Floyd in the United States and the way police brutality makes them feel 'unsafe' and 'uncomfortable' rather than 'safe' and 'protected' (figure 1). As one of the participants, Karina mentions: 'They (police) are supposed to make us feel safe but right now they just make us feel like thinking that if something happens, we start thinking we don't know if we should call them and if we call them, it's not like they help us because might turn against us.'

Karina also emphasized that not only police brutality affects Black people physically but also has a direct impact on their mental health. This was shown in 2018 in one of the first studies on the impact of police killings of unarmed black Americans on the mental health of people who were not directly affected by the incident (Bor *et al.* 2018). The findings of the study show that police killings have an adverse impact on the mental health of black Americans (Bor *et al.* 2018). In another study by Young-Drake and colleagues (2017) it was reported that police violence on Black people has destructive psychological effects on Black communities. In the same study it was shown that police violence has significant effects on mental health in Black communities by 'breeding mistrust in the institutions' which are meant to keep us safe (Young-Drake *et al.* 2017, p. 5). The problem is exacerbated when other barriers, such as mistrusting mental health services, prevent Black communities from seeking mental health support. The lack of trust was also expressed by

one of the participants Gloria when she said she cannot talk to a psychologist or therapist because she does not know 'what they do with that information.'

Many participants mentioned that they do not think they are different from others. However, for others they are considered outsiders because of their 'color of skin' or even the way they speak. As Gloria observes: 'To us we are not different because we have the exact same kind of body. Whether we are black or white we have the same blood, the same heart, even if we are different from outside we are the same. We are all human. Nobody is inferior or superior. Even if the appearance is different. We are equal. And you cannot see a person different from others or better than others.'

Regarding figure 2, the participant expresses her concern about how people sometimes judge Black people without knowing them. As she mentioned she likes to ask these people 'why do you judge me without knowing me?' The presence of various forms of discrimination against refugee girls in Québec resonates with the broader discussions on systemic racism, which Black girls encounter on a daily basis. This discrimination could manifest as bullying (Garbern *et al.* 2020), racial profiling (Razzak *et al.* 2020), xenophobia (Roupetz *et al.* 2020), or marginalization (Stewart *et al.* 2019) within the host society.

Figure 1 'Say no to police brutality'   *Figure 2 'Get to know us before you judge'*

Complexity of Mental Health and Well-being

In their photos and discussions, the participants frequently talked about their 'physical and mental health' and why being 'safe' after resettlement is important but not enough. According to several participants, it is a 'privilege' to be in a safe country like Canada. However, there are other factors which are affecting their mental health. While cultural factors can have an impact on the participants' understanding of mental health, in their conversations they mainly discussed mental health in relation to 'depression', 'anxiety', 'COVID-19', and 'isolation'. For instance, as one of the participants mentioned, to be 'healthy you need mental health support because I know many girls who have depression'.

Similarly, another participant stated that since teenagers think nobody listens to them and as a result, they 'close all their feelings and become detached and they become depressed' (Figure 3). In addition to depression, several participants shared their experiences of anxiety. As one of the participants Jalo states: 'I'm generally anxious. I can't really be alone. Like if I'm somewhere with a lot of people it just gives me anxiety, I would just close

I don't know what to do and I would just be on my phone. So, I open and close it and I'm like what should I do?'

In 2018, in a cross-sectional study on the mental health of adolescent refugees in Malaysia (Low *et al.* 2018) it was found that compared to male adolescent refugees, females show a higher level of depression and anxiety. This difference can be explained by the fact that family interactions generally have a larger impact on females. Therefore, they tend to internalize their childhood experiences, the stress and violence experienced by their parents, and the discrimination and injustice from their environments (Low et al. 2018). These findings are consistent with another study in Montreal, Canada (Rousseau et al. 2004), which revealed that adolescent girls are more at risk of internalizing symptoms such as depression and anxiety.

Figure 3 'This is how you are when you're depressed'   *Figure 4 'We (teenagers) are depressed and lonely'*

During the interview, one of the younger participants Jalo (14 years old) explained why being a 'teenager' and 'refugee' is difficult. She adds that: 'It's like you're going through a lot already but there's a lot of other things you need to cope with. You're

changing everyday but you also have to get used to a new culture, new school, new friends. It's just too much.'

Adolescence is a critical period characterized by rapid physical, biological, psychological, and social transitions (Gilles 2014). During this period, adolescents undergo physical changes, begin their transition from childhood to adulthood, and in many settings accept new roles such as worker or citizen (Samuels *et al.* 2017). Moreover, for refugees these transitions happen in a context where they encounter other challenges including integration into a new society, studying in a new education system, and adapting to a new culture. In this situation it is important to 'talk' and 'share' the things that are challenging and that can make them feel better.

While in photos and narratives the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was not directly mentioned, in several interviews the participants stated that the pandemic and the restrictions made them more 'isolated' and 'lonely'. As Diane observes: 'And I lived alone. I didn't go out. I just went out with one person. I didn't have friends. I couldn't tell all these to my mom, but I wanted some friends. Someone told me if COVID was over I could do things (outside). But I was home all the time. I didn't have a problem with loneliness. But I know for youth loneliness can destroy your life. The outgoings could be a good way to meet people, not necessarily to talk to people but also listen to people. It's really good.' In addition, Hannah mentions: 'For me the isolation was bothering a little. I had nobody to talk to.' It is important to note that the complexity of mental health and well-being is an important aspect of the experiences of refugee girls and this complexity is increased when intersecting with other factors such as race, gender, social class, and immigration status.

A growing body of literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on resettled refugees has revealed that compared to the host population, refugees faced unique challenges such as reduced access to public services, economic hardships, and mental health exacerbations (Brickhill-Atkinson and Hauck 2020). In addition to isolation and loneliness, recent studies show that resettled refugee populations are at greater risk of exposure to the coronavirus such as experiencing poverty, living in crowded houses, and working in less protected environments (Clarke *et al.* 2021). While in this study several participants talked about financial issues and having to live in crowded houses, they did not explain if these factors affected them more during the pandemic.

As Roseangélica observes: 'I want that the apartments have more rooms because there are a lot of us in our family and the place is small. And if somebody comes over it's worse. Because there's not enough space.'

Integration is Long and Multifaceted

Another major theme that participants frequently discussed in their photos and narratives was integration and the factors that affect this process in Québec. As one of the participants Catalina states: 'To be integrated into society, you need to be supported by your parents, family, teachers, and the government.'

Integration in its broadest sense focuses on the participation and inclusion of refugees in the host society. However, successful and effective integration 'requires a social context that supports inclusion and participation' of refugees (Hynie 2018, p. 265). According to the Holistic Integration Model (figure 5) integration occurs across three

spheres including subjective, interactional, and social which are grouped around social identity, personal history, and socio-economic context (Hynie *et al*. 2016).
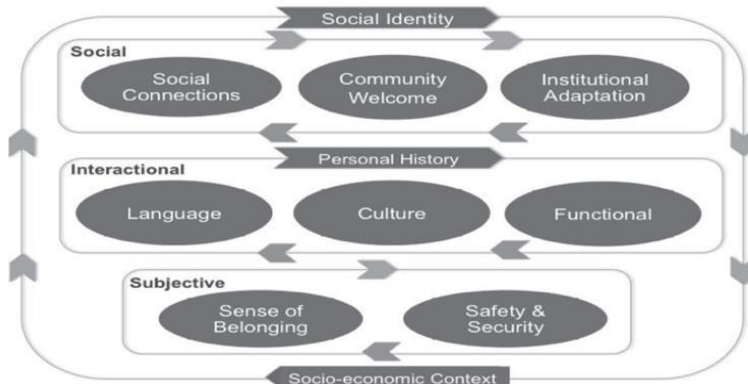

Figure 5 The Holistic Integration Model (Hynie et al. 2016)

In line with this model, participants shared their experiences of integration in Québec at different levels. In the subjective individual level, for instance, one of the participants stated that when she arrived, she felt 'really safe' and she was grateful for the physical 'safety' but 'mentally' she was going through a lot and she did not feel she 'belonged' here. In another case, one participant mentioned that studying in Québec, whether online or in-person, is challenging as the 'culture' is totally different from what she had experienced before.

Figure 6 'The school culture is different in Canada'

Figure 7 'One of our problems is winter and waiting for the bus that is always late'

In a study on refugee students' views on school culture, rules, and methods and techniques employed by teachers at schools in Turkey, Gömleksiz and Aslan (2018) found that this particular group of students face challenges in regard to course contents, medium of instruction, and interaction with their peers. Furthermore, in another qualitative research in Ontario, Canada government-assisted refugee students' perspectives were examined (Monteiro *et al.* 2012). The findings of the study suggest that refugee students' sense of belonging can be improved through creating an anti-immigrant environment in the school culture.

Another participant expressed the need for understanding that integration is a 'long process' and does not happen 'in a day or two'. As Karina observes: 'You just get here, and the system and the culture is not the same, so you need to adapt to new things here. You should know that is a long process and takes time. Integration doesn't happen in a day or two. There are many things you need to figure out.' In this regard, Wilkinson (2001) makes a distinction between short-term and long-term integration. While successful short-term integration of refugees in Canada can include adjusting to a new climate, finding secure employment, learning French or English, and even locating the nearest grocery store, long-term integration goals can include making friends, finding a job in a more specific profession and learning about Canadian culture, customs, and etiquette (Wilkinson 2001). However, this process is not identical for all refugees. For instance, when the individual knows English and/or French as with the participants in this study, learning the language is not part of the integration process. Thus, the integration process is unique for each individual and varies based on the individual's status, age, and even nationality. This aligns with the

broad discussions of intersectionality, which recognizes that individuals' multiple identities interact to create their experiences and social positioning. Similar to other groups the participants did not form a monolithic entity and had diverse experiences which were influenced by multiple factors. For example, in this study one of the participants was a 20-year-old refugee girl from Haiti. She left her family to come to Québec hoping for safety and a fresh start. While she spoke French fluently and was able to navigate the daily interactions and communication in Québec, she still faced challenges related to living on her own, making cultural adaptation and establishing a new life in a foreign country.

Financial Issues Pose Different Challenges

The Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) or Province of Québec provide government-assisted refugees resettling in Canada with financial support for up to one year or until they are self-sufficient, whichever comes first (IRCC 2022). In addition, this category of refugees is entitled to a one-time household allowance upon arrival (IRCC 2022). Despite the financial support, a study from the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy in August 2022 has shown that there are currently one million refugees in Canada and their economic struggle is real (The School of Public Policy 2022). According to this report, after ten years of living in Canada, the median income of a refugee is $27,000 which is $13,600 less than the median annual income at the national level (The School of Public Policy 2022). Compared to other groups of newcomers, refugees face additional barriers that impede their socio-economic integration into the society including not having access to transcripts or job histories (The School of Public Policy 2022). Another study in Canada found that the economic integration of refugee women mainly depends on their level of education (Ogoe 2022). Understandably, the findings of this study show that refugee

women with university degrees earn much more than those with a high school diploma or less (Ogoe 2022). Similarly, in this study the girls and young women expressed their concerns about financial instability in their photos and narratives. For example, in the following photo (figure 8) Hannah talks about the need for having an 'acceptable credit history' prior to be approved to rent an apartment or house. She further explains: 'When I took this photo I wanted to show financial issues. For example, having good credit is important and when a person arrives here they need good credit to rent a house but it is very difficult because that person has no credit history or a job. When you arrive if nobody knows you they don't believe that you can pay for things in life so sometimes you know someone who help you that would be good.'

Figure 8 'It is usually difficult for newcomers to get a credit card when they arrive'

Hannah had mentioned in one of the workshops that she was studying psychology in Congo when the unsettling situation forced them to leave their home and seek asylum in Canada. Like many other refugees, when she arrived, she did not have her academic

transcripts and had to work in a minimum paid job. Two other participants also said that they have to work in McDonald's on weekends in order to help their parents 'pay the bills.'

