

Unsettling Settlement: Perspectives of Refugees from South and South East Asia

UNSETTLING SETTLEMENT: PERSPECTIVES OF REFUGEES FROM SOUTH AND
SOUTH EAST ASIA

By

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the settlement challenges of South and South East Asian refugees in the City of Hamilton. This study was undertaken to represent the voices of the marginalized and vulnerable communities such as refugees to be included on settlement related research. The purpose of the study was also to identify issues to suggest directions for future policy planning.

The study concludes that ‘settlement’ is a narrowly defined concept that fails to incorporate significant aspects of a refugee’s life. South and South East Asian refugees face unique barriers and challenges in the process of settlement. The mainstream settlement agencies are not always able to respond to the peculiar needs of ethno-racial refugees, which create a wide gap between the service providers and users. Ethno racial agencies attempted to represent the unique needs of South and South East Asian refugees are often crippled by funding restrictions. These have impacted the overall quality of their services, which are perceived as being broad, general and superficial by the service receiving communities and individuals. Therefore the settlement sector, both mainstream and ethno racial, needs to be sensitized about the unique barriers and challenges faced by the South and South East Asian refugees.

The finding of the study also exemplifies that the discrepancy between policy idea and everyday reality. Although settlement is widely considered as a “two way process” between the mainstream and the ethno-racial minorities, it is more a fallacy in reality. The ethno racial refugees face skin colour racism and systemic discrimination on a daily basis which make their settlement experience overwhelmingly challenging. Participants often are confronted prejudice and non-accommodative attitudes towards their culture, language and customs and live in an atmosphere of hostility and insecurity. The settlement policies, which are meant to help refugees adapt, adjust, and integrate in host society are found discriminatory and insensitive towards their settlement needs. To the participants, settlement is more or less a one way struggle with constant rejection and exclusion from the mainstream community.

To contribute to policy and program changes in the settlement sector, this study also summarizes what could be done from the participants’ point of view and identifies specific areas for further research and policy debates.

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CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH PROBLEM, TARGET POPULATION AND THE RESEARCHERS

Every year the number of refugees coming to Canada is increasing. Yu and her colleagues (2007) point out ‘refugees have consistently made up over 10 percent of the annual inflow of newcomers to Canada in the last decade’ (p. 17). In 2005, Canada granted permanent residence to 35, 768 refugees out of which 71 per cent were ‘Landed in Canada Refugees’¹, 21 percent were ‘Government Assisted Refugees’² and eight per cent were ‘Privately Sponsored Refugees’³ (CIC, 2006). These refugees settling in Canada has impact on every sector of the Canadian society such as health care, education, social services, etc. Studies such as Canadian Task Force on Mental Health Issues Affecting Immigrants and Refugees (1989), *After the Door Has Been Opened*, indicate that refugees and immigrants have difficulty accessing health and social services that affect their overall well-being (Reitz, 1995). They also face cultural, linguistic and racial barriers in service delivery system. This study explores the settlement challenges faced by South and South East Asian refugees in the City of Hamilton. It reviews settlement services available in the community, the perspective of refugees on gaps in the services and their recommendations for improvement. This study will also identify areas for future policy planning.

¹ Landed in Canada (LCRs) refugees are claimants who are determined to be in Canada ‘s protection by Immigration and Refugee board (IRB) and are granted the ‘protected persons’ status, if they are rejected they are subject to removal. These protected persons subsequently become permanent residents and are called Landed in Canada Refugees

² Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) are refugees selected overseas through the resettlement program. They are referred by UNHCR and are supported through federally funded Resettlement Assistant Program (RAP).

³ Privately Sponsored refugees (PSRs) are the ones supported and sponsored by voluntary groups.

Government, non government and community based organizations plan and implement policies, programs and services based on their particular understanding of settlement without considering how this impacts the communities they intend to serve. The communities’ perspectives on settlement are hardly represented in policy documents and their settlement experiences are not taken into cognizance when policies are formulated and services are developed. Wayland (2006) perceives settlement as a process of continuum of activities that a refugee or immigrant passes through upon arriving to a new country. Hence, settlement could be multi-dimensional and may contain multiple layers. But it is certainly not an easy continuum. As a woman refugee from Nepal who came to Canada two years ago, I feel that newcomers face great difficulty becoming “settled” in a foreign country; we struggle to find our way and hence being able to settle in one area does not necessarily mean that we are fully “settled”. One continues to face difficulties, challenges and struggles based on race, class, gender and other social locations. In other words, settlement experience is largely influenced by one’s identity and social locations and is not a simple step by step process. In this study, I focus on the settlement experiences of refugees from South and South East Asia, who are also identified as racial (visible) minorities in Canada (CASSA, 1998). I look at their daily challenges and struggles. I have explored this question through an analysis of in-depth semi structured interviews with three participants from Pakistan and two from Burma, who preferred to call themselves as Karen⁴ refugees living in the city of Hamilton. I have

⁴ Karen refugees are the ethnic minorities of Burma (Myanmar) who left their country in 1995 due to conflict with the Burmese government army with Karen National Union and have been living in Burma side border with Thailand. There are 140,000 Burmese refugees living in the Thai refugee camps for more than two decades. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the government of Canada have identified Karen refugees in Thailand as the most vulnerable group having special needs (CIC, 2007). They live in refugee camps amidst dangerous and difficult circumstances. In this study I have used Karen refugees and refugees from South East Asia interchangeably.

concluded this study by discussing the settlement issues of these groups and have identified issues and concerns that would be useful in guiding future policy planning for social workers, development workers and policy makers.

Why South and South East Asians in Hamilton?

South Asian immigrants are considered as one of the largest immigrant groups in Canada. Roberts (2003, p.235) suggests that “in Canada, Immigration from the Asia and Pacific accounts for over 50 percent of the total immigration”. South East Asian refugees although small in number are consistently growing. In the year 2006, the government of Canada accepted 810 Karen refugees from Burma (Myanmar) and in the year 2007, it announced it will be welcoming additional 2000 Karen refugees (CIC, 2007).

According to 2001 Census the populations of South Asian and South East Asian living in the City of Hamilton are 14,765 and 5,995 respectively (Statistics Canada, 2005b). Hamilton CMA has the third highest percentage of foreign born population after Toronto and Vancouver. Hamilton ranks seventh among all Canadian cities according to the actual size of foreign born population (Statistics Canada, 2005b).

According to Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO, 2008), 7,000 to 7,500 refugees are accepted by the Government in Canada each year as part of their International Humanitarian commitment out of which more than 400 refugees come to Hamilton. The City of Hamilton is considered as one of the most diverse metropolises due to its demographic characteristics. With comparatively low living costs, settlement services which are closer and in accessible areas and other social and community level services, the city of Hamilton attracts many immigrants and refugees (Navarathna, 2006).

Reports published by Bauder & Cameron (2002) and The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) (2005) talk about the settlement experience of refugees and immigrants in other large cities such as Toronto and Vancouver. Hamilton, although being home to many refugees and immigrants, has not received much attention from researchers, academicians and writers. There is a need to understand the settlement experiences of refugees in the city of Hamilton due to its demographic diversity in terms of language, culture and race. Frideres (2006) suggests that second⁵ and third tier cities have not received attention even though in recent years immigrants and refugees settling in these cities are increasing. The settlement experiences of immigrants and refugees in major mega cities such as Toronto and Vancouver might be totally different than in the smaller cities. Frideres (2006, p. 7) also suggests that immigrants’ ‘integration’ and ‘quality of life’ seem to be better in second and third tier cities as compared to first tier cities. Therefore, this study is undertaken to understand more about settlement experience of refugees in a second tier city.

South and South East Asian refugees are largely invisible in the Canadian research on immigration and settlement issues, particularly their everyday settlement experiences. Although they are included in a few studies as service-recipients to evaluate the effectiveness (or absence of it) of services, they are merely passive participants in those studies. Yu., et.al (2000) suggests that refugees face greater barriers to accessing services due to their traumatic migration experience, lower human capital or different social networks (p.21). The situation of South and South East Asian refugees is particularly unique because their settlement experience is also impacted by negative racial and cultural stereotypes which hinder their

⁵ Hamilton is considered the second tier city. According to Statistics Canada Hamilton received 40,000 and 100,000 immigrants in the year 2001

long term participation and integration in the mainstream Canadian society (CASSA & SAWC, 2000).