Not surprisingly, economic stability is one of the social determinants of health, which have a direct impact on people's well-being and quality of life (Healthy People 2030 2020). In other words, people with unstable employment are more likely to live in poverty. As a result, they are not able to afford healthy foods and are more likely to become ill (Healthy People 2030 2020). As one of the participants mentioned 'healthier food like vegetables and fruit' are less accessible and for this reason they normally go to 'fast-food restaurants' which are more affordable and less expensive. In addition to employment and nutrition, several participants talked about their housing condition after resettlement in Québec. This is in line with previous studies which highlight that one of the most common challenges of resettlement for refugees is housing instability (Oudshoorn *et al.* 2021). Similarly, a qualitative study with 27 female newcomers in Montreal found that housing instability poses unique challenges for women refugees (Walsh *et al*. 2016). In this regard, due to a lack of secure housing they had to stay with relatives, share rooms, or live in temporary shelters which caused issues such as financial dependency, interpersonal conflicts, or exploitive relationships (Walsh *et al.* 2016). As one of the participants Rosangélica states: 'There are a lot of us in our family and the place is small. And if somebody comes (over) it's worse because there's not enough space.'

In their discussion one of the participants said that she wanted to take a photo to show 'a family who lives in one small apartment' but she did not know how to take it. She took the following photo instead.

Figure 9 'There's only two rooms in our house. I have one room with my brother and two sisters and the small baby sleeps with my mom'

Solutions and Recommendations

While most of the photos produced by the participants focused on their issues and challenges after resettlement in Québec, in their discussions and interviews they suggested various solutions to tackle these issues. In the Reflexive Thematic analysis, I saw that their suggested solutions broadly highlighted the importance of education and creating a circle of trust. Most older girls, for instance, mentioned that they would like to ask the government for 'opportunities to study at university'. They also added that as a refugee it is not possible to think about 'higher education' since the tuition fees are more than your income. However, if the government financially supported them, they could continue their education and help the economy in the long run. The situation is different for younger girls since they have access to 'public schools for free'. Previous studies have also acknowledged that the benefit of education goes beyond education itself. As a developmental tool education impacts economic growth, sustainability, empowerment, poverty alleviation, and human rights protection (Cook 2020). Education is particularly vital for refugee girls since it offers a

learning space with a 'potential to protect and safeguard' them from risks of exploitation, sexual abuse, and child marriage (Folven 2022, p. 36). One of the participants mentioned that higher education could help her 'break the monotony' of everyday life in Québec. According to the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (Allaf *et al.* 2022), education can provide a sense of routine and stability, which are beneficial for refugees' well-being. Additionally, it was frequently mentioned by the participants that having a 'confidential' circle of trust can help them deal with their issues and challenges.

As Catalina mentions: '(At Maison d'Haïti) there is a workshop each Wednesday for girls between 10 to 18 years old. They talk about what they think about things and they never go outside. What they say stays there. So, it's a good thing this circle because it is confidential, but it is only for girls between 10 to 18 years old not for us.' According to the participants, being in this circle can help them share 'what they think without being judged'. This is in line with a recent qualitative study which indicated that Syrian refugees in Germany tend to rely on their social capital in order to make informed decisions and collect necessary information (Al Masri *et al.* 2021). The circle of trust according to the participants should be a 'safe circle' where they will be 'listened to.'

Karina observes: 'I think when you're a teenager you are going through a lot, and you need people to listen to you and you need some people to hear what you have to say but people just they react before they listen and that's bad …you know? And I'm not talking just for me I'm talking for everybody. We need to be listened; we need to be understood everywhere.' Participants also reported that in that circle of trust they would like to invite girls from different nationalities and cultures since we need to be 'united' and 'fight together' in order to change the world for the better.

Discussion

Being young, female, Black, and refugee, can entail multiple challenges in Québec for several reasons. First, it has been shown that discriminatory behavior is prevalent in Canada, and it removes the sense of security among refugee youth (Nakeyar *et al.* 2018). Experiences of discrimination have also shown to have a negative impact on refugee youth's mental health (Hadfield *et al.* 2017). Second, compared to boys, girls are often at a greater disadvantage in terms of opportunity costs (Sperling and Winthrop 2016). In other words, many families think that when their daughter attends school they will lose the services offered by her such as taking care of younger siblings, cooking or washing the dishes. As one of the participants mentioned in this study her parents expect her to "help with the housework" and taking care of her "younger siblings". Finally, it has been shown that Black refugees in Canada have to deal with additional challenges such as systematic anti-Black racism (King *et al.* 2022).

This study's findings align with the literature highlighting the complexity of integration after resettlement (Hynie *et al.* 2016). Social identity, personal history, and socio-economic factors can influence refugees' integration process after resettlement (Hynie *et al.* 2016). In addition, the participants in this study revealed that experiences of racism and discrimination widely affect their resettlement experience in Québec. According to previous studies, these issues are alarming in Western countries, including Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Canada and affect all aspects of refugees' lives in the host country (King *et al.* 2017). Therefore, to promote successful integration in the host communities the government and non-governmental organizations need to focus on

creating programs and interventions which directly address the issues of racism and discrimination (King *et al.* 2017).

The nine participants in this study suggested that in order to deal with these issues, there are several possible solutions. First, they suggested that creating a "circle of trust" can be helpful. In this circle they can "make connections" with the members of the society and "share their stories and experiences" in Québec. According to the participants, this circle can be "a safe space where everyone can open up and talk about their daily problems" without being judged. Second, they suggested that creating opportunities to study or take educational classes can have a tremendous impact on their quality of life in Québec. Going to university, in particular, can help them get a degree and develop the necessary skills for finding a well-paid job after graduation.

Conclusion

This study sought to highlight the issues and challenges of a group of adolescent refugee girls and young women from Haiti, Congo, Venezuela and Brazil after resettlement in Québec. Using photovoice, as a Participatory Visual methodology, it explored the ways in which the participants shared their stories and narratives through photographs. Following the work of girlhood scholars, the study attempted to show the world through the eyes of adolescent refugee girls and young women. As adolescents and young women with refugee backgrounds with intersecting identities, the participants revealed that they face additional barriers related to education, employment, mental health, and financial issues.

In November 2022, Sean Fraser the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada released the immigration plans for the next three years (IRCC, 2022).

Accordingly, the Government is continuing to provide a 'safe haven' to asylum-seekers.

Similarly, Canada's refugee system is based on saving lives and creating stability to those

with a well-founded fear of prosecution (IRCC 2022). Canada has an international

reputation for being safe and welcoming for refugees and except for one of the participants

in the current study, the rest agreed that Canada is indeed a 'safe place'. According to

several participants, compared to the United States, it is 'easier to receive a status in Canada'

since the 'government appreciates young people'. However, after arrival even if they receive

their status, they have to overcome challenges related to education, employment, mental

health, and financial issues. As the findings of this study show because of being female and

young the stories of adolescent refugee girls and young women can be unheard. In this

situation, their specific needs and challenges might not be acknowledged for creating

resettlement programs. Thus, through listening to these stories the government and local and

international organizations are able to create effective and suitable programs which

encourage meaningful participation of the girls and young women in society and help them

reach their full potential.

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Bridging statement

In the previous chapter, 'Adolescent refugee girls and young women in Québec: Telling the stories of resettlement through photovoice,' I aimed to address the second set of my research questions: 1) What are the issues and challenges of adolescent refugee girls and young women after resettlement in Québec? 2) What are the solutions that can address these issues? My main objective was to shed light on the following broad question: What does the world look like in the eyes of adolescent refugee girls and young women after resettlement in Québec, Canada?

To answer these questions, I described the three phases of my fieldwork in Maison d'Haïti in 20221. In the fieldwork, I investigated the resettlement issues and challenges of nine refugee girls who came to Québec from Haiti, Venezuela, Congo, and Brazil between 2017 and 2020. I also examined the solutions that the girls themselves can identify to address their needs and concerns. In line with the principles of Girlhood Studies and Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodology, I explained the potential of photovoice for providing a space for marginalized populations such as refugee girls and young women to express their voice and power. As I showed in this paper, the findings of the study reveal the six themes that emerged from the Reflexive Analysis. Four out of six themes highlighted the issues and challenges related to discrimination, mental health and well-being, the complexity of integration, and financial issues. In addition, two themes focused on the solutions for these issues, including opportunities to pursue education and creating a circle of trust. An important theme in the workshops and interviews was discrimination that was mentioned by the participants in relation to other words such as "aggressive," "vulnerable," "distrust",

"uncomfortable," and "racism". Therefore, being young, female, Black, and a refugee in Québec presents several difficulties to adolescent refugee girls and young women.

My discussion in my previous manuscripts revolved around using Participatory Visual and Arts-based approaches to work with refugee girls whose voices are often unheard in refugee research. In addition, both manuscripts focused on the need to acknowledge girls' agency and empowerment that would enable them to share their stories and narratives. Finally, they both took a girl-centred approach to discuss the specific needs and concerns of refugee girls.

In the previous chapter, I revealed the findings of the study that emerged from the Reflexive Thematic Analysis. However, in the following manuscript, I will describe the process of participatory data analysis. During this process, which required high levels of engagement and interaction between me and the participants, the participants analyzed the photos and poster-narratives from different phases of the study. The overall aim of the following manuscript is to contribute to considering the involvement of participants beyond data collection and emphasize that there are various approaches to conduct participatory data analysis. It is important to note that I conducted the Reflexive Thematic Analysis after the participants' analysis to put their voices at the centre of interpretation and analysis. Therefore, the second and third manuscripts are not in chronological order. For this thesis, it made sense to present them this way because it allowed for a deeper exploration of the participants' perspectives and ensured their narratives remained the focal point of the research.

Chapter 5: Participatory Data Analysis in a Photovoice Project with Refugee Girls[13]

Introduction

In this chapter, I map out the steps I took to facilitate a participatory data analysis workshop within a photovoice project that explored refugee girls' and young women's engagement in resettlement programs in Montreal, Canada.[14] Resettlement programs are offered to ease the transition of refugees and provide access to key services such as mental health and education (Morland and Levine 2016). Resettlement programs are particularly important for adolescent girls and young women, enabling them to acquire key social, educational, and employment skills during a critical period of their psychological and social development (Samuels, Jones, and Abu Hamad 2017). The main objective of my study was to give refugee girls and young women an opportunity to narrate their stories and experiences of resettlement in Québec, using photovoice as a participatory visual method.

Photovoice

Wang and Burris (1997) coined the term photovoice to refer to a research process in which participants take photographs to identify and represent critical issues, with the broader goal of enhancing their communities.[15] Photovoice enables people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, promotes critical dialogue about important issues, and endeavours to reach policymakers (Wang et al. 1998). In developing their SHOWeD method for carrying out photovoice research, Wang et al. (1998) pose the following questions for

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[13] This chapter is accepted for publication in Schwarz, K., Hutten, R., & Mitchell, C. (2023). *Participatory data analysis in/as feminist research*. University of Alberta.

[14] Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from one place to another where they might be able to acquire permanent residency (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2020).

[15] Wang and Burris (1997) first used photovoice to understand the public health needs of 53 adult women from China.

participants to discuss: "What do you **S**ee here? What's really **H**appening here? How does this relate to **O**ur lives? Why does this situation, concern, or strength **e**xist? What can we **D**o about it?" (80).

Photovoice has meaningful resonances with feminist theoretical frameworks, specifically building upon Maguire's (1987) feminist participatory approach and Freire's (1970) notion of *conscientization* (the idea that a new awareness of one's self-in-context can lead to social change). Furthermore, photovoice is a research tool that is meant to amplify the voices of marginalized groups, including women and girls (Mitchell, De Lange, and Moletsane 2017). For instance, scholars have employed photovoice to explore girls' perceptions of water and sanitation access (Sajan Virgi and Mitchell 2011), pregnant teenagers' and young mothers' experiences re-entering formal education (Nyariro 2021), girls' perceptions of physical education (Rivard 2015), and girls' perceptions of feeling safe and unsafe as well as feeling strong and not so strong (Mitchell 2015). My research specifically builds on the work of scholars who have utilized photovoice with war-affected populations. For example, Green and Kloos (2009) used photovoice with 12 internally displaced youth residing in a camp in Uganda who deployed digital cameras to take photos of everyday life in their communities. More recently, Miled (2020) conducted a photovoice project with a group of 10 Muslim girls from refugee backgrounds to explore their sense of belonging in Western Canada. These studies reveal that photovoice can serve as a constructive tool to assist refugee children and youth to describe and analyze their lived experiences, as photographs and narratives facilitate "knowledge production, as opposed to knowledge gathering" (Veale 2005, 254).

Even though photovoice can generate a rich amount of data on participants'

thoughts, reflections, and experiences, it sometimes fails to meet its "emancipatory aims"

because it does not eliminate power imbalances between the researcher and participants

(Switzer and Flicker 2021). Furthermore, while the data collection and knowledge

dissemination phases are often participatory, the data analysis and interpretation phases may

be mostly researcher-driven (Switzer and Flicker 2021). Nind (2011) observes that while the

potential to include participation throughout the whole research process is "boundary-less,"

many photovoice researchers do not take this potential into account. In this chapter I

contribute to visual and participatory scholarship by outlining the steps I took to facilitate

participatory data analysis in a photovoice project with a group of adolescent refugee girls

and young women.

Framing the Project: Girlhood Studies

My study draws from the main tenets of girlhood studies, which adopts a feminist

viewpoint on girls' childhoods and adolescences (Mitchell, Reid-Walsh, and Kirk 2008).

Girlhood studies acknowledge that children, girls, and young women are independent,

agentic individuals who can choose for themselves, create their own narratives, and address

issues of self-representation (Mitchell, Reid-Walsh, and Kirk 2008). According to Mandrona

(2016) the starting point of girlhood studies is "research and engagement with girls, for girls,

and by girls" that draws attention to and seeks to remedy their "absence and voicelessness"

in studies that impact their lives (1).

Scholars' understandings of knowledge creation in research have evolved over time.

Gonick (2003) suggests that "the process of knowing" takes place "within a complex

collaboration" between the researcher and participants and is shaped by power dynamics that

exist in the research setting (60). In the field of girlhood studies, Moletsane, Smith, and Chisholm (2008) highlight the importance of recognizing these power dynamics, and advocate for an approach that is focused on working with, for, and by girls. This approach acknowledges the need for crossing disciplinary boundaries, as well as cultural and age differences, to ensure that the research is inclusive and empowering for all participants. By acknowledging factors like gender and power, girlhood scholars can develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of girls and young women and help to promote greater social justice and equality (Krause et al. 2017).

Girlhood scholars increasingly draw on the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to consider the intersections of race, class, religion, and other identities. For instance, Vanner (2019) highlights the importance of considering how "varying social processes" shape the experiences of girlhood, processes which are especially complex for girls of colour and other marginalized or racialized populations (20). As we can see in recent work exploring intersectionality within girlhood studies, Black girlhood has become, in and of itself, a distinct field of study (Rogers 2022; Scott 2022; Smith-Purviance and Jackson 2022).

My project is located within what Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2008) refer to as "girl method," which means working "*with* girls" as opposed to "*about* girls," and which seeks to provide a place where participants can express their agency and power (17). In addition, intersectionality is a key component for understanding the experiences of refugee girls and young women after resettlement, since they may experience various forms of discrimination due to their gender, age, citizenship status, and race. Thus, intersectionality guides my understanding of how the girls' identities intersect with systems of subordination and oppression specific to Québec society.

Positionality

I believe that in the eyes of the refugee girls in my study, I held an "outsider" status. I am a West Asian middle-class woman, and at the time of data collection, I was in my early thirties. Before coming to Canada in 2017, I lived in Rasht, the largest city on Iran's Caspian Sea coast. My first language is Persian, and I learned English as my second language. To me, being an outsider meant that I might not easily understand participants' attitudes, behaviours, and values. In this regard, Banks (1998) notes that in cross-cultural research, being an insider who shares the same culture, language, and social background with participants is necessary for conducting successful fieldwork. This is primarily due to insiders' ability to gain participants' trust and build a positive relationship with them (Sharrif 2014). However, as Manohar et al. (2019) suggest, outsider status can be an advantage for researchers because they tend to seek more explanation to understand the context of participants' experiences.

Additionally, as all the participants identified as Black, race played an influential role in the research process. Frankenberg (2004) suggests that who we are shapes the questions we ask, the responses we receive, and the knowledge we produce from those responses. According to Fletcher (2014), a lack of awareness about the importance of race in the research process can have negative consequences, such as "distorting the voice" of participants and marginalizing their perspectives. Fletcher (2014) explains that this can "[reinforce] the centrality of white ideologies and practices; whilst deifying 'whiteness' and assuming this perspective can best explain all number of experiences" (249). As a non-Black feminist researcher, I tried to repeatedly reinforce to participants that they are knowledge holders who have the power to raise awareness about issues affecting their lives.

Researchers' understanding of girls' and young women's experiences will be superficial unless their voices are included in various research stages. Reducing power imbalances between researchers and participants requires researchers to pay attention to the notion of reciprocity. According to Huisman (2008), reciprocity is based on the idea that researchers and participants have equal value and importance in the research process, and that the research needs to be beneficial for both parties. Since reciprocity is intertwined with reflexivity, throughout the research process I considered how, as an adult researcher, my own identities and life experiences affect the way I see and experience the world, and give meaning to participants' stories, issues, and concerns.

How has Participatory Data Analysis been Addressed in the Literature?

Participatory data analysis has been taken up by scholars in various ways. Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a six-step thematic analysis process which involves becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, reflecting on themes, identifying the relationship between themes, and producing a report.[16] Importantly, the accessibility and flexibility of this approach makes it possible for participants who do not possess formal research training to be involved in some steps of the analysis process (Braun and Clarke 2006).[17] Liebenberg, Jamal, and Ikeda (2020) built on Braun and Clarke's work in developing a participatory thematic analysis process to actively involve participants in all steps of the data analysis. As they highlight, including participants in data analysis

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[16] Thematic analysis is a process of coding and systematizing data to produce detailed descriptions of themes (Braun and Clarke 2006).

[17] Later, Braun and Clarke (2021) suggested that researcher's reflexivity is an essential requirement for data analysis and noted that recursive engagement with the dataset can produce a more robust analysis. For this reason, they introduced reflexive thematic analysis to highlight the situated and subjective process of analysis that exists at the intersection of the researcher, the dataset, and the various contexts of interpretation.

challenges inequitable power dynamics between participants and researchers and acknowledges both parties as experts with skills, knowledge, and insights to contribute to research findings (Liebenberg, Jamal, and Ikeda 2020). In practice, the authors employed participatory thematic analysis in a photovoice project with a group of Indigenous youth in three Canadian communities to explore the spaces and places where they felt supported when facing risks. The researchers concluded that including participants in data analysis shaped and guided the findings and ensured that participants' voices remained central.

Recognizing that community members can bring rich expertise to the analysis process, Flicker and Nixon (2015) introduced the DEPICT model to involve participants with varying levels of research expertise. The model includes six sequential steps: **D**ynamic reading, **E**ngaged development of codebooks, **P**articipatory coding, **I**nclusive reviewing of categories, **C**ollaborative analysis, and **T**ranslation (Flicker and Nixon 2015). Switzer and Flicker (2021) employed the DEPICT model to analyze the participant-generated photos and narratives related to the diverse conceptualizations of engagement within three HIV organizations in Toronto, Canada. According to the researchers, the primary benefit of using this model was democratizing data analysis which allowed the participation of diverse groups of stakeholders.

The level of participation in participatory data analysis can vary. While in the DEPICT model participants' reflections and insights are included in all steps of analysis, in other studies their involvement is limited to one step of data analysis. For example, Ngidi (2020) conducted a participatory visual study with 27 adolescents who identified as orphans, using a combination of drawings, photographs, collages, storyboards, and written reflections to understand and communicate their vulnerability to sexual violence. Participants aided the

data analysis process by writing captions to explain their visual productions and by verbally explaining their visuals to other participants during group discussions. Afterwards, the researcher utilized thematic analysis to analyze the storyboards and written reflections. Thus, although the analysis entailed participants' interpretations, their involvement was contained to one phase.

Whether the researcher includes participants in all steps or in just a few steps of the data analysis phase, the approach must align with the research objectives and study context (Bergold and Thomas 2012). For example, Barley and Russell (2019) were interested in the identities, hopes, and feelings of children and youth living in Northern England, and they chose to explore this topic through two longitudinal ethnographies. They designed a participatory analysis tool to facilitate a collaborative analysis where the children and youth worked alongside the researchers to review the data extracts. Longitudinal ethnography was well-suited to this study context as it allowed the researchers to establish a trusting relationship with the participants over time.

Study Phases

I divided my project into four phases: photovoice workshops, a community-based exhibition, individual interviews, and participatory data analysis (Figure 1). I conducted all phases of the study at Maison d'Haïti, a non-profit organization in Montreal. Founded in 1972, Maison d'Haïti is a community and cultural organization dedicated to promoting the integration of immigrants, asylum-seekers, and refugees into Québec society. The organization develops and delivers programs related to education, literacy, womanhood, and parenting (Maison d'Haïti 2021). To respond to the needs of immigrant and refugee women and girls, the organization adopts a feminist approach that promotes women's empowerment

by creating a space for discussion and debate and seeking individual and collective change (Maison d'Haïti 2021).

Figure 2. Study phases

As a volunteer in 2019 and 2020, I had the opportunity to work with refugee youth and children involved with Maison d'Haïti. For this reason, the girls and young women who attended the workshops and participated in this study had previously met me in my capacity as a volunteer through previous projects.

I applied purposive sampling to recruit a group of adolescent refugee girls and young women at Maison d'Haïti. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where researchers select participants based on a specific purpose or criterion. I recruited nine participants between the ages of 14 to 24 from Congo, Haiti, Venezuela, and Brazil. While their durations of stay in Québec differed, all of them had arrived as refugee claimants after 2017. As most participants preferred to communicate in French, I hired an interpreter to help me communicate with them.

Phase 1: Photovoice workshops

Participants attended five photovoice workshops where I taught them about photovoice methodology and its objectives, the importance of visual ethics, and the project

more generally. During the workshops, I provided participants with two prompts: "Take pictures that show your struggles and challenges in Québec" and "Take pictures that show the solutions for these issues." Before taking the photos, participants worked in small groups to brainstorm what issues, challenges, and solutions they might wish to capture. I gave participants one week to take photographs in response to the prompts. In the next workshop, I divided participants into three small groups to create poster-narratives (Figure 2). Poster-narratives consist of a series of photographs accompanied by captions or text that explain the meaning or significance of the images. In an individual activity, participants selected one photo that best represented their challenges as an adolescent refugee or young woman in Québec and added a one-sentence caption to explain the image's significance (Figure 3).

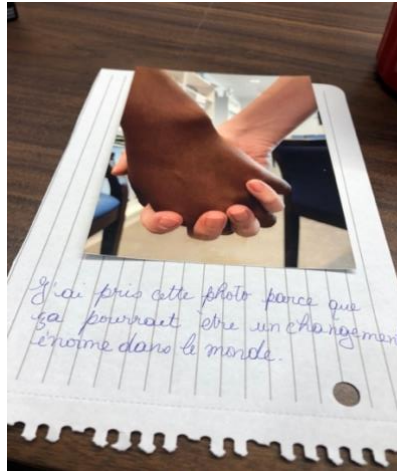Figure 2: Group's poster narrative (author photograph).

Figure 3: Participant's photograph and caption (author photograph).

Phase 2: Community-based exhibition

I worked with participants to plan a public community exhibition to be held at

Maison d'Haiti. My goal for the event was to raise awareness about the resettlement

experiences of refugee girls and young women in Québec and to initiate public

conversations about the issues and challenges they faced. I did not initially consider the

workshop where we collectively prepared the community exhibition as part of the

participatory data analysis process. However, I later recognized that the preparation

workshop and the participatory data analysis workshop were closely related because

participants went through the visual dataset and worked together to select the photographs

and poster-narratives they felt best represented their experiences in Québec. In addition to

selecting the works to be exhibited, participants engaged in discussions about the intended

audience of the exhibition, as demonstrated in the following dialogue:

P7: "We should definitely invite parents because in Haitian community parents always say you have food, you have house, you have school, so you have no problem. If they come they will learn having food and house is not enough for having a good life."