‘Gender’ is an important component to analyze settlement experience of refugees from South and South East Asia. Different gender roles have differential affect on how refugees access settlement services, the barriers they face and the choices they make. Studies suggest that “women face additional barriers in many arenas, including paid-work opportunities, accessing the health care system and education attainment” (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2006, p.13). However, Gender as a variable is hardly discussed in settlement related discourses. The lack of gender analysis in the studies on settlement experiences of refugees and immigrants create a gap in understanding how women refugees view settlement.

The report published by various governmental and non-governmental organizations such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) (1996), Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA) (1994), South Asian Community Legal Initiative (SALCI) (1999) only talk about the number and extent of services needed to immigrant and refugee populations due to their cultural and linguistic specificities as well as immigration trends without analyzing the impact of such services on them. For example, Tamils being the largest ethno-cultural groups among South Asians have unique linguistic needs. As well they face unique social issues due to the cause of migration, i.e., civil war. There are number of services developed considering their unique needs (CASSA, 1998). However, there are barriers which hinder refugees from accessing these services, which are not taken into account when developing the services. These services are often either inaccessible (location or linguistic differences for example) or too general to meet the needs of refugees and

immigrants. There are other factors which influence accessibility and availability of services such as racism and discrimination within the mainstream community. Refugees from South and South East Asia face discrimination on a daily basis due to the language they speak and the color of their skin. This impedes their participation and also distances them from availing themselves of formal mainstream service agencies. South and South East refugees commonly share history of colonization and racism and have common settlement experiences (CASSA & SAWC, 2000, p.12). Though there are few studies focusing on settlement experiences of South Asian refugees (CASSA, 1998), the studies on South East Asian refugees are negligible. There are no research conducted on South East Asian refugees in Canada, particularly from Burma and therefore their daily settlement experiences remain unknown in the general literature on settlement experiences. This study hopes to fill some of the knowledge gap for social researchers and policy makers to better understand the settlement issues confronting South and South East Asian.

LOCATING SELF IN THE RESEARCH

My interests in this research area and this population lie in my own lived experience being a woman and a refugee from South Asia. I believe that my settlement experience in Canada is little different from that of the research participants in the study. Being a refugee, a woman of color, a single mother, and poor, I have experienced marginalization and vulnerability first hand. In the first few months I came to Canada, my situation was challenging mainly due to my history of migration. I was in shock and constant stress in the initial days as I came to Canada alone and expectant and was fretful about my impending childbirth. I had no support network to rely on and also lacked confidence to interact with

people. I faced a lot of challenges when looking for jobs to support myself and my newborn. It was during my job search I realized that there was a lack of recognition of my foreign credentials and even though I had my Master's degree in social work from a prestigious university in India- Tata Institute of Social Sciences⁶, it was not valued in the Canadian labour market. This left me frustrated many times and was compelled to commence my second Masters from a Canadian University. The services I received from mainstream agencies did not help me meet my needs, and the ones from local service delivery agencies were very superficial in their impact. I felt lonely, lost, isolated many times. It is because of all these struggles I faced, I am personally motivated to voice the peculiar battles that refugees from South and South East Asia witness so that 'our' struggles, challenges and experiences are understood by the wider community. In my reading I have found that many studies fail to differentiate between the situations of refugees and immigrant communities and treat them as a collective mass (CIC, 1995; CIC, 1997). The danger here is that refugee communities as such do not get due attention and their needs and concerns remain unaddressed.

This research gave me an opportunity to investigate the settlement challenges that South and South East Asian refugees face in Canada, their perception of 'settlement' and settlement services. The research provided me a platform to discuss the gap between official definition of 'settlement' and day to day settlement challenges of South and South Asian

⁶ Tata Institute of Social Sciences is one of the reputed and established academic institutions in India. It is a pioneering Institute for Social work. It is also considered a Centre of excellence in Social Service Research in South Asia. It has a status of a Deemed University and invites students of India and abroad to pursue Post-Graduate courses in Social Work, Personnel Management and Industrial Relations (Times of India, 2003).

refugees. This study has helped me identify issues and concerns for settlement of refugees in Hamilton to make recommendations for future planning on settlement service policies.

I believe my settlement experience as a refugee has given me an insider view to the struggles and experiences the research participants have experienced. I therefore identify myself as an insider to the situation when I am looking at the experiential challenges of refugees. At the same time I could also be an outsider to their situation as a researcher having higher level of education, proficiency in English language and being affiliated to McMaster University. This dynamic between the researcher and research participants made me insider in one issue but at the same time outsider in another (Lee, 2008, forthcoming). Therefore I have tried to be mindful of the tension between insider and outsider perspectives throughout this study in order to present a more complete picture (Lasala, 2003).

In all research situations, there is a hierarchy between the researcher and the researched. Williams (2001) suggests that “the fact that one group of people is able to conduct research on another group as the subject of research is itself an indication of power differences” (p.238). This suggests that a researcher has a degree of intellectual power and control over participants (Lee, 2008, forthcoming). During the interviews, I was very conscious of this power differential and worked to mitigate it while conducting my interviews.

I also believe that understanding the life world of the research participants gives the researcher better access to subjective views of the situation. Refugee settlement experience is contingent on racial and ethnic identity of an individual. Therefore one’s race and ethnicity creates barriers to integration to mainstream community. South and South East Asian

refugees have been impacted by racist policies, programs and services in Canada (CASSA & SAWC, 2000). Being a South Asian refugee myself made it easier to open the discussion on issues of race and ethnic identity and enhanced my ability to understand the perspectives of the participants (Egharevba, 2001 in Dei, 2005). Dei (2005, p. 205) suggests the experience of researcher is equally important as the experience of researched. He argues that the ‘individual identity’ and ‘social difference’ between the researcher and the researched are important to be addressed in understanding and explaining ‘experiences of oppression and marginalization’ (p. 205). The role of a researcher is challenging as we have to simultaneously assume multiple roles: i.e. being a ‘translator’ of the experiences, a ‘navigator’ of multiple and complex social differences, and a ‘self-proclaimed authority’ on what is/will be considered important and researchable from researched lives and experiences (Dei, 2005, p.205). I hope that my study will illuminate the settlement challenges of South and South East Asian refugees and the barriers they are confronted due to policy and service gaps.

Although this is an academic paper, I consider my subjectivity to be an important and salient part of this study. In this report, I choose to address myself by ‘I’, and ‘me’. By doing so, I acknowledge my own commitment to and direct experience of the research problem and the research population. Indeed, this study is not merely about the settlement experience of the research participants but also reflective of the life situation, struggles and challenges of my own.

Organization of the Thesis

The study is divided into five chapters. The following chapter discusses the available literature on the definition of settlement, barriers to settlement, settlement services and programs and their funding. The third chapter discusses the methodological framework of the study, research design, data collection, data analysis, data management. It also acknowledges the limitation of the study. The fourth chapter talks about the findings of the study and discusses how research population view settlement and the existing barriers to settlement, the effectiveness of settlement services and their limitations from research participants' worldview. The fifth chapter concludes the study; it charts out findings of the study with implications for future policy on settlement services.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, I review existing literature on settlement experiences of South Asian and South East Asian refugees in Canada and examine how they address the following aspects of the research problem: a) Canadian Settlement Programs, Policies and Funding, b) Definition of Settlement and c) Barriers to Settlement. The chapter discusses these major issues based on the available literature.

Canadian settlement Programs, Policies and funding

In Canada, under the immigration act, settlement policy is implemented through settlement programs (ISPR, 2000, p.35) which identifies services and delivery of such services to be its mandate to achieve successful settlement (Beyene et, al., 1996, p. 171 quoted in ISPR, 2000, p. 35). There are various settlement services available for refugees and immigrants and the federal government funds these services. The Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) provides funding to three major newcomer⁷ programs such as Immigration, Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP), Host program and the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program (LINC). The ISAP program is responsible for services such as reception, orientation, interpretation, counseling, referral to other community services, employment related services etc. The HOST program is geared towards fostering integration by linking newcomers with residents in Canada. The HOST program matches newcomers with volunteers who are familiar with Canadian culture and who can teach

⁷ There is no concrete definition of newcomers. CIC (2005) considers newcomers as immigrants, convention refugees, refugee claimants and other foreign born persons, who have been living in Canada for three years and who intent to live here permanently. This also includes non-status persons.

newcomers about available services, practice English or French, help to establish employment contacts and encourage participation in community activities (CIC, 2004). Lastly, the LINC program is responsible for funding basic language instruction classes such as English and French to adult newcomers (CIC, 2004).