P5: "Yeah, parents should also be educated so learn about teenagers' problems."

P1: "I totally agree! They should learn about our fight."

P7: "I like the word fight."

Nesa: "How about the title of our exhibition?"

P1: "I vote for our fight."

P7 : "Un combat pour les adolescents."

Here, participants are highlighting two points. First, they emphasize the importance of involving parents to broaden their understanding of the challenges faced by teenagers, beyond the basic necessities of food, shelter, and education. Second, they express a strong desire for the exhibition to convey the concept of "fight" or "combat," emphasizing the struggles and issues faced by adolescents, with one participant suggesting the title "Un combat pour les adolescents" (A fight for adolescents).By involving the participants in this collective decision-making process, the exhibition was tailored to be accessible and engaging for the targeted audience, as well as meaningful and relevant for the participants themselves.

Once participants had agreed on the exhibition title, they shared their reflections on what to include in the curatorial statement. A curatorial statement refers to the printed text that curators typically employ to "interpret, justify, and explain" to the audience what their exhibition is about (Kompatsiaris 2020, 1). Participants created a curatorial that highlighted

the importance of listening to the voices of adolescent girls and young women, fostering

collaboration, addressing social issues, and taking an active role in shaping their experiences

to create positive change. Ultimately, the curatorial statement was an important

demonstration of the power of art and collective storytelling in amplifying the voices and

experiences of adolescent girls and young women in the process of resettlement. (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Participants developed the curatorial statement and title together.

The exhibition, "Un combat pour les adolescents," aimed to shed light on the

experiences of adolescent girls and young women during resettlement in Québec. It called

attention to the roles of parents, educators, researchers, and community members in shaping

their experiences and emphasizes the potential for collective action and social change. It is

important to note that while researchers can encourage participants' attendance and

collaboration, participants might not be interested in or available for all planned activities.

For example, in my study, even though all participants had been part of planning the

exhibition, only three out of nine attended.

Phase 3: Individual interviews

I conducted individual interviews with participants where they shared their thoughts and reflections about the photovoice workshops, which allowed me to gain a deeper insight into their experiences of the research process thus far. In short, the questions primarily revolve around gathering information and insights from participants regarding their workshop experience, migration experiences, reasons for coming to Canada, personal challenges, integration barriers, awareness of rights, and recommendations for supporting adolescent girls and young women. The questions aimed to explore various aspects of the participants' perspectives, experiences, and opinions related to these topics.

Phase 4: Participatory data analysis

Following the interviews, I held a two-hour workshop on participatory data analysis where participants analysed the photographs and poster-narratives. I decided to only work with the visual data; participants did not have access to interview transcripts. I made this distinction for several reasons. First, by prioritizing the photos and poster-narratives, I ensured that participants' attention was focused on the implicit meanings of the visual data they generated. Second, by excluding the interview transcripts, I avoided the risk of losing participants' engagement and involvement as they found the visual data more compelling. Finally, since most of the transcripts revolved around the photos and poster-narratives, by not including them in the workshop, I gave participants another chance to revisit the photographs they had previously produced and add to their narratives and stories. Overall, this workshop provided participants with an engaging and powerful experience, ensuring their active participation and ownership in the interpretation of the visual data. In the next section, I will detail the specific steps I took to facilitate the participatory data analysis workshop.

What does Participatory Data Analysis *Look Like*?

  Step 1: Getting Started

   I showed participants the 27 photos and four poster-narratives through a slideshow

(Figure 5). I began the workshop by showing a photo that had been taken in one of the

photovoice workshops (Figure 6). I selected this photo of two holding hands as a starting

point since it had been widely discussed by participants in the photovoice workshops and it

had received the attention of many people during the exhibition. I asked participants to

reflect on what they saw in the photo and what message they felt it contained. Participants

offered explicit answers such as "hands" but also implicit answers such as "compassion" and
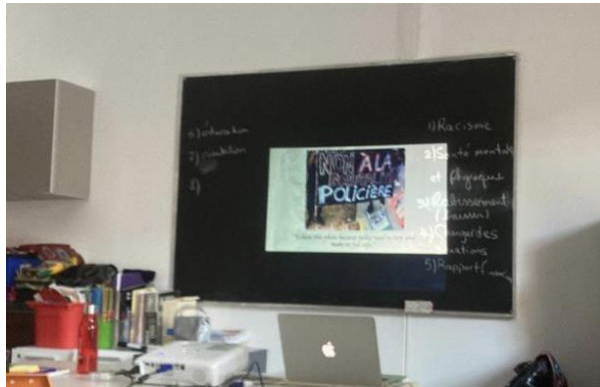
"solidarity."

    Figure 5: Projecting the photo images (author photograph).

Figure 6: Participant's photograph.

Next, I asked the group to respond to the broader question "What does our visual data mean?" To help them become familiar with the concept of participatory data analysis, we discussed how, like verbal and written data, visual data does not speak for itself, so we have to speak for it (Darby 2018). Participants then worked in pairs to answer questions about the importance of their involvement in the research process: "Why is it better for this study to have your involvement?" and "How does your involvement change the outcome of the study?" Participants noted that they enjoyed having the opportunity to "speak for themselves" and to "decide what works for them." One of the participants mentioned that by participating in projects such as this, girls may come to believe they are "capable" and prove to others that they are not "a child." While participants' responses varied, they all embraced the idea of having agency and autonomy to influence the outcome of the study.

Step 2: Initial Exploration

According to Liebenberg, Jamal, and Ikeda (2020), analysis should accurately reflect the focus of the research question. For this reason, I encouraged participants to recall the

research questions which framed the study: "What issues and challenges do you face daily as a refugee?" and "What solutions do you think can solve these issues and challenges?" I placed participants in small groups and handed everyone a sticky note and coloured markers. Participants observed all the photos and poster-narratives displayed on the slideshow and reflected on the issues and challenges they could see in the visuals. The goal of this step was to allow each participant to get a sense of the data before beginning a systematic process of analysis. After going through the photos, participants spent a few minutes taking brief notes and developing their initial ideas on sticky notes (Liebenberg, Jamal, and Ikeda 2020). Everyone shared their ideas in small groups, and one person from each group volunteered to summarize their discussion for the larger group.

During the initial discussion, participants mainly talked about the impact of discrimination on their daily lives:

P1: "We talked about reaction to Black people. For example, if someone sees someone Black, they think they are street gang or something like that. That's why [the poster] says you cannot judge me before you know me."

P8: "We find racism in a lot of photos. This is an important message. Refugee girls experience racism."

In this conversation, participants highlighted the centrality of racism as something they all agreed affects their daily life at school and in society. During these activities, I was present to answer questions and clarify any issues or confusion, but otherwise, I tried to allow the conversations to unfold without much interruption or active facilitation. While I adopted a minimum interruption approach of facilitation that aimed to create a safe space for

participants to express their perspectives and experiences, I encountered a constant challenge regarding questioning techniques without imposing my own view. As noted by Ryu (2022), as a researcher there is a risk that the participants in our group would simply provide answers that they believed we wanted to hear, rather than expressing their authentic perspectives. To counteract this, I employed a strategy of sharing my own experiences that had shaped my knowledge, particularly as an international student in Québec. At the same time, I openly acknowledged my limited understanding of the girls' unique experiences.

Step 3: Discussion of Themes

I encouraged participants to return to the photos on the slideshow once more and put similar or seemingly related photos together to bring order to the data (Brooks and Hesse-Biber 2014). I gave participants time to categorize the photos individually and additional time to discuss the themes that emerged with the larger group. In the previous photovoice and community exhibition preparation workshops, I learned that giving participants more time to complete tasks was beneficial because they were able to notice significant details in the photos and find new insights into their meanings. As one participant noted, when they had enough time, they could "think about the questions many times" and find a "new answer each time."

The purpose of the thematic discussion step was for participants to reach an agreement on the main themes. This was particularly important because it helped to ensure that all participants were on the same page and shared a common understanding of the main themes. Moreover, participants' agreement on the main themes made it easier to build a common language and framework for my own analysis and interpretation of the transcripts.

However, it is worth mentioning that in cases where participants disagreed with each other, or an individual idea dominated the discussion I gave participants more time and encouraged group consensus.

The main themes that participants identified included financial issues, police brutality, mental health, education, and language issues. Here, it is notable that participants were generating not only themes based on the explicit visual content within the photographs, but also the social, economic, and political issues that underlie them. For example, participants interpreted a picture of a trash can overflowing with garbage (Figure 7) as a symbol of mental health issues affecting adolescents. In another example, participants interpreted two pictures of Black people as indicative of the ways police brutality affects the mental and physical health of Black youth.

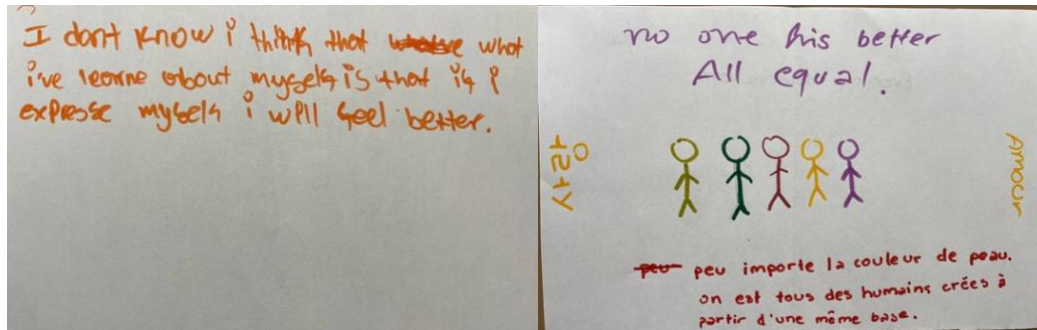Figure 7: Participant's photograph

Step 4: Reflection

I guided participants through the "So What?" phase of the analysis process by posing three questions: "What can we do with the themes on the board?" "How do these themes relate to larger projects for refugees?" and "Who needs to learn about these issues?" In answering these questions, participants discussed the importance of sharing findings with non-profit organizations such as Maison d'Haïti:

P8: "[These organizations] work with immigrants. It would be good if they were aware of their concerns so that they could better support them. And during the consultation tables to be able to make proposals to the government. They can also reassure them, give them moral and psychological support at no cost because many experience a lot of stress throughout their immigration and integration process."

Participants also mentioned that very often even a simple program can improve the well-being of refugee girls and make them feel less isolated and lonely. In addition, they emphasized the role of government in facilitating refugees' integration and resettlement. Thus, through participatory data analysis, participants were able to reflect upon the issues they had previously recognized and generate solutions to tackle these issues.

In the final activity, I gave each participant a piece of paper where they could share their final thoughts and answer the following: "What have you learned about yourself or your problems from participating in this research?" I reminded them that they were free to write in any language and could even sketch or draw their thoughts instead of writing (Figures 8 and 9). The statements participants wrote reflected the importance of promoting equality and creating a safe space where individuals could feel comfortable expressing

themselves. They also highlighted the need for inclusive spaces which value diversity and, at

the same time, empower participants to share their thoughts and experiences.

Figures 8 and 9: Participants wrote their reflections in the last activity (author

photographs).

Discussion

In employing participatory data analysis in the photovoice project with refugee

girls, I saw that this method has several feminist and intersectional implications. First, by

actively involving participants in data analysis, participatory data analysis ensures that their

voices are heard in every step of decision-making. Second, by recognizing that knowledge

and expertise go beyond conventional frameworks, participatory data analysis acknowledges

and values the unique knowledge and experiences of refugee girls and young women. Third,

in line with feminist principles, participatory data analysis can effectively challenge the

power dynamic between the researcher and participants (Liebenberg, Jamal, and Ikeda

2020). Challenging power structures in this study allowed participants to play an active role

in the process of data analysis and the interpretation of findings. Fourth, by examining the

unique challenges refugee girls and young women face, I gained a better understanding of

how their various identities shape their lives. For example, one participant noted that her

ability to access education is limited both because she is expected to fulfill house chores and care for her younger siblings and because her family is experiencing financial hardship. Therefore, participatory data analysis prioritizes the agency and empowerment of refugee girls by involving them in the research process. Participatory data analysis thus contributes to more inclusive, equitable, and impactful research outcomes by amplifying the voices of the participants, valuing their knowledge, challenging power dynamics, facilitating intersectional analysis, and promoting empowerment.

The participatory data analysis workshop led to conversations that would not have happened otherwise, resulting in a deeper level of understanding of the issues that refugee girls and young women are experiencing after resettlement in Québec. Without engaging participants in data analysis, the findings of the study would have been solely interpreted by me, but I felt it was critical to centre the voices of refugee girls and young women since one of the main objectives of the study was to highlight *their* needs and concerns. In addition, I brought participants' attention to the solutions that could potentially meet their needs and challenges such as access to education and creating a circle of trust.

One criticism of involving participants in data analysis is the possibility that they will be bored and uninterested (Vaccaro 2020). During the process, I found that participants were genuinely interested in taking part in the process of analysis and interpretation as they kept asking and answering questions and were eager to take part in the discussions. However, because of various life circumstances, it was not always easy to have their full attention and engagement. For instance, one participant mentioned that her mom was pregnant, and she had to go home early to babysit her younger brother and help with the

housework. To overcome this challenge, I employed a variety of activities such as individual reflection, group discussion, and large group conversations to encourage their participation.

Working with a group in a participatory way also helped me realize how difficult it can be to record and transcribe overlapping speech, as participants frequently spoke over each other and at the same time. As soon as the workshop ended, I wrote fieldnotes about my observations and experiences, which helped me to clarify the audio recordings. It is also important to note that most of the discussions in the participatory data analysis workshop were in French, and there was an interpreter who translated my questions and participants' answers. However, while transcribing the audio recording, I realized that in some cases my interpretation (based on my limited understanding of French) was different from what had been translated. To tackle this issue, I sometimes had to listen to the same sentence a couple of times or have further conversations with my interpreter to better understand what had been said in each context. Therefore, in cases where the interpreter is not available after the project ends the researcher might have to use other translation resources.

Conclusion

There are various ways to conduct participatory data analysis. According to Nind (2011), these approaches can be formal or informal, structured or unstructured, but regardless, participants take an active role in making sense of the data. In addition, participatory data analysis focuses our attention on reflexivity and multi-voicing rather than on a single "truth." How can researchers ensure that everyone's voice has been included? Though one of the promises of participatory data analysis is to amplify the voices of otherwise silenced or marginalized populations, some participants may be more reserved and

hesitant to share their perspectives. In this study, I attempted to encourage all participants to take part in discussions by focusing on collective rather than individual awareness. At the same time, as a feminist researcher, I was committed to seeing through the eyes of the girls and young women themselves by prioritizing their voices and experiences rather than relying on my own assumptions and interpretations.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 6: Discussion, Conclusion, and Implications

Introduction and Summary

In this dissertation, I explored the resettlement experiences of refugee girls and young women in Québec. I examined the issues that affect their well-being, their experiences facing these challenges, and their narratives and visual representations.

In chapter one, I provided an overview of the context in which refugee girls and young women resettle in different countries and focused on refugee resettlement programs in Canada. I included the objectives of the study, the significance of the research, and a detailed description of the research questions. In the first section of chapter two, I discussed Girlhood Studies as the main theoretical framework that guided my whole dissertation inquiry and had significant implications in the research process. Here I draw on Black Girlhood Studies to recognize the role of intersectionality in relation to age, gender, race, and social class. The second section of chapter two focused on the methodological framework that guided the data collection process. I highlighted that Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies such as photovoice create opportunities for girls, women, and other marginalized groups to understand and construct meaning and present their experiences in challenging settings. In the last section of chapter two, I presented a comprehensive literature review of the current body of knowledge on refugee girls and young women regarding various social structures, including family, peers, schools, and settlement services and I concluded that supportive systems could facilitate the integration of refugee girls.

In my first manuscript (chapter three), 'Refugee girlhoods,' I outlined the challenges that impact the mental health and well-being of refugee girls before, during, and after resettlement. In the same chapter, I explored Participatory Visual and Arts-based approaches that can act as interventions to improve the well-being of this specific population. The chapter set the stage for girl-centred ways of thinking about refugee girlhood. In my second manuscript (chapter four) 'Adolescent refugee Girls and young women in Québec: Telling the stories of resettlement through photovoice', I focused on my fieldwork with nine adolescent refugee girls and young women who came to Québec between 2017 and 2020. The fieldwork was conducted at Maison d'Haïti in Montreal between June to December 2021. In this chapter, I explained the study findings that emerged from the Reflexive Thematic Analysis along with the participants' photographs. In the chapter, I highlight that being young, female, Black, and a refugee can intersect to create unique and complex challenges for these individuals in ways that influence their experiences, perceptions, and opportunities in Québec society. In my third manuscript (chapter five) 'Participatory data analysis in a photovoice project with refugee girls', I highlighted the ways in which the girls themselves could be involved in participatory data analysis, and hence 'rounding out' the participatory nature of the study. In this chapter, I explained the process of participatory data analysis and the themes the participants had identified. The themes were related to mental health, education, financial issues, and racism. Moreover, participants shared their solutions to address these issues in the same session, including raising awareness about refugees at schools and providing financial support. I concluded that through listening to the stories shared by girls, the government and organizations can develop targeted programs that encourage meaningful participation and support their full potential.

Responding to the Broad Research Question

This thesis aimed to explore the experiences of adolescent refugee girls and young women during the resettlement process in Québec. Photovoice was employed as a girl-centred method to create a safe space where the participants could share their personal stories of resettlement and address the research questions. Drawing on the principles of Girlhood Studies, this study recognized girls and young women as capable social agents who can influence and be influenced by their surroundings. By this I mean girls and young women should be viewed as capable individuals who are active participants in society.

The findings of this study revealed that the participants faced numerous challenges in their daily lives in Québec:

1) They encountered discrimination in different contexts, despite their ability to communicate in French. They still felt like outsiders and were treated differently from the mainstream population.

2) The participants shared their education-related issues, including teachers' lack of understanding of their culture, educational gaps, and high tuition fees that forced them to prioritize finding a job over attending college or university.

3) The participants expressed their experiences of isolation and loneliness, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a negative impact on their quality of life in the first few months after resettlement.

Responding to the Sub-Research Questions

Refugee girlhoods. In this manuscript, the main question was: What other factors affect the mental health and well-being of refugee girls before, during and after resettlement?

To respond to this question, I conducted a literature review on the mental health and well-being of refugee girls. As I explained in chapter three of this dissertation, in refugee populations mental health issues are associated with age, gender, and social status (Mels et al., 2010). Previous studies have revealed that before and after resettlement, the psychological well-being of refugee girls is influenced by gender roles and norms, gender-based violence, and discrimination. Gender roles play an essential role in shaping the experiences of refugee girls. Findings from previous studies suggest that refugee girls are obliged to follow traditional social and cultural norms in many situations. These unspoken expectations and rules define the standard for appropriate or acceptable behaviour for refugee girls and their families.

Furthermore, in families gender roles are closely related to the perception of protection and safety that, in turn, affect the well-being of refugee girls. In addition to gender roles and norms, refugee girls' mental health and well-being is influenced by gender-based violence. According to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), violence can take different forms, including child or forced marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual abuse and assault, or forced prostitution. Multiple factors such as economic issues, gender inequality, and lack of social status make refugee girls vulnerable to different forms of violence before, during, and after resettlement. According to prior studies, gender-based violence can lead to both physical and

psychological harm. Unwanted teenage pregnancy, for example, is a of concern for refugee girls because they may feel forced to get pregnant by their partners as a result of unequal power dynamics and gender norms or because their restricted access to contraceptive methods (Ivanova et al., 2018). Finally, previous work has found that refugee girls' mental health and well-being are significantly influenced by gender-based discrimination (Kira et al., 2015). According to a study on Somali refugee girls in the United States, stigma and discrimination led to increased rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Discrimination has also been shown to affect the academic success of refugee girls in the classroom.

To tackle these challenges, Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies such as photovoice, cellphilming, drawing, and digital storytelling have been used to deepen an understanding of the mental health and well-being of refugee girls. In alignment with Girlhood Studies, these methodologies have previously been used in different contexts to explore s critical issues such as early pregnancy in Kenya (Nyariro, 2018), access to water in Mozambique (Sajan Virgi & Mitchell, 2011), and sense of belonging after resettlement in Vancouver, Canada (Miled, 2020). As I found, these methodologies are effective in giving refugee girls an opportunity to play an active role in the research by talking about their resettlement issues, suggesting appropriate solutions, and informing policymakers through their exhibitions and screenings. As Mitchell (2015) notes, photographs, drawings, and video productions have contributed to what can be described as a "shifting the boundaries of knowledge" from the powerful to those whose voices have been silenced. In this regard, in their visual and art-based work with Indigenous girls and young women in Canada and South Africa, Mitchell and Ezcurra (2017) suggest that these tools allow participants to question or oppose pre-existing societal norms collectively. Similarly, Mitchell and

Moletsane (2018) discuss how Indigenous adolescent women and girls may employ these diverse techniques to "speak back" to dominant standards.

Adolescent refugee girls and young women in Québec: Telling the stories of resettlement through photovoice. My second set of sub-research questions asked: What needs and concerns do refugee girls have after resettling in Québec? How do they show these needs through photovoice? What solutions do they offer to address their issues and challenges?

To respond to these questions, as shown in chapter four, I focused on my fieldwork with nine refugee girls and young women between 14 to 24 years old. The girls were from Haiti, Congo, Venezuela, and Brazil and had come to Québec between 2017 and 2020. Inspired by the work of girlhood scholars, I used a feminist perspective to see the world through the eyes of refugee girls and young women. In addition, building on the main principles of Girlhood Studies, I saw the girls and young women as independent and agent individuals who have the ability to narrate their stories and voice their concerns. Moreover, drawing on the tenets of Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodologies, I used photovoice as a research tool to amplify the voices of refugee girls and young women. In the first phase, the nine girls and young women participated in five photovoice workshops to learn about photovoice, its process and objectives, the technical aspects of photography, and the importance of respecting people's rights in photography. During the photovoice workshops, they discussed questions regarding the issues of refugee girls in Québec and the programs that can target these issues. After learning about the prompts, they individually took photographs which represented their issues and challenges as well as the photographs that represent their solutions. In a group activity, the participants created poster-narratives to

highlight the most salient photographs and shared them with the large group. At the end of phase one, the participants attended one final workshop to plan out a community-based exhibition at the Arts Centre of Maison d'Haïti. In phase two, the exhibition occurred in November 2021. The audience, including members of the community, parents, educators, and the girls, acknowledged the purpose and meaning of the photovoice and, at the same time had a chance to reflect upon the photos and poster-narratives and share their thoughts and reflections. In the third phase, I interviewed the nine participants from phase one. The interview allowed me to have a one-to-one conversation with the participants and learn about their personal stories and experiences. The fourth and final phase was data analysis conducted at two levels. First, I invited the participants to one final workshop on participatory data analysis. Second, I used Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis to analyze the transcripts from all the photovoice workshops, interviews and the captions of the photos and poster-narratives. It is important to note that the Reflexive Thematic Analysis provided a nuanced and complex insight into the experiences of the refugee girls and not a straightforward way to answer the research questions. Six themes emerged from the Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Four themes highlighted refugee girls' issues and challenges after resettlement, including direct and indirect forms of discrimination, the complexity of mental health and well-being, the complexity of integration, and financial issues. Furthermore, two themes addressed the solutions for these issues, highlighting the importance of education and creating a circle of trust.

In summary, the participants reported that Québec has provided them with a safe space where they are physically safe. However, being female, young, Black, and refugee, they have to deal with various challenges after resettlement in Québec. The themes

mentioned above align with the literature that emphasizes that after being resettled, refugees' integration process is influenced by various factors such as social identity, personal history, and socioeconomic factors (Hynie et al., 2016). Additionally, the participants revealed that their daily encounters with racism and discrimination significantly impacted their life in Québec. Thus, governmental and non-governmental organizations must focus on developing initiatives and programs that directly address these issues to foster effective integration in the host communities.