All of these programs are developed with the understanding that after accessing the services the refugees and immigrants are better equipped to be settled in Canada. In reality, it is seen that many refugees and immigrants are unable to access these programs due to array of challenges and barriers, which are not taken into consideration when the services are implemented. Added to this, most of the settlement services are only meant to serve newcomers and with an assumption that refugees and immigrants who have been living in Canada for more than a three year period have already attained settlement. However, I believe although refugees and immigrants who have been living in Canada for long time do face settlement challenges in some aspect of their life and are in need of support to overcome their challenges. It is unfortunate that while there are negligible settlement services available for refugees and immigrants living in Canada for longer period of time, the services available for newcomers are also dwindling under funding restrictions.

In Ontario, Financial support for the ISAP, LINC and host program is decided upon by National Allocation Formula (NAF). CIC developed this formula to allocate and distribute funds to programs provincially (Truelove and Wang, 2001) based on a two step formula⁸.

⁸ Step one calculates the funding to provinces that receive five per cent or less immigrants to Canada in a given year. Four service variables are required to calculate this: number of newcomers destined to the province; number of refugees; number of adult immigrants over 15 years old; and number of adult refugees with no official language ability. A weight factor of 1.6 is applied to refugees so that a minimum level of settlement support is available to refugees in all provinces. In step two, allocates funds to provinces that receive five per cent or more of all immigrants to Canada in a given year. Funds are

This two step formula has its own limitations because the funds are not equitably distributed among all provinces (CIC, 2004) in many cases provinces having few percentage of newcomers are favored over those having higher percentage.

Hamilton having lower percentage of newcomers compared to other mega cities gets affected by this process. The immigrant draw in the first tier cities such as Toronto and Vancouver has always been higher as compared to second and third tier cities such as Hamilton, Quebec City (Frieders, 2006). Although in absolute number the ‘immigrants share’ in Hamilton has significantly increased in the recent years, comparatively it is still not as significant as the other mega cities. This has significant impact on funding of settlement services in Hamilton. This has resulted in settlement services for immigrants and refugees in Hamilton to be limited with specific timeline (SISO, 2005). Also the development of specialized services for refugees having peculiar needs are not emphasized due to limited funding (CASSA, 1998). Therefore the services combine both refugees and immigrants into a monolithic body and their specific concern and needs are not addressed.

Newcomer Settlement Services

There is another specific program for newcomers, which is called Newcomer Settlement Program (NSP). In Ontario, NSP is responsible for brokering two contracts such as: settlement service contracts and purchase-of-service agreements (Government of Canada 2004b). There are two main service streams that are funded by NSP such as a) core services and b) employment-facilitation services (Government of Ontario 2004b).

allocated according to a 80:20 split between LINC (80) and all other programs (20), including ISAP and the Host Program” (Sadiq, 2004, p. 11).

- a) **Core services:** The core services consist of assessment, referral, information and orientation, and general settlement assistance. Assessment services identify newcomer needs and determine an appropriate response or recommendation. Referral services link newcomers with community resources, services, ESL instruction, and employment training programs. Information and orientation services provide assistance to newcomers to establish themselves in their communities, including help with securing essential documents, and assistance with housing, education, transportation, health, and legal services. General settlement assistance services provide newcomers with help settling in Ontario. For example, assistance is offered in the completion of forms needed to access essential services (such as housing and health cards), arranging appointments, obtaining information and helping to resolve problems related to settlement (CIC, 2004).

Although the core services seem all encompassing and fairly thorough for newcomers to help settle in the community, the effectiveness of such services is vague as the evaluation reports published by organizations delivering settlement services such as SISO (2005) in Hamilton does not reflect their impact on service recipients. The opinions of the services users are mostly depicted by percentages and charts and their subjective experience of utilizing such services are not well represented. It is very difficult to ascertain which aspect the settlement services have been useful and which ones have not been able to meet the needs of refugees and immigrants.

- b) **Employment-facilitation service:** This service is said to be more in depth than the service provided under core services. It helps the newcomers to access job training

programs, assessment of credentials, and acquire professional certification. This service also helps newcomers to develop resume, develop skills to match the employment requirement and improve their interview skills

However, these services have been developed with an understanding that all immigrants and refugees have equal access to services. The varying levels of accessibility due to residential location, educational background, cultural differences, language barrier, lack of information and so forth have not been taken into consideration. Leung (2000) suggests that many of the settlement services for immigrants and refugees are either too general or board and most of the service-users are frustrated due to this. Sadiq (2004) on the “Two Tier Settlement System: A Review of Current Newcomers settlement Services in Canada” suggests that the there is a mismatch between location of settlement services and the residential locations of newcomers and therefore newcomers are unable to access these services. It is therefore important to understand the barriers to accessing settlement services in their experiential reality. These issues have been explored by empirical evidence in the fourth chapter.

There are other four types of services developed based on the newcomer’s length of stay in Canada, such as a) reception level services b) basic level services c) labor market entry services and d) specialized settlement services (CIC, 2004). Reception level services cater to cultural and linguistic needs of the newcomer, basic level services deal with housing needs, job training, language training, interpretation, networking and helping with government documentation such as OHIP card, labor market entry services cater to the employment needs of the newcomer such as assessment of foreign credential and employment related training.

The specialized settlement services comprise of more emotional and mental needs of the newcomer such as counseling services on matters related to cultural barrier, family problem, racism, stress and the like.

The wide range of services developed to cater to psychological, social and emotional needs of immigrants and refugees is particularly encouraging. However in practice the actual implementation of these services depicts a different picture. The mainstream organizations delivering these services fail to provide the services in culturally appropriate manner and their interface with the refugees and immigrants have time and again demonstrated insensitivity and racism against this population. Various service gaps exist in the mainstream agencies while dealing with clients on a daily basis including language needs, employment and career needs, access to information, access to services, harassment and racism, liaison with school boards, counseling, health and housing and overall the service delivery models are not effective to meet the needs of those accessing the services (SALCI, 1999). Therefore, many South and South East Asian refugees and immigrants being aware that these mainstream organizations do not understand their culture, have chosen not to access mainstream services, which have exacerbated racist stereotypes against them (Ku, 2000).

The responsibility of delivering these services in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner therefore mostly lies with the local ethnic or multi cultural organizations. As Leung (2000, p. 5) suggests one of the main reasons ‘for the establishment of these ethno-specific organizations are that clients from minority groups are not able to get culturally and linguistically sensitive services from mainstream institutions’. There refugees and

immigrants are more reliable on ethno-specific and multicultural organizations for their daily settlement needs.

However, financial restrictions have crippled the functioning of these organizations. The financial cuts subsequent to 1995 have impacted multi-cultural and ethno specific organizations to a great extent. Some useful programs for refugees and immigrants have been closed down and some are at the risk of closing. Sadiq (2004, p.18) suggests that almost 43 per cent of all programs for immigrants or refugees were at a high risk of being eliminated in 1996. For instance, the Ontario Welcome House, which provided general settlement services such as translation and interpretation services, was eliminated in 1995. Also in the same year, the provincial Multilingual Access to Social Assistance Program (MASAP) and provincial Newcomer Language Orientation Classes (NLOC) was eliminated (ISPR, 2000, p. 35).

In 1995, there was a shift in investment policy of Ontario government. The government shifted its ‘direct investment’ in the public sector to ‘competitive contract’ (Sadiq, 2004). According to Mwarigha (1997) the outcome of this resulted in withdrawal from direct service provision, reduction of grants and programs to NGOs, especially politically weak organizations working with immigrants and refugees, and promotion of competitive measures to allocate funding to those agencies which could work on low cost and abide by stiff agreements. This has impacted the organizations working with South and South East Asian refugees and their clientele. The South and South East Asian refugees on the one hand avoid accessing services provided by mainstream agencies due to cultural and linguistic barrier and their Euro-centric perspective (SALCI, 1999) and on the other hand are unable to receive services from the ethno specific organizations as they have either closed

down or are at the verge of closing. This has exacerbated the vulnerability of this population who have been left to fend for themselves in the host country without adequate support and guidance. Shakir (1995, p. 50) argues that the ethno-specific services are appropriate as they provide community-based, informal, ongoing support and are geographically, culturally and linguistically accessible. However, as mentioned above with the current political scenario where such organizations are getting weaker both politically and economically, it is difficult to procure funding to sustain services for ethno-racial minority communities such as South and South East Asians. This impedes the ability of South and South East Asian refugees to connect with the other community members and to maintain community relations through ethnic organizations, rendering them isolated and helpless adding to their settlement challenges. Therefore in this study I have explored their both formal and informal support networks to understand how either or both make it easier or difficult for them in their daily settlement experience.