Participatory data analysis in a photovoice project with refugee girls. In my third set of sub-research questions, I asked: What does participatory data analysis involve? How participatory does participatory data analysis have to be? What strategies can be used to prepare the data for analysis?

Photovoice is a research tool that aims to amplify the voices of marginalized populations in particular women and girls. Wang and Burris (1997) coined the word photovoice to refer to a research method that enables ordinary people to document and reflect on their community's issues, concerns, and strengths. According to Wang and Burris (1997), through discussion of photographs, photovoice fosters critical dialogue about important issues and reaches policymakers. With this premise, photovoice has been used in education, psychology, anthropology, and public health to raise awareness on critical issues (Coemans et al., 2019; Do et al., 2021; Tanhan et al., 2021). While the method is popular for involving participants in data collection, very few studies have examined the use of photovoice in data analysis. To address this gap and respond to the last set of my sub-research questions, I focused on phase 4 of the fieldwork, in particular the process of participatory data analysis.

In its broad sense, participatory data analysis is a collaborative method that involves bringing a group of individuals together to interpret the data (Flicker & Nixon, 2015). Accordingly, in my study the nine participants from phase 1 attended one final workshop to analyze the photos and poster-narratives. The workshop included introducing participatory data analysis to the participants, developing initial ideas, categorizing and theming, finalizing the themes, and identifying solutions. The process of participatory analysis allowed the participants to highlight their needs and issues after resettlement in Québec. According to the participants, these issues are mainly related to the brutality of the police against Black people, mental health and well-being, and financial situation. In addition, they believed that some of these issues can be resolved by raising awareness about refugees at schools and offering financial support to those interested in going to colleges and universities in Québec.

As discussed previously in chapter five, I needed to involve the participants in the process of data analysis to be the only researcher to interpret the findings, which would have excluded their voices from the process. Therefore, the process of participatory data analysis put the voices of refugee girls and young women at the centre of interpretation and analysis. Moreover, the conversations during the analysis revealed the significance of each theme to better understand how the situation of adolescent refugee girls and young women could be improved. Participatory data analysis brings forth several contributions to participatory research in its broad sense. First, by involving the girls directly in the analysis process, their voices are amplified, and their insights are given the prominence they deserve. This contributes to participatory research generally by challenging power dynamics and ensuring that marginalized individuals such as refugee girls are active agents in impacting the

research agenda. In addition, refugee girls come from various backgrounds that influence their experiences. Participatory data analysis recognizes the importance of understanding these backgrounds and encourages the girls to provide their interpretations and narratives of the photographs. By engaging them in the process of analysis, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of their lives, contributing to more contextually grounded research outcomes.

Furthermore, participatory data analysis encourages researchers to critically reflect on their own biases and assumptions. At the same time, it creates an environment of trust and mutual respect between the researchers and participants, as their insights and reflections are valued and validated. This contributes to participatory research by fostering meaningful relationships and promoting ethical research practices. Finally, the insights gained through participatory data analysis can inform tangible practices. By involving refugee girls in the analysis, researchers can collaboratively identify key themes and recommendations emerging from the data. This contributes to participatory research by ensuring that the research outcomes have real-world significance and can drive meaningful change, such as informing policies, programs, and services that address the needs of refugee girls in Québec.

Contribution to Original Knowledge

This photovoice study contributes to the main concerns of girlhood studies, particularly Black girlhood studies. First, it reveals that Black refugee girls and young women are marginalized due to systemic racism and xenophobia. They may be disproportionately affected by policies and practices of immigration systems that might make them more vulnerable or limit their access to necessary resources. The challenges they

face also interact with gendered power dynamics. In other words, refugee girls can feel pressured to fulfil gendered expectations and duties in their families and communities that exacerbate their disadvantages regarding finances and education. Therefore, the issues they encounter are aggravated by the intersections of race, gender, and migration.Acknowledging these inequalities to understand their unique challenges and inform strategies for meaningful change is essential.

Second, by showcasing the achievements and successes of Black refugee girls, we can change the assumptions perpetuating marginalization. Sharing their stories of resilience and perseverance disrupts dominant narratives about refugee girls and, at the same time, emphasizes their capabilities and potential. Moreover, culturally appropriate educational programs play a significant role in empowering refugee girls. Along with ensuring access to education and resources, these programs can offer mentoring and leadership opportunities, culturally sensitive mental health support, or language assistance.

Finally, this work responds to the call for a more interdisciplinary study that explores the complexity of the resettlement experiences of refugee girls (Miled, 2020). Drawing on Girlhood Studies and Participatory Visual and Arts-based methodology, the study used multiple paths, including photography, individual and group activities, a community-based exhibition, and in-depth interviews to study the resettlement experiences of refugee girls. This resulted in vibrant conversations around the issues of refugee girls and the solutions to these issues. These paths produced a dynamic way for participants to shape and influence the activities they were partaking in.

As I highlight in chapter two, Black girlhood studies is an interdisciplinary field focusing on Black girls' unique experiences and perspectives. Black girlhood studies emerged as a response to the underrepresentation of Black girls' experiences in academic research and mainstream narratives. In line with other girlhood studies, particularly Black girlhood studies, the current work highlights the intersectional identities of refugee girls from Haiti, Venezuela, Congo, and Brazil, as they navigate multiple forms of oppression based on social categories, including race, age, class, and sexuality. By exploring the stories and narratives represented in the photographs, the study shows the way that the girls themselves challenge stereotypes. In addition, by highlighting the role of girls as active participants and agents of change in their communities, the study recognizes their capacity to challenge inequality and transform society. Moreover, it explores girls' experiences in school systems that may not adequately address their needs and aspirations. Finally, while the current study recognizes the importance of centring the well-being and mental health of girls, future studies need to further explore the impact of systemic racism and discrimination, and other forms of oppression on their mental health.

Discussion

When I decided to focus on my doctoral project, which involved working with refugee girls in Montreal, I discovered several organizations in the area that were dedicated to assisting refugee populations, such as Chez Doris, the Refugee Centre, Unitarian Church of Montreal, and Promis. However, I found that none of these organizations specifically addressed the needs of girls and young women. Consequently, it became evident that I would have to establish such a program myself, similar to previous experiences I had encountered with 'girl groups.'

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, I was fortunate to have already volunteered with Maison d'Haïti and Byenvini, supporting refugee children from Syria, Haiti, Congo, and Pakistan. This prior involvement allowed me to create a girls' group and work with them over an extended period, utilizing the community services provided by Maison d'Haïti. Recognizing that race played a significant role in this context, I delved into literature on Girlhood Studies and the emerging field of Black Girlhood studies. While Black Girlhood Studies has its roots in the United States, encompassing age, race, and gender, and is led by Black feminist scholars like Halliday, Ohito, and, of course, bell hooks, its relevance to the situation of Black refugee girls in Québec became apparent.

This dissertation contributes to a body of work on Black Girlhoods and what it means to be a girl or young woman of refugee status and with resettlement experience. Black Girlhoods is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on the experiences of Black girls and young women. Black Girlhood scholars highlight the significance of intersectionality, centring Black girls' voices and their agency and power for a more nuanced understanding of their unique challenges and dynamics in white-dominant societies. Crenshaw's (1989) framework of intersectionality recognizes that multiple factors such as race, gender, and age intersect to shape individuals' experiences. To better understand the nature of discrimination and violence experienced by Black women, Crenshaw rejects a single-axis paradigm and focuses on the multidimensionality of their experiences (Crenshaw, 1989). Like Crenshaw, Henry (1998) argues in favour of adopting a comprehensive and inclusive perspective when studying the experiences of Black girls. In her research with African Caribbean girls in the United States, she emphasizes centring on Black girls' voices. By adopting an intersectional

lens, Henry believes that for Black girls to express their experiences and create their narratives, it is essential to hear and cherish their voices.

Hooks introduces the concept of the "oppositional gaze" as a means for Black women and girls in subordinate positions to challenge and resist the prevailing narratives and representations imposed upon them. According to hooks (1994), looking can serve as an act of resistance and rejection. Expanding on this notion, Jacobs (2016) utilizes qualitative data to explore how Black girls employ critical lenses to comprehend their experiences of race, gender, and class in schools. The study's findings reveal that Black girls develop their own oppositional gazes of resistance and resilience in response to media images and messages (Jacobs, 2016). In a related context, Jiwani (2006) emphasizes the significance of considering the intersecting vulnerabilities experienced by Black refugee girls. Racialized girls, marked as different due to factors like skin colour or religious and cultural differences, undergo processes of othering and devaluation during socialization. These experiences are further exacerbated by varying roles, responsibilities, and health concerns affecting the female population.

Halliday (2022) has also highlighted the negative representations and stereotypes surrounding Black girls, particularly in areas such as education, sexuality, and aggression. These stereotypes directly influence the way that Black girls are treated in society. Through her work, Halliday aims to dismantle harmful stereotypes and biases against Black girls by encouraging them to actively challenge the stigma and labels imposed upon them. According to Halliday, by centring the voices and experiences of Black girls and women, Black Girlhood scholars need to highlight their accomplishments and challenge the prevailing narratives. Media representation plays a significant role in the lives of Black girls

and young women, as their stories have historically been narrated by others (Muhammad, 2012). Muhammad and McArthur (2015) reveal a contrast between how Black girls desire to be portrayed and how they feel society and media represent them in the United States. The study shows that Black girls often perceive themselves to be stereotyped as loud, aggressive, and violent in media portrayals. In another study in the northeastern part of the United States (Jacobs, 2016), it was found that negative representations in the media, which Black girls are regularly exposed to through various channels, contribute to experiences of cultural dissonance, leading to a sense of devaluation.

Black Girlhood scholars advocate for challenging stereotypes, centring the experiences of Black girls, and recognizing the intersecting factors that shape their lives. They emphasize the need to dismantle negative narratives and empower Black girls to shape their own identities and narratives. By listening to their voices and understanding the complex interactions of race, gender, and class, society can foster an inclusive and empowering environment where Black girls can thrive and overcome societal barriers.

In line with the tenets of Black Girlhood studies, in my photovoice study with Black girls and young women with refugee backgrounds, I found that several factors, including discrimination, mental health issues, financial difficulties, limited education opportunities, and the complexity of integration impact their resettlement experiences in Québec. These findings align with the broader discussions on the experiences of Black girls in white-dominant societies. First, as highlighted by Black scholars like Crenshaw, intersectionality emphasizes the interconnected nature of social identities and the ways they create Black girls' experiences. In my study, the intersecting factors of age, race, socioeconomic class, immigration status, and resettlement contributed to the multifaceted

challenges encountered by Black girls. By acknowledging the complexity of these

experiences, my research contributes to the understanding of Black Girlhoods and the need

for an intersectional lens to capture the unique dynamics and struggles this specific group

faces. As noted by several participants, they are sometimes mistreated by others (e.g., peers

or teachers at school) or feel excluded or marginalized due to their "non-Québécois accent,"

which often prevents them from accessing available resources such as mental health

services. The difficulties they encounter also interact with gendered power dynamics.

As some participants mentioned, they have to deal with gendered expectations and

duties in their families, which exacerbate their disadvantages in terms of finances and

education. By acknowledging these structural inequalities, we can better understand the

unique challenges confronted by refugee girls and develop strategies for meaningful and

long-term changes. Age can also mitigate the impact of discrimination on the resettlement

experiences of refugee girls and young women. For instance, younger girls (between 14 to

18 years old) may have an easier time adapting to new social and cultural norms, while for

older girls (18 to 24), this may be much harder. As one of the participants mentioned,

younger girls benefit from attending school since it offers a structured setting where they can

acquire new skills and make new friends, which helps them adjust to their new environment.

However, for older girls, due to societal and cultural expectations around gender roles and

family duties, the chance to attend school may be more limited. In addition to age, the

socioeconomic background of refugee girls can influence their discrimination experiences

after resettlement. For example, girls from a lower socioeconomic class have less access to

opportunities such as education and employment so they may be perceived as "inferior" in

the host society. In line with this finding, Damaschke-Deitrick and associates (2019) report that girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to experience racism, sexism, and xenophobia than girls from higher socioeconomic backgrounds in Norway. Moreover, previous research has shown that refugee girls from lower socioeconomic classes are more likely to experience discrimination at school, which may lead to more stress and psychological distress that can negatively affect their sense of belonging in various countries such as Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire and Lebanon (Oppedal & Idsoe, 2015).

As one of the participants noted, because of being a girl, she had to deal with gendered norms that restricted her freedom and choice. For example, she is expected to help with house chores and care for her younger brothers. This is exacerbated by her family's financial issues, which directly impact her opportunities for education and career growth. Thus, the experiences of discrimination can manifest itself in other forms, including exclusion from educational opportunities due to financial barriers. Moreover, even if they could overcome financial obstacles, they still have to deal with other forms of exclusion. As several older participants mentioned, they are not able to provide documentation for their educational histories to continue their education, and for this reason they will face the prospect of commencing their academic pursuits from scratch should they choose to attend university or college. Overcoming these barriers is particularly important for refugee girls and young women as they strive to enter the job market and attain financial stability. Previous studies have shown that financial instability can negatively impact refugee girls' and young women's mental health and well-being. For instance, Banati et al. (2020) highlight the significance of financial stability in supporting refugee girls' mental health and

well-being, suggesting that economic support can help lower stress and encourage good

outcomes. It is important to note that financial obstacles can also influence other

marginalized groups. However, for refugee girls and young women, the intersection of

refugee status, gender, and financial barriers can create unique challenges that limit their

access to education. In this situation, mental health support can benefit refugee girls and

young women by promoting their resilience and self-care skills by teaching them coping

strategies for stress and anxiety, mindfulness techniques and other self-care practices

(Kazandjian et al., 2020). By developing these skills and resources, refugee girls and young

women can better deal with their challenges. These services can also address the specific

needs that refugee girls and young women may have (Sadler & Clark, 2014). Mental health

professionals, for example, can provide language support and cultural sensitivity that will

make it easier for refugee girls to express their needs and concerns (Woodford et al., 2023).

They can also help connect them with other resources and services, including education and

employment support, to improve their overall well-being. However, as several participants

mentioned, their access to mental health services is limited due to financial constraints, lack

of knowledge about the availability of such services, and cultural differences. For instance,

cultural differences can make it difficult for refugee girls to receive mental health services

because they may hold different attitudes about mental health, which can affect their

willingness to seek assistance or participate in therapy (Duden et al., 2021). Thus, the

experiences of refugee girls and young women from Haiti, Venezuela, Congo, and Brazil are

deeply influenced by the intersection of their age, race, gender, class, and other social

identities. For instance, a Black refugee girl from Haiti can face intersecting forms of

discrimination and oppression stemming from her gender and race, and her exclusion

experiences can differ from those of a non-Black refugee girl from a different country. Therefore, as suggested by Crenshaw, it is crucial to understand the nuances of these intersections in comprehending the complexities of the lives of refugee girls and young women.

Second, bell hooks' concept of "oppositional gaze" resonates with my findings regarding the active role of the Black girls in creating a counter-narrative. Drawing on this concept, photovoice empowers the girls to actively confront and subvert the objectifying and controlling nature of the gaze imposed upon them. For example, taking photographs and selecting them provided a space for the girls to play an active role in shaping the narratives and presented an alternative visual representation that created a counter-narrative. This is in line with the intricate nature of working *with* girls, *for* girls, and *about* girls and challenging the traditional ideas of participation and the researcher-participant power dynamic, particularly when it comes to listening to girls' voices (Moletsane et al., 2009). In my photovoice study, I worked *with* girls to create a social space *for* girls where they felt comfortable sharing their concerns and issues *about* themselves, while as a researcher, I was present to listen and engage with their perspectives actively.

Third, my study also reveals the way that Black girls see their issues and how these issues are different from what is depicted in the media. For instance, the media in Québec is primarily dominated by the images of Roxham Road and how "illegals" take this path to enter the province (see Nardi, 2023). However, the photographs shared by the girls go beyond Roxham Road and challenge the dehumanizing label of "illegals." Through their photographs and narratives, the girls highlight the complexity of their experiences, which contrasts with the simplified version presented in the media. This process aligns with

Halliday's concepts of representation and social justice that focus on enabling girls to reshape their own narratives and contribute to a more accurate understanding of their experiences. By sharing their photographs and narratives, the girls disrupt the dominant narratives propagated by the media, ultimately fostering more inclusive and nuanced pictures of their lives.

Overall, the findings of my study contribute to a broader understanding of Black girls through highlighting the intersecting issues they face in Québec society, recognizing their role in creating counter-narratives and challenging negative stereotypes. Through photovoice, the girls played an active role in shaping the narratives on Black refugee girls and offering authentic visual representations that show the complexity of their experiences after resettlement. While the study highlighted the issues of refugee girls after resettlement in Québec, it is essential to note that the girls did not see themselves as victims of their situation. This point was raised by one of the reviewers of the manuscript Refugee Girlhood, chapter three. In response to an early draft of the chapter, the reviewer commented that while it effectively explored the challenges of refugee girls, it could benefit from a more strength-based perspective that went beyond the risk factors and included a more balanced perspective. The reviewer emphasized the significance of acknowledging the agency and resilience of refugee girls and addressing the negative experiences and trauma they may have experienced. They noted that by incorporating this perspective, the manuscript could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the refugee girls' experiences and contribute to a more empowering narrative. They also said recognizing the girls' agency allowed for a fuller exploration of their capacities and ability to navigate adversity. We appreciated the reviewer's insightful feedback on our manuscript and agreed that

incorporating a strength-based perspective is essential to provide a more balanced and empowering portrayal of their experiences. We acknowledged that our initial approach may have leaned towards what Eve Tuck (2009) describes as a damage-based model, emphasizing refugee girls' challenges and trauma. We agreed that it is crucial to recognize and highlight their agency, resilience, and strengths alongside these difficulties. Alongside this focus on a strength-based approach and the role of images in relation to resistance, I want to conclude this discussion section by returning to the community exhibition designed collaboratively with the girls at the Arts Centre of Maison d'Haïti (Figure 1) held in November 2021. I talk about the ways in which the girls engaged in planning this community exhibition in chapter 5. The exhibition aimed to "build momentum and solidarity" between the refugee girls and the audience (Mitchell, 2018, p. 524).

I benefited from the framework for Critical Audience Engagement and Dialogue for Social Change, which encourages engaging the audience in critical reflection to promote dialogue and practical actions to tackle critical social issues (Mitchell et al., 2017). The approach recognizes the complexity of social change and highlights that social change is possible only through the active involvement of various stakeholders, such as community members and leaders (Mitchell et al., 2017). Therefore, by engaging audiences in critical reflection and dialogue and promoting collaborative action, the framework seeks to create meaningful and long-lasting social change. Building on this framework, the exhibition involved various audiences, including students, educators, parents, and community members of Maison d'Haïti. The audience was active participants in shaping conversations about the issues of refugee girls rather than passive recipients of knowledge. The engagement and

conversations in the exhibition were critical in questioning the assumptions, values, and power dynamics.

The event began with a [short video](#) that I produced and provided the audience with an overview of the project's goals and objectives and the creative process involved in producing the photographs and poster-narratives. The video was carefully created to include many 'process photographs' I had taken during the workshop, highlighting the participants' experiences and perspectives. After viewing the video, the audience was invited to walk around the exhibition space and observe the photographs and poster-narratives. This allowed them to engage with the exhibition's content in a more personal and intimate way, experiencing the photographs and narratives up close and reflecting on their responses to them. Following this period, the audience was asked to share their reflections on the most prominent photograph or poster-narrative that caught their attention. This allowed the audience to engage in a dialogue with each other and some of the participants, to learn more about their experiences and perspectives, and to explore the themes and issues that emerged from the photographs and narratives. As the conversation continued, the audience was encouraged to write out their comments and reflections on the exhibition through post-its, creating a space for dialogue and reflection on the issues raised by the exhibition. By engaging the audience in this way, the exhibition serves as a participatory space that promoted understanding and dialogue while highlighting the experiences and struggles of refugee girls in Québec.

The 'A Fight for Adolescent Girls' exhibition amplified the voices of refugee girls and young women by providing a space to share their photographs and poster-narratives, which raised their voices and stories in a more personal way. Moreover, the exhibition

helped to raise awareness about the unique challenges faced by adolescent refugee girls and encouraged the audience to think critically about these issues. Furthermore, the exhibition created a space for dialogue and engagement, inviting the audience to participate in conversations about the issues and concerns of refugee girls. Finally, the process of creating the photographs and poster-narratives and being involved in the exhibition planning process can be empowering for the participants. By providing them with a platform to express themselves and share their experiences and perspectives, the exhibition can help to build confidence and self-esteem among participants. Therefore, the exhibition was able to not only showcase the experiences of refugee girls but also promote a more nuanced and complex understanding of their lives in Québec.

Figure 1 Invitation poster of the exhibition.

While the participants came from different countries, cultural backgrounds, and economic environments, they all had powerful stories to share about their resettlement

experiences. The findings also reveal that various factors influence the resettlement experiences of adolescent refugee girls and young women in Québec. These factors include 1) different forms of discrimination, 2) mental health issues, 3) complexity of integration and 4) financial issues. According to the findings, refugee girls can benefit from educational opportunities and having a circle of trust to share their concerns to overcome these challenges.

As stated by Larkin (2022), girl migration involves more than just moving from one physical location to another as it often involves the ongoing negotiation and re-negotiation of the concept of girlhood, of how each girl navigates and experiences girlhood in connection to her intersecting identities. However, few studies have developed a rich understanding of refugee girls' experiences by acknowledging their agency to share their stories. The Muslim refugee girls in Miled's photovoice study in British Columbia (2020), for example, speak of how silence is imposed on them because of "being a Muslim and becoming a refugee" in a Western country that sees them as "oppressed with no agency" (p. 8). As more refugee girls' voices are heard, more stories highlight their resilience, courage, and determination to break through the obstacles holding them back, despite facing various challenges.

Limitations of the Study

Despite this study aiming to be comprehensive and expansive, I would like to acknowledge its limitations. First, I recognize that I conducted the fieldwork with nine refugee girls and young women in Montreal. For this reason, their stories, narratives, and perspectives may not represent those of the other refugee girls and young women living in Québec or other provinces of Canada. Furthermore, I acknowledge that although photovoice offers participants the opportunity to interpret their own photographs through various individual and group

activities, the resettlement stories of the refugee girls are complex, and there may be aspects of their experiences that they were unable to share or communicate through the photographs. In addition, the relatively short fieldwork period of six months posed challenges to fully exploring and understanding the complexities of the girls' experiences. Therefore, longer-term engagement could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of their challenges, strengths, and aspirations. Another limitation arose from the absence of some participants from the community-based exhibition, which limited the opportunity for direct engagement with the audience. The girls' absence may have reduced the impact that could be developed through interpersonal interactions and exchanges during such events, although at the same time their absence also points to the limits of participation and the importance of ensuring that participants have free choice. In addition, setting up sessions with policymakers could have added a direct link between the girls' narratives and potential policy changes. Engaging policymakers could have facilitated a more direct channel for sharing insights and advocating for necessary changes to address the challenges encountered by refugee girls. Finally, it was sometimes challenging to put together the diverse experiences of girls from different countries: Brazil, Venezuela, Haiti, and Congo. While this project aimed to capture their diverse experiences and commonalities by creating an inclusive space where girls were encouraged to share their unique stories, the challenge lay in trying to capture and present these diverse experiences in a coherent and meaningful way. All participants were attached in one way or another to Maison d'Haïti which was an asset, but returning to the point raised in chapter two that the participants were from such widely different settings as Congo, Haiti, Venezuela and Brazil may have meant that I lost some of the nuances of their country-specific stories. In

studies specifically focusing on Syrian girls' experiences, or experiences of girls from Afghanistan would be able to counter some of this diversity.