For settlement programs and services to be successful, it is very important to understand how settlement is defined by government and non-government organizations and how refugees themselves view settlement. So far I have argued that both government and ethno racial (Service Providing Agencies) organizations deliver settlement services to South and South East Asian refugees amidst funding restrictions. Evidently, the settlement services provided by mainstream agencies are not effective to meet their cultural and linguistic needs and the services provided by ethno racial organizations have been helpful to refugees and immigrants in their settlement experience. However, funding cuts and narrow definition of settlement marks the services provided by both mainstream and ethno racial agencies. The

understanding of settlement among both government and ethno racial organizations does not seem to incorporate all aspects of refugees’ lives. There seems to be a gap between how these organizations define settlement and how refugees view it. In the following section, various definitions of settlement proposed by both government and non-government organizations will be explored. In chapter four, the understanding of settlement by South and South East Asian refugees will be examined. Special attention will be given to issues of participation, integration and adaptation when settlement of refugees from South and South East Asia is considered.

Settlement: Debate and Discussions

The term settlement is vaguely defined by various government and non-government organizations working with refugees and immigrant populations, and their definitions differ as they see settlement as a complex process. The meaning of settlement for one group of people might not necessarily be the same for another, therefore it is challenging to have a universal definition of settlement. The definition of settlement could be complicated because it is an abstract term and could vary from one individual to another (Leung, 2000). Weinfeld & Wilkinson (1999) suggest settlement is a multi-dimensional process as an immigrant might feel settled in one area but not in another, therefore researchers could only examine the subjective experience of how well an immigrant or refugee has settled by developing some indicators (Leung, 2000). The multi-dimensional process of settlement becomes subjective as meaning of settlement as this might differ from context to another and from individual to individual. The refugees from South and South East Asia might be able easily to settle in

one domain but not in other. CIC has suggested a few indicators which can ascertain the level of an immigrant's settlement. According to CIC (1995) settlement is a process by which a newcomer, during his or her first few years in Canada, acquires basic information, knowledge and skills to become self-sufficient, e.g. find a home, find a job, communicate in one of Canada's official languages, access health services, interact with schools, etc.

Neuwirth and Jones' (1989) definition of settlement is similar to the definition suggested by CIC. It suggests 'settlement as an initial transition period of linguistic, economic, occupational social-institutional and cultural adaptations, and physical and mental well-being (ISRP, 2000, p. 46). Mwarigha (1998) on the other hand identifies three main stages in settlement, such as immediate stage, intermediate stage and long term stage. For Mwarigha, (1998) time frame is very crucial to determine settlement and that it can go beyond short initial period. He suggests:

“In the immediate stage, newcomers require a range of services, such as: shelter, food, clothing, information and orientation, and other essential 'reception' or early settlement services. In the intermediate stage immigrants learn more about how to access and enroll in a number of Canadian systems, starting with language (ESL) classes, upgrading training and education, health, housing and legal systems. The long term stage involves diverse and much more differentiated elements that facilitate the long term participation of individual immigrants in Canadian society” (p.93).

The Ontario Council and Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) has a more flexible definition of settlement, and sees it in the light of flexible process. Settlement is a process or a continuum of activities that a new immigrant/refugee goes through upon arrival in a new country. As cited in (Holder, 1999, p. II-1), this process includes the following stages:

1. Adjustment: acclimatizing and getting used to the new culture, language, people and environment or coping with the situation;
2. Adaptation: learning and managing the situation without a great deal of help;
3. Integration: actively participating, getting involved and contributing as citizen of the new country.

OCASI (1998 quoted in Holder, 1999) contends the perspective on settlement which is limited to “immigrant adaptation” and further defines settlement as:

[A] Long term, dynamic, two-way process through which, ideally immigrants would achieve full quality and freedom of participation in society, and society would gain access to the full human resource potential in its immigrant communities(p. 9).

The Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR, 1998, p. 10-12) suggests settlement as a two way process which could be complex and long term and multi-dimensional incorporating all ‘social, economic, cultural and political spheres’ of an immigrant’s life. CIC in its Federal Integration Strategy has acknowledged this “two-way aspect of integration” as a national principle for resettlement, “which requires newcomers to adapt but also requires Canadians to welcome and absorb new people and cultures” (CIC, 1995, p. 2). Various advocacy organizations for newcomers have also suggested some indicators for successful settlements, for policy making, funding settlement programs and supporting service development. CCR (1998, p.15-16) has outlined following areas as crucial to help newcomers fully participate in the community:

- Development of language skills
- Access to employment
- Cultural orientation
- Recognition of immigrant qualifications and experience

- Combating racism and discrimination
- Facilitation of family reunification
- Confidence of security of status as permanent resident (refers to immigration status)
- Ability to build community of identity/affiliation
- Welcoming communities to newcomers

The term settlement has evolved in its definition and meaning over the years as organizations working with refugees and immigrants have realized that settlement is a complex process and cannot have one static definition. The short-term process of settlement defined by CIC has its own limitations as settlement does not only pertain to newcomers finding new jobs, housing or basic information. Settlement is both short and long process. From my personal experience I believe that refugees living in Canada for many years continue struggling to be settled. Therefore time factor is seen crucial in the settlement process which is being dealt with by Mwarigha (1998). OCASI and CCR's definitions of settlement have gone a little further and have included the mainstream community in their understanding of settlement. They have suggested that settlement is a two way process wherein both mainstream society and immigrants and refugees are responsible for its attainment. Refugees and immigrants are expected to be able to fully integrate and participate in the mainstream society. Therefore there services available for help to fully participate in the Canadian society. It is interesting to understand how refugees view acceptance and inclusion in the mainstream community and whether or not they feel they are being accepted.

While analyzing the definitions of settlement, I understood ‘settlement’ as a process which fosters acculturation wherein ultimately refugees and immigrants are expected to completely submerge in the host culture. For instance the definitions suggested by OCASI and CCR talk about settlement as being a process which calls for immigrants and refugees to completely blend with the host culture which coincides with the definitions of acculturation suggested by many scholars. Berry (2003) suggests acculturation as a process when people from diverse cultures come in contact with the host culture experience change in their own cultures. This change could be either indirect (non cultural or ecological) which takes place over a period of time mainly due to constant interaction with the host society; or reactive which the immigrants or refugees constantly reject and choose to adopt more traditional way of living rather than finding similarities with the dominant culture (Berry, 2003, p. 19). These interactions have significant implications on the settlement experiences of refugees and immigrants in the way how they want to adjust to the host society. According to Berry, acculturation is not a short term process and it takes more than two generations to take place. The definitions of settlements that I reviewed for the study were found to be geared towards fostering acculturation among refugees and immigrants. Acculturation is therefore considered crucial in the process of successful settlement. In the fourth chapter attempts have been made to identify refugees’ perception towards this transformation and how this is impacting their daily lives. .

The development of the definitions of settlement could be encouraging as they have widened in their scope and purview. However I still feel that they are narrowly defined as they do not incorporate all dimensions of refugees’ experiential reality. They fail to include

the kinds of barriers refugees and immigrants face to settlement. Concepts such as full participation, integration and adaptation to the mainstream society have been promoted without considering the barriers that prevent them in attaining these. Services have been identified in helping refugees and immigrants for helping them settle but there are no services identified for the mainstream society to be more accommodative, even though settlement is defined as a two way process. This shows the lopsided understanding of settlement, wherein only refugees and immigrants are responsible for working towards it. Therefore in my study I will be exploring the barriers faced by refugees to settlement and how these barriers hinder them in their settlement experience. Some of the barriers for South Asian and South East Asian refugees I have identified for this study are- language, economic barrier and socio-cultural barrier

Barriers to Settlement

Scholars and community researchers have identified the following barriers immigrants and refugees are often confronted during their settlement in Canada:

Language:

There are several studies which indicate that fluency of English is an important aspect in successful settlement (CASSA, 1994, 1998). Inability to communicate in English is considered as a definite barrier to getting proper service and linguistically appropriate support (Shakir, 1995). According to Kwan (1999, p. 33 quoted in ISPR, 2000, p. 39), the main language issues for immigrants and refugees are the impact of accent on social and economic opportunities in Canada, the acquisition of language specific to labor market

usability, and a sufficient level of language acquisition for settlement and employment purposes.