Implications

There are several implications to this study for theory, practice, schools, policy, and further research. In the following sections, I explain each of them in more detail.

Theoretical implications. This study was built on the main concerns of Girlhood Studies that highlight the agency of girls and young women by seeing them as active and independent individuals. According to Mitchell and associates (2008), Girlhood Studies recognizes that girls and young women are able to make their decision, create their own narratives, and voice all of this. Thus, as Mandrona (2016) states, Girlhood Studies focuses on research and engagement with girls, for girls, and by girls that draws attention to their absence and voicelessness in programs that affect their lives. Therefore, this study has several theoretical implications. Building on the tenets of Black Girlhoods, this study recognizes that girls are not a homogeneous group but rather a diverse and intersectional group of individuals who experience girlhood in different ways. This recognition challenges traditional essentialist notions of girlhood that assume a single, fixed identity or experience for all girls. For instance, in this study we saw that the unique identities of the girls and young women such as age, race, religion, immigration status, and socioeconomic situation interact with one another to shape their resettlement experiences. For this reason, the resettlement issues of younger girls (14 to 18 years old) are different from the older participants (18 to 24 years old) as they navigate through the education system in Québec. The process of enrolling in schools in Québec is relatively easy for younger participants. At the same time, older girls struggle to secure sufficient funds to pursue higher education at

the college or university level. Moreover, this study challenges the patriarchal views of Black girls and young women as passive objects as often portrayed in mainstream media by acknowledging that girls are active agents in their own lives and can shape their own experiences and identities. In this photovoice study, recognizing girls' agency means they are not the passive subjects but active participants who can challenge dominant narratives. Finally, this study highlights the need for interdisciplinary approaches that draw on multiple theoretical perspectives and research methods to better understand girls' lives' complexities. For example, by drawing on a combination of research methods, including photovoice and individual interviews, this study developed a more nuanced understanding of refugee girls' resettlement experiences in Québec.

Practical implications. This study reveals that it is critical to take an intersectional approach to design programs and initiatives to address the resettlement issues and challenges of refugee girls and young women. As the findings of the study show, integration is long and complex; for this reason, an intersectional perspective can offer a new way of looking at these complexities. Additionally, an intersectional approach can be used to link the rights of refugee girls and young women to the many forms of discrimination they encounter. In this regard, the organizations responsible for assisting with refugee resettlement can use the significant themes within this research to develop programs and initiatives that better meet the priorities of refugee girls and young women. For instance, participants' emphasis on providing educational opportunities points to a need to create opportunities that enable them to participate in Québec society fully. In addition to these organizations, schools can benefit from the findings of this study. For instance, as one of the participants mentioned studying in Québec is challenging for refugee girls as the school culture differs from her home

country. Therefore, schools can create more inclusive environments for refugee students by familiarizing teachers with concepts and facts related to refugees and simultaneously encouraging teachers to become familiar with students' cultures, languages, or educational backgrounds.

Implications for schools. The findings of this study have several implications for teachers, schools, and curriculum development. Teachers need to be aware that students from refugee backgrounds can face discrimination even if they can communicate with other students in French. To tackle this issue, they need to be equipped with strategies to deal with discriminatory behaviours inside and outside the classroom. For instance, teachers can set clear rules and expectations that create an inclusive environment or have open discussions on diversity and inclusion that create a safe space for students to express their thoughts and experiences. In addition, as the findings show, participants faced educational issues stemming from a lack of understanding of their culture by teachers. To tackle this issue, schools can provide professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their cultural competence. For example, educational workshops, seminars, or training sessions for teachers can raise awareness of refugee girls' cultural backgrounds and experiences in Québec. In addition, curriculum developers can incorporate diverse perspectives and backgrounds into school curriculums. For instance, they can include literary works by refugee authors in the curriculum, allowing students to explore different perspectives and themes related to displacement, resettlement, resilience, and integration.

Implications for policy. This study has important implications for policy that can help improve the lives of refugee girls and young women in Québec and other refugee destinations:

1)   Gender-sensitive policies: This study highlights the importance of gender-sensitive policies considering refugee girls' and young women's unique experiences, needs, and concerns. These policies can address various issues related to education, mental health and well-being, employment, and violence prevention. They should be designed to consider the different experiences and challenges that refugee girls and young women face. For instance, Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) is an analytical process that offers a rigorous method for evaluating systemic inequalities. Such methods can be employed to recognize the unique experiences of refugee girls as a specific group within the resettlement context and provide inclusive interventions that can address their needs and rights.

2)   Promoting refugee girls' empowerment: This study provides insights into the factors that can promote girls' agency and resilience. Policies should focus on providing opportunities for refugee girls and young women to participate in decision-making, access education and health care, and gain leadership skills. For example, policies can provide spaces where refugee girls have a voice and can share their opinions and ideas, such as youth councils or advisory committees.

Implications for further research. There are several implications in relation to the topic of this dissertation. There is a need to develop gender-responsive programs. Currently, most programs target the needs of youth and fail to address the particular challenges and issues of girls and young women. This is particularly important when girls' and young women's mental health and well-being are influenced by risk factors such as discrimination, gender-based violence, and gender roles and norms. Further research is needed to explore strategies to create such programs.

Additionally, while this study underscores the importance of creating safe spaces where adolescent refugee girls and young women can voice their concerns and issues, further research is needed to examine targeted interventions to address the challenges faced by this population during resettlement. By addressing these challenges, these interventions can promote the successful resettlement and integration of adolescent refugee girls and young women in Québec. Moreover, longitudinal studies can track the resettlement experiences of refugee girls over an extended period. Such studies can provide helpful information about the long-term effects of resettlement and, at the same time, explore the factors that can positively impact the resilience and well-being of refugee girls over time. Future research can also delve into how refugee girls have been represented in the media. For example, by analyzing news stories, documentaries, films, and social media, future research can identify dominant narratives, preconceptions, and prejudices that shape public opinions, perceptions, and attitudes toward refugee girls. Finally, the recent closure of Roxham Road (Nardi, 2023), as a measure to control the flow of irregular border crossings, can impact refugee girls and their families in Québec. Therefore, more studies are needed to explore the impact of this closure on various factors such as migration routes, existing support structures, mental health and well-being, and social isolation of refugee girls and their families.

Final Remarks

As I end this journey, I am filled with a sense of awe and gratitude for the incredible experience of working with the girls and young women. It has been an honour to learn from these courageous and inspiring individuals who have shown such strength and perseverance in adversity. Throughout this study, I have been struck by their numerous challenges as they

navigate a new country, culture, and education system. I have also been heartened by their resilience and determination in their quest for resettlement and integration. My study has offered essential insights into the lives of refugee girls in Québec. However, I recognize that much work still needs to be done in this area. I hope my research will inspire and inform further exploration of this topic and contribute to the development of more effective policies and practices that better support the needs of refugee girls and young women. In closing, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to undertake this research, and I am excited to see where this journey will take me next. I am confident that the knowledge and insights gained through this work will positively impact the lives of refugee girls, and I am grateful for the chance to contribute to this critical and ongoing conversation.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval Certificate

McGill

Research Ethics Board Office   Tel: (514) 398-6831
James Administration Bldg.   Fax: (514) 398-4644
845 Sherbrooke Street West. Rm 325   Website: www.mcgill.ca/research/research/compliance/human/
Montreal, QC H3A 0G4

Research Ethics Board 3
Certificate of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Humans

REB File #: 21-06-034

Project Title: Resettlement experience in Quebec: Arts-based approaches to work with adolescent refugee girls.

Principal Investigator: Nesa Bandarchian Rashti   **Department:** Integrated Studies in Education

Status: Ph.D student   **Supervisor:** Professor Claudia Mitchell

Approval Period: June 15, 2021- June 14, 2022

The REB 3 reviewed and approved this project by delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct For Research Involving Humans.

Lynda McNeil
Associate Director, Research Ethics

Appendix B: Audience Feedback
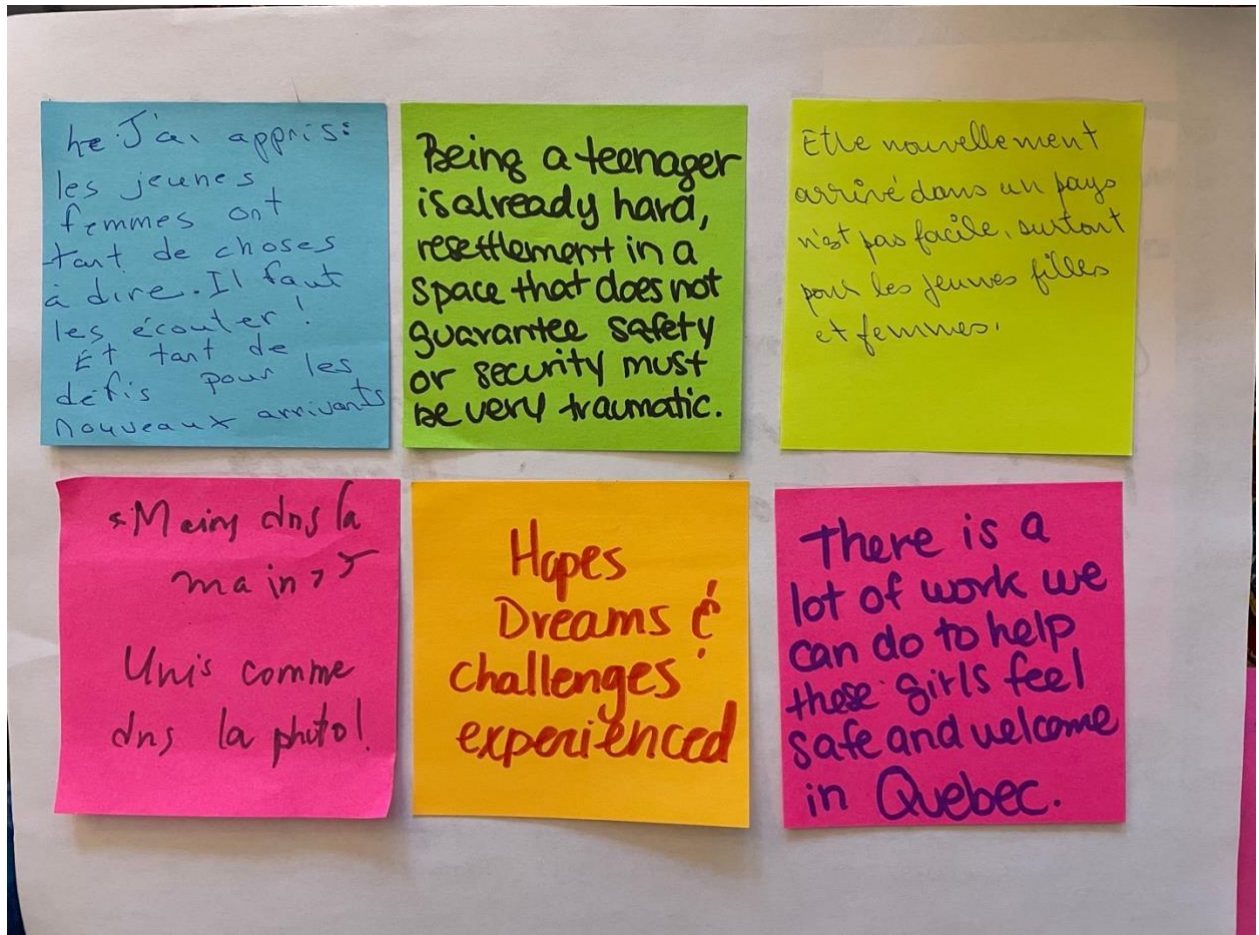
Appendix C: Semi-Structured Individual Interview Questions

- What part of the workshop did you like the most? Which did you find challenging?

- What was your experience like when you first came to Canada/Québec?

- What were the main reasons for you to come to Canada?

- What are some of the issues and challenges you personally have?

- What barriers you face in integrating into Québec society?

- Do you know what rights you have here? what are they?

- What would you tell policy makers, community leaders, educators about the support they can give adolescent girls and young women?