Language barrier has a great impact on integration in any society. There are many disadvantages of language barrier. De Vries and Simkin (1994) argue that, there is a positive correlation between language acquisition and economic integration, which means those having good language skills are absorbed by the job market very quickly (Leung, 2000). In the report published by CASSA & SAWC (2000) suggest that due to the language barrier many South Asian refugees do not access available settlement services and in most cases choose to avoid them.

Economic Barrier:

According to CASSA (1998), there is dissatisfaction among South Asian immigrants that job search services are inadequate. Employment services to South Asian immigrants are an important component and most of the organizations working with this population have one or the other kind of employment services. In one of the CASSA (1998) reports it notes that:

“The high percentage of ethno specific agencies offering employment related services to their clients is a true reflection of the immigrant and refugee clients’ needs. Lacking familiarity with the job market; lacking Canadian job experience; facing problems in getting accreditation for non-Canadian qualifications; lacking familiarity with employment standards or employee unions; and discrimination in the labor market are some of the most potent barriers for immigrants and refugees that prevent them from integrating successfully into the mainstream of Canadian society. Hence, the availability of these services should be a matter of course for all agencies serving ethno-specific clients” (p. 88).

There are many studies which suggest that lack of Canadian experience; foreign credentials and inadequate command of English are major barriers for immigrants and refugees to join the work force (Bauder & Cameron, 2002; Maitra, 2007).

Socio-Cultural Barrier:

Coming to a new country is a totally different experience, refugees need to adapt to various new environment. Leung (2000, p.4) suggests ‘settlement involves adaptation’ and it is particularly difficult for those who come from different social and cultural backgrounds and face many challenges to adaptation. This is particularly difficult for South Asian women as they come from a traditional society where men have been the head of the household and considered the sole decision maker in almost every situation. The husband-wife relations, decision-making power changes when they come to a new environment. Many studies suggest that gender oppression is the major problem of South Asian culture and therefore ‘assimilation’ and ‘acculturation’ of South Asian women is a way to ensure gender equality (CASSA&SAWC, 2000, p.16). However, Naidoo and David (1988) suggest that South Asian Women face ‘duality of experiential realities in Canada’ (CASSA & SAWC, 2000, p.16). “South Asian women in Canada have an unflinching commitment to their family and home; deeply held values entrenched in their cultural heritage; and they simultaneously exhibit future oriented aspirations which are very contemporary” (Naidoo & Davis, 1988 quoted in CASSA & SAWC, 2000, p.16). There are some studies which report the prevalence of domestic violence in South Asian families and protection from wife abuse considered a high priority for South Asian women (VAWPI, 1993 cited in ISPR, 2000).

This suggests that refugees after coming to a new country are continually adapting to the new social and cultural environment. The South and South East Asian refugees are diverse and have unique backgrounds and hence their understanding of settlement might differ from one community to another. Some might be settled in one area but some other might be struggling to be settled in the same area. It is also important to understand that some of the South and South East Asian refugees who have already been settled or who are still settling in one area or another might not necessarily be dependent on public assistance or any kind of professional help. Social network and support from friends and family could be a good source of informal help. Therefore it is important to understand how both formal and informal source of support influence settlement experience of refugees to ease their challenges and struggles and cope with different social and cultural environment.

Conclusion:

After reviewing the literature I understood that there is no clear definition of settlement and that it varies from one group/community/individual to another. There are various settlement services which have been developed amid funding restrictions to meet the settlement needs of refugees. However, it is challenging to understand the exact settlement needs of refugees because they differ from one person to another. These settlement services have been developed to meet the settlement needs of refugees and both mainstream and ethno specific organizations are involved in the delivery of these programs. Budgetary restrictions have impacted both mainstream and ethno-specific organization and in the given situation of lack of funding most of the services are standardized and are influenced by ‘one size fit all’ principle. The settlement system does not acknowledge the barriers faced by the South and

South Asian refugees and their barriers to integration remain unaddressed. Given this scenario South and South East Asian refugees are struggling to belong to the mainstream community. All of these issues and concerns have led me to undertake the current study. Therefore the purpose of this study are 1) to explore the daily settlement challenges of South and South East Asian refugees in Hamilton 2) to understand if the participants think service agencies are helping them deal with their daily struggles 3) to explore their perception of gaps in the services they receive 4) to identify the areas of improvement the refugees would like to foresee in the services received.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological framework that I used in the study. It discusses the relevance of using this methodology, the selection criteria of participants included in the study and the reason behind using the criteria. It also discusses the research design and use of semi-structured in-depth interview as well as the areas covered in the interview guide and the challenges of using the guide. The process of collecting managing and analyzing data is explained. Finally, the limitation and delimitation of the study is described.

Critical Qualitative Methodology:

The study is qualitative and therefore draws on a small sample. A small sample size allows for the collection of rich and in-depth data. According to Schwandt (1997) “generally, qualitative studies, using unstructured, open-ended, informal interviews, allow the most flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues for both respondents and interviewers” (p.74). In qualitative study, the researcher does not follow specific set of questions outlined in the interview guide during the interview but he/she has a general plan of inquiry ‘that must be asked with particular words and a particular order (Babbie, 2001, p. 291). Also qualitative social research mostly relies on interpretive and critical social science approaches. Interpretative social research attaches values to everything such as the interaction between research participants and the outside world, their life situations, their roles in the society and the like and it is more concerned with how research participants view and define the world around them. Critical social science goes beyond that, it takes into account the power

relations in which meaning is constituted and strives towards changing the world. Critical social researchers ‘apply theory in a different way, give the historical context a major role, critique social conditions, and reveal deep structures of social relations’ (Neuman, 1997, p.329). This allows for a deeper understanding of the subjective aspect of the researched and challenges the existing structures, practices and beliefs that are problematic.

Intersecting self in critical qualitative research is considered crucial as this allows for understanding subjective context of the research participants. Subedi and Rhee (2008) recognize this as collaborative aspect of research wherein the researcher shares similar social locations of that of research participants. This allows for meaningful interaction between the research participants and the researchers when “researchers solicit and recognize informants’ perspectives on how the researchers have conceptualized ideas of dialogue and empathy (Miheisah, 1988 in Subedi and Rhee, 2008, p. 1080). Because of my social location as woman refugee from Asia studying settlement experiences of South and South East Asian refugees, I share many similarities in terms of their lived experiences. In the study I became self reflexive of my role as a ethno racial researcher in the field as entering into research spaces has ‘political, cultural and ethical implications’ (Subedi and Rhee, 2008, p.1077) and I understand this implicates both data collection and data analysis. Therefore, in this study, by exploring the settlement needs of South and South East Asian refugees I hope to call into question the perception of existing problematic policies, programs and structures among refugees which perpetuate racial inequality against them, which have affected my settlement experiences in Canada.

Research Design

In this research, semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted to explore their daily experiences/challenges and their knowledge about, perception of and attitude towards Community Service Agencies in Hamilton. As mentioned above the purpose of qualitative interview is like a conversation to understand the themes of the daily lives of the research participants. Although the structure of the interview is very close to everyday conversation, as a professional interview it needs to follow certain technique and method of questioning (Kvale, 1996). Therefore, I agree with Kvale (1996) that ‘technically the qualitative interviews are semi-structured: it is neither an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire’ (p.27). Hence, during the interview I mostly asked open ended questions but followed on the interview guide prepared that contained certain themes and suggested questions.

An interview guide was prepared to assist in conducting interviews, and to help ensure coverage of important issues and questions. As Rubin & Rubin, (1995,) suggest “qualitative interviewing is iterative. That means each time you repeat the basic process of gathering information, analyzing it winnowing it, and testing it you come closer to a clear and convincing model of the phenomenon you are studying” (p.46-47). One individual interview was conducted with each participant for an hour and a half. It was face-to-face interview conducted in a mutually agreed time and location.

Development and Use of interview guide:

In the interview guide, I developed a list of questions around the interviewees’ settlement experience and their views on existing programs. These came out from my own

knowledge and from a review of literature regarding experiences of refugees in Canada and their interface with local service providing agencies in Hamilton. Interviews were conducted in an open-ended format, to allow them to share information and insights, which did not arise directly from pre-formulated questions, and to incorporate particular participant's experience that might be relevant to the study. Neuman (1997, p. 331) suggests that qualitative research is more non linear and cyclical. The researchers do not follow a straight line; rather pass through successive steps, sometimes moving backward and sideways in a cyclical manner and with each repeated cycle new data and insight into the issue emerges. Therefore, even though I had some general questions set to ask prior to the interviews, I welcomed new issues and themes identified by researched which they thought were important. This allows flexibility in qualitative research and helps the interaction between data and theory (Neuman, 1997).

Areas covered in the interview guide:

There will be five major areas covered in the interview guide, such as:

1. *Challenges/struggles of South Asian Refugees in Hamilton:* In this section questions were asked to better understand the situations of participants, their challenges and struggles being refugees in this country, what makes their situations different from refugees from other parts of the world, how do they deal with the situation? Throughout the interview focus was given to elicit examples rather than general statements.
2. *Role of Community Service Agencies in the lives of the refugees:* Questions were asked in order to understand their perception of how helpful the community service agencies have been in helping them deal with their problems on a daily basis. Their perception regarding

their services and instances of how these services have been helpful in linking them with other services was explored. Both presence and absence of intervention of or interface with community service agencies came up during the discussion, which was interesting in discussing the difference in their settlement experience.

3. *Limitations of Community Service Agencies in Catering to the needs of refugees:* The questions were geared towards understanding their perception regarding the limitation of community service agencies, which services have been helpful and which have not been and the reasons behind this; and

4. *Recommendations for improvement:* Perhaps, this was one of the few occasions where the researched could express what needs to be improved in the services they are receiving. Hence questions were asked to discuss their recommendations to improve the services they are receiving from service providing agencies. What do they view as lacking and in what way they want these agencies to improve their services was be discussed.

Sampling & Recruitment:

At the inception of the research, I intended to recruit total five participants from South Asia each from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. I displayed posters on various locations such as restaurants, shops, public places and apartment buildings. I also contacted local organizations to circulate my posters. Only three participants from Pakistan contacted me and showed their interest to participate in the study. I had discussed my study with one of the Karen refugees working in a local organization in Hamilton, who was also interested in this study and later helped me get another Karen participant. As a result, I interviewed three refugees from Pakistan and two from Burma. The letter of information was

hand delivered to them. It was important for me to visit the participants personally to explain them the purpose of my study and the topics to be covered in the interview as most of them were not be familiar with the academic language and also had difficulty understanding English language. The participants also received a copy of the interview guide with them before the interview. I asked the participants to sign on the consent form before I proceeded with the interview.

During the recruitment stage I realized that the refugee community was fearful of coming forward and expressing their stories, they were afraid that I was from the press and that I would be publishing their stories or reporting their stories to authorities. Obviously, past experiences of being a part of research made some of them reluctant to participate in my study. Some of the South Asian refugees I approached said that back home in Pakistan they were a part of many studies, which did not help them deal with their problems. The researchers would make them talk about lack of proper sanitation in the community, quality of education and so on and after the data collection was over the researchers never disseminated the information. They never got to know what impact the research made on the issue they studied. Some were also of the opinion that whatever they say to be will be quoted in the study and could be used against them such as their lifestyle or their ways of raising children. Therefore people had difficulty coming forward and participating in the study. Eventually, I could only recruit five participants in this study due to the scope and time limitation of the study.

As such the purpose of this study was to collect, analyze and describe experiences, views and opinions of South and South East Asian refugees in Hamilton and not to make an

exhaustive analysis of services, policies and programs per se. Small sample size allowed for the collection of rich and detailed data. The small sample size also posed some limitations in that it was not necessarily reflective of the population and therefore they could not be generalized (Neuman, 1997). But depending on the quality of the interview, conclusions have been drawn based on their responses as I could see repetition of some themes in every interview. Although small sample size, participants having varied social locations came forward to be included in the study, which helped me gain insight into their settlement experiences. In short, participants of this study belonged to the following social locations:

Gender:

Lived experiences differ according to one's social location. Hence, the struggles/challenges faced by women were found to be drastically different from those of men. Subsequently their experience with the service providing agency was different. Understanding the implications of gender, I analyzed the findings from gender lenses.

Age:

Age is another important factor that was seen relevant in analyzing the findings. The participants between the age group of 18-50 came forward to participate in the study which added to the diversity and richness of experiences of the participants.

Years of Stay in Canada:

Siddique (1983) has argued the length of stay in Canada is an important factor for integration for immigrants and refugees. Refugees and immigrants who have stayed in Canada for longer will have developed a reasonable amount of settlement skills, whereas newcomers would still be struggling to get connected to services and resources locally. It

determines familiarity with the system and how decisions are made in the family. (ISPR, 2000, p.40) suggests the longer they stay in Canada, it is more likely for South Asian families to be ‘Westernized’. Therefore participants’ length of stay in Canada had significant impact on their settlement experiences. This gave diversity in their opinion on settlement experiences.

Presence and absence of service providing agencies in their daily lives:

To look at whether or not the absence and presence of service providing agencies may be a factor in their settlement experiences, participants who have received services from the service providing agencies as well as those who have never accessed to any of these services came forward to be included in the study. In the study four participants accessed some or the other kind of services from service providing agencies and only one participant was not accessing any kind of services and was mostly relied on support from friends and family.

Data Management:

I was the one who interviewed all the interviews and transcribed the data. All the participants gave permission to tape the interview. Only my supervisor and I had access to the raw data that was collected. To preserve anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy of the participants, the identities of the participants are all converted into pseudo names. All raw data collected during this research study, including any information that would decipher the coding system, was secured in a locked file in my office. All raw data, including observation notes, audiocassettes, and transcript notes will be saved for five years after which they will be destroyed. This will allow me to work on the data in future for publishing articles. The duration of saving the data for future publication purpose was informed to the participants.

Data Analysis

After data collection, content analysis was used to analyze the data. During the analysis I looked for patterns which occurred over time and gave codes to those patterns. John and Lyn Lofland (1995) suggest there are six different ways of looking for patterns they are frequencies- how often does issue occur, magnitude- what is the magnitude of the issue, structures- what are the different types of issue, process- is there any order in which the issue occur, causes- what are the causes of the particular issue, and consequences- how does it impact the researched (Babbie, 2001). I looked for patterns as suggested by John and Lyn Lofland (1995) and coded the data based on above mentioned ways.

The data was continually analyzed after completion of each interview. Codes were constructed as common themes emerged during the analysis. The letter R was used to represent research participants and single letter acronyms was used to identify each participant being quoted. During the analysis, open coding method was used (Berg, 1989).

This method included following steps:

1. Asking the data a specific and consistent set of questions
2. Analyzing the data minutely, which was done by minutely reading the transcripts
3. Interrupting the codes frequently to write a theoretical note by reflecting back to literature review.

This is a type of data coding structure where systematic and structured aspect of content analysis is used. According to Berg (1998), content analysis is a method of analyzing written communication objectively wherein the underlined and implied meanings within the

communication are identified and analyzed. This helps in examining hidden and covert meanings which are not explicit but have a greater relevance to the objectives of the study.

The analysis was therefore a reflective process. In this method of analysis it was essential for me to understand my own influence on the research and the possible biases that may arise due to this. Hunter (2004) suggests the imperativeness of reflexivity in the research process in order to unveil what is hidden in one's own epistemology. As a new researcher sometimes during the interview I was aware that my own biases influenced the way I asked questions especially around issues of religion and culture. Biases may be present in the way we ask questions and probe into certain issue which would lead the participants to answer the question in a particular way. I had to be conscious about not letting my biases come in the way I asked questions and therefore had to come up with simple and varying ways of asking questions.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study:

Like any other methodology, qualitative methodology has distinctive strengths and limitations. Babbie (2000, p. 98) suggests that “as such the chief strength of this method lies in the depth of understanding it permits”. Whereas other research methods may be challenged as “superficial”, this charge is seldom lodged against field research”. This is the greatest strength of my study as I was able to explore the settlement experiences of refugees more fully, which was possible due to small sample size.

There are however some limitations of the study and one of the limitations that I found was the area from which the refugees came forward for participation. Due time limitation, I could not wait for participants from other countries to contact me other than

Pakistan and Burma. Therefore the perspectives reflected in the study are from Pakistani refugees and Karen refugees.

However, the study has attempted to provide an in-depth reflection of settlement needs and challenges of South and South East Asian refugees in Canada that will provide some basis and understanding for social workers and social development workers to work with this marginalized and vulnerable population.

Conclusion:

The study uses a qualitative framework, and critical social science approach. This methodology was chosen because of the flexibility it provided in exploring the subjective experience of South and South East Asian refugees. It allowed understanding the settlement needs of the researched and also unveiling both ineffective and effective settlement services and how these groups view they impacted their day to day needs. This method also allowed to question practices, structures and policies that were discriminatory and allowed ways towards critiquing them. Data was collected by conducting semi-structured in-depth interview with each participant in mutually agreed time and location. Collected data was analyzed using content analysis technique by culling out repeated patterns in the transcripts. Open coding was done to manage the data and for interpretation purposes. Anonymity and confidentiality to the information gathered was maintained by converting the data into codes and keeping them in a secure place.

We know that qualitative methodology has both strength and weaknesses. Although small sample size and exploratory, descriptive nature of the study posed some limitations to relevance and transferability of the finding of the study, it provided in-depth analysis of the

settlement experiences of South Asian and South East Asian refugees, their perception on the settlement services and the gaps. It also gives some directions for future policy planning.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, I would be discussing the themes that emerged and consistently recurred during the interview. The understanding of settlement among South and South East Asian refugees is different from how settlement is perceived externally by the Canadian government, the people, organizations and institutions. The subjective meaning of settlement for South and South East Asian refugees, challenges to settlement, services available to overcome such challenges, their perception of gaps and recommendation for improvement are explained in this chapter.

1. Push vs. Pull.

In the interview it was seen that refugees migrated to Canada rather unwillingly and they eventually only because of the situation in their home countries. Most of the participants had very insecure and dangerous living conditions and were desperate to have a secure life for themselves and their children. Back home they were living in poverty, civil war and threat to personal life and safety. One of the male participants from Pakistan (R2) who came to Canada in 1980s said that:

In Pakistan I belong to a community which is not considered um..... which is considered very.....you know...not considered Muslim...so whatever we believe in is in contradiction with the government of Pakistan.....they discriminate us....the government is not fair with us...they do not give us good jobs even when we qualify and even when we are well educated as compared to other Pakistani people.....we are ignoredthe *mullas*⁹ and all religious people have started killing us and looting our property and setting fire....they also set my own home on fire....and we escaped very very hardly from

⁹ Mullas are religious and ethnic majority of Pakistan

that fire...so we had to migrate to another city and we stayed there for some time and when we went back to our house they had looted our house.....and second thing is that we face discrimination in the workplace.....as people laugh at usin my workplace they even put my drinking water separate because I was not considered Muslim so I could not share their food and the cups of tea and glass of water.... .this hurt me a lot you know?...so I decided that there is not future for myself and my community.....

The above narrative suggests that the departure of the research participants was provoked by fear and insecurity. (Montgomery et.al, 2001) suggests in most of the cases refugees made the decision to leave the country suddenly which lead to unpreparedness to settle in a foreign land. Immigrating to a new country and starting a new life all over again is a challenging process, more so for refugees as they do not always choose to migrate, they are being pushed from homelands rather unwillingly (Segal and Mayadas, 2005). Their departure is often unplanned and they leave their homes with very little belongings as they have suffered “inconceivable atrocities in the form of persecution, degradation, and violation; and witness the destruction of their fundamental rights and lifestyle” (Segal and Mayadas, 2005, p. 1). This creates stress and trauma as they do not have time to reflect on their situation and escape to a totally new country.

There are multiple factors which pull refugees to seek refuge in Canada. The government of Canada’s long standing tradition of granting refuge to those seeking asylum, its multicultural and diverse demography, its Humanitarian and Settlement programs specifically developed for refugees, and its multicultural policy to provide equal opportunities for every immigrant and refugee, all of these project Canada as a safe country for refugees to settle. Kelley and Trebilcock (1998, p. 15) write many nationalities from “Loyalists to Doukhobors, from Tamils to Kosovars”, many groups of people have sought and found refuge in Canada. Therefore refugees choose Canada thinking that this is the

country where they can get the respect and dignity they deserve as human beings and in a hope to attain the freedom to live a safe and comfortable life.

Also, in the developing countries of global South people face many developmental challenges such as lack of education, lack of proper drinking water, lack of transportation, just to name a few. On top of this the civil war, intra and inter community rivalry have led to schools being closed down, public and private properties destroyed, fear and insecurity among general populace. People are forced to leave their country for peace and safety for themselves and their family as government is unable to provide security to its citizens. Some of refugees who come to Canada have been living in refugee camps for years without basic amenities such as drinking water, schools and hospitals. People who come from such circumstances consider Canada a land which not only guarantees safety but also promises opportunities to better their lives through gainful employment and better education. The male Karen participant (R5) had similar hopes when he came to Canada as he was living a dangerous life in a refugee camp in the Thai-Burmese border for many years.

I came here because I was living in a refugee camp for 12 years since 1988 you see in a jungle..... I ran away from my village because Burmese military was killing everybody after that I took refuge in Thailand many of my village members took refuge and we went to Thai Burmese border but we were not recognized as refugees then...but in 1994-95 UNHCR recognized us as refugees in Thailand¹⁰.....and we could come to Canada...I feel happy....

¹⁰ Karen refugees are resettled in Canada through Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and these refugees are called Government Assisted Refugees (GARs). The refugee protection system in Canada has two components- the in-Canada refugee Protection system and the refugee and humanitarian resettlement program. Persons who make refugee claims after coming to Canada through in-Canada refugee protection system are called ‘refugee claimants’ who need to be determined as those needing Canada’s protection by Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) as protected persons. Those claimants who are rejected get deported from the country. These protected persons subsequently become ‘Landed in Canada Refugees’ (LCR) and get their permanent residence. The resettlement program of the government of Canada selects refugees overseas either as ‘Government Assisted Refugees’ (GARs). GARs are referred by UNHCR and are supported by federally funded Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) or as ‘Privately Sponsored Refugees’ (PSRs), sponsored and supported by voluntary groups (Yu et.al, 2007).

Although the refugees feel happy to have an opportunity to migrate to Canada, they are not prepared to deal with the challenges they have to face in a new country. When they arrive in Canada adjustment to new people, culture and society makes it emotionally and psychologically challenging for them. During their settlement process they undergo many social, emotional and psychological changes, which lead to ‘socio economic and psychological’ problems (Segal and Mayadas, 2005, p.1). They suffer from mental stress and emotional trauma (Nash et.al, 2006) because they miss their home and their families as they must have left their home countries in tragic situation and did not realize that they were losing their family members when they are leaving their countries. This was the case with one of the male participant from Pakistan (R1), who came to Canada three months ago.

It's been 3 months so I feel used to now...in the beginning I used to get up at 2- 2:30 at night and sit on my bed...I have never been separated from my parents and my sister...my wife used to ask what happened and I used to tell her I am missing my mummy, daddy, sister.....we have five brothers and one sister.....oh.....I used to take care of the family the most...so I miss them...

The mental tension due to their history of migration adds to their challenge to adjust to the new environment. As they start navigating their daily lives, they also start realizing the expectation the Canadian society has from them. They realize there are insurmountable challenges that impede them from fully adjusting to the new society.

2. The Challenges that refugees face

In this study, the research participants identified three major challenges for them to belong to the mainstream society. I will be discussing these barriers/challenges and how these affect their settlement experience. The challenges that South Asian and South East

Asian refugees are three fold: lack of language skills, lack of employment opportunities, and socio-cultural issues, which are discussed below.

2 a Language Barrier – Lack of Proficiency & Accent Discrimination:

Language was seen as the biggest barrier that refugees face after coming to Canada and all participants equivocally said that their limited command in English language makes it difficult for them in their day to day interaction in the community. Participant (R3) had to say,

We have to struggle a lot...for language.....my biggest problem is my language....I can only communicate with people when I understand them and they can understand me... but if I cannot speak English then how will I talk and also look for job when I have to.

Lack of English language is a definite barrier for South Asians (Shakir, 1995). There are many negative consequences of language barrier. Many participants said that because of the language barrier they have difficulty accessing services in the community. One of the male Karen refugees from Burma (R4) said that:

My English is not very good..... the most difficult thing is the language...even though I can communicate a little bit with people I am not a very good speaker...because of my English it is very difficult to do communication. ...and also when I go to the hospital...when I go to the doctor....its very difficult sometimes we have to wait for a long time, because they know that we can't speak English so they talk to all other people and then they talk to us and talk very slowly...and take a long time because it's very difficult for us to understand

This shows that their limited ability to speak English makes it difficult for them to access essential community resources to meet their daily needs. This may also lead to social isolation and lack of proper services among refugees (Leung, 2000). Evidently, the difficulty or inability of refugees to access essential services contradicts with the understanding of

settlement proposed by the government. As I have pointed out in my review of literature that the government considers effective delivery of services to be an important mandate for settlement (ISPR, 2000). The basic assumption that there are services available in the community such as LINC, ISAP, HOST, and other services under NSP, intended to help refugees do not translate into actually benefiting refugees as they are unable to access them due to their language barrier. Therefore the official definition of settlement is flawed as there are barriers which prevent them to be fully settled.

The refugees from South and South East Asia also face accent discrimination in their daily lives. For those who have adequate language skills, their accent might still be a huge barrier to integration and participation, impeding them from accessing social and economic opportunities in Canada. South and South East Asian refugees faced barrier in their both labor market and in their daily interaction because their accent is seen as different from Canadian way of speaking English and most native Canadian do not choose to understand it. This was the experience of one of the male refugees from Pakistan (R2) who said:

Although I can speak English and have a good education from Pakistan, my accent was different..... we speak English in different accent so when I came here it was really hard for me, I could not understand Canadian people what they were saying to me and they could not understand what I was saying to them. So accent was my biggest problem, I am from a different culture, my color was different my face was different, my language was different.....when I got a job I tried to talk to other people because of my different accent some people laugh at me and um. it was very hurting for me..... very much ...you know?

Accent is one the reasons the South and South East Asian refugees face racism in their daily lives. It makes their settlement more challenging as their experience becomes different being a minority community of the society. We know that Canada is a racist society

and there is higher prevalence of racism in everyday lives of ethno racial minorities. My experience of living in this country for more than two years has been such that although it might be possible to change an individual's attitude towards an ethnic minority it is impossible to change the society's perception when there is a perpetuation of systemic racism through media and other social and political institutions making racism an accepted phenomenon for many White members of the society. Hence laughing at us when we are not able to speak in 'Canadian accent' is a common occurrence. Once I was asking a bus driver (White) the direction to a book store and had to be exposed to her condescending comment because I was not pronouncing the word 'right'. I felt ashamed and rejected at that moment and realized how systemic racism percolates in our daily interaction with the mainstream community.

In an attempt to understand the settlement challenges of South and South East Asian refugees it is important to contextualize their realities of daily experiences in Canada where 'cultural imperialism' and 'white supremacy' are exercised (Ku, 2000, p.13). 'Accent' is just one of the ways to reinforce race and power differential between native born Canadian and racialized minorities and this plays an important role in determining their status in Canadian society. This is also called skin color racism and this should be “recognized as an integral element, just as sexism, classism, and heterosexism are, of institutional oppression in Canadian society” (CASW & SAWC, 2000, p. 22)

In the face of language barrier be it accent or ability to speak English, the refugees find themselves at the risk of being isolated. This challenges the process of settlement for these groups as they were unable to participate with the wider community. They face

complex challenges and great difficulty in communicating with people and expressing their thoughts.

When we try to say something other people don't understand us so we don't talk at all..... if we talk we might not make the other person understand what we are trying to say..... that's why we don't have to say anything...lets be quiet...easier you know.....we don't know their rules their regulations.....when I say something I feel what I say might be good to me but not good to other people, they might disagree.....so it's better to be quiet. (R4).

The above narrative clearly indicates that refugees from South and South East Asia witness systemic barriers to their full participation and success. Hence, the idea of settlement that organizations such as OCASI (1998) envision wherein the refugees and immigrants are fully able adapt, integrate and participate in the society does not seem possible. This is because we cannot change our accent and if we were unable to talk like Canadians do, we are not considered as one of them and will always face discrimination and racism based on our differences. Accordingly settlement remains a distant dream for us since the expectation to be settled from us in this country is more than we are able to accomplish.

2 b. Employment Barrier:

Another major barrier in settlement experience that all participants faced was that of economic integration. Because of limited language skills, a participant who had recently arrived in Canada feared that he would not be getting appropriate job; due to his accent a participant who had been living in Canada for few years had unpleasant experience of finding a 'right job' and due to the limited language skill a participant who was already working in a contractual position in an organization feared the risk of losing the job. There was anxiety prevalent amongst all participants regarding jobs and financial security.

We can find many literatures such as Maitra (2007) and ISPR (2000) which link official language fluency to employment achievement in the context of Canada. The findings of these studies suggest that ‘language acquisition has important implications for access to employment and job achievement’ (Boyd 1992; Frideres 1989; Chiswick and Miller 1992 in Hyndman and Roberts, 1998, p. 15). There seems to be positive correlation between language skills and employment opportunities and since refugees from South and South East Asia lack language skills that are considered ‘appropriate’ by mainstream Canadian labor market, they are excluded from entering into it. One of the male participants from Pakistan (R1), who came to Canada three months back, was worried that his lack of ability to communicate in English might impede his economic participation.

I have heard that it is very difficult to get jobs in Canada. But I have also heard that one needs to have good command over English to get good paying jobs...I am very afraid that in this case I might not get a good job...because I can only say hi and bye in English. Obviously, I am not afraid of the struggles.....I have a habit of working. So I am looking forward to work... I am looking for jobs..I don't know..I have heard that there are problem getting jobs here so...till now whoever I have asked they say... jobs are really hard to find.....

It is evident that employment system is another arena where racism is exhibited based on one's ability or inability to communicate in ‘proper’ English. This is the way in which system distinguishes and discriminates. This is also another way of perpetuating power differential and systemic racism.

Refugees from South and South East Asia suffer from ‘de-skilling’ in their jobs wherein they are not able to apply their foreign education, skills and experience in Canadian labor market and devalues their ‘human capital’ (Bauder & Cameron, 2002, p.14). Basran and Zong (1998) suggest that the de-skilling of immigrants is about not recognizing the

professional certification from overseas. Devaluation of credential is a problem for many refugees and immigrants. The male participant from Pakistan (R2) had similar experience when he was looking for employment, he said that:

Wherever I went to look for jobs... people said you are under qualified...I went and applied in some offices they are asking me Canadian experience and they are asking me that you are under qualified because you don't have a Canadian experience so you don't know how to work in the offices. Although I told them I worked in an office in Pakistan but nobody was ready to take the risk. And I tried to go in the factories I go over there and tell them this is my education and people in the factory and other small jobs, they don't hire me because I was over qualified....so one place I was over qualified and another place I was under qualified. So I had quite a hard time here. And finally a friend of mine helped me get a job in a factory so I worked in the factory for a long time.

From the above narrative it is evident that lack of Canadian experience is one of the ways to practice de-skilling by Canadian labor force. This limits their opportunities to get high quality employment which stagnate them to low paying jobs. One of the male Karen participants (R5) from who came to Canada two years ago said that:

I am scared that I won't find a job....but I am ready to work anywhere.....some of the people from my community work in chicken farm and mushroom farm.....yeah I can work anywhere but I need to have a job, which is very difficult to find here. I have no education and I hardly know any English so I am worried where am I going to work.

Bauder & Cameron (2002) see this as systemic and conscious way of reserving better quality jobs for native Canadians. De-skilling has a traumatic effect on settlement experience of refugees and immigrants. This can lead to settling down for lower paying, degeneration of one's skills and devaluation of human capital. This can created added mental stress, anxiety and at times depression in refugees (Nash et.al, 2006).

Studies (Yu et.al, 2007) also indicate that the chances of refugees getting secure, desirable and high paying jobs is limited as compared to skilled immigrants as they have

lower level of skills and education. Statistics show that 60 per cent of skilled immigrants are employed within six months after arriving to Canada whereas only 20 percent of refugees get employment in the same period of time (Yu et.al, 2007, p. 18). Therefore economic integration of refugees takes longer than that of skilled immigrants having subsequent impact on their settlement experience.

2 c. Socio-Cultural barrier:

Socio-cultural barrier in this study is defined as challenges refugees from South and South East Asia face in the way they practice cultural and religious beliefs. It also pertains to challenges they face while adjusting to developed and modern Canadian society.

Cultural Barrier

Culture is problematic here....kinds of clothes people wear...we are old enough to understand what is right and what is not....but our kids are young, you see...its challenging to make them understand everything...to teach them our religion...to make them follow our tradition will be difficult....this is our challenge...for any Muslim parents this is the greatest challenge. To teach your daughter to wear *burkha*¹¹...scarf on their heads...my daughter has to wear *bukha*....like me.....she is not going to wear any dress which will make us unhappy....but here they don't wear *burkha* here right? This is our problem (R3).

It was interesting to see how the participant discussed different levels of racialization through culture. This is a reflection of how difficult refugees find to preserve their culture amidst prejudice and discrimination in the way they dress differently. As they are committed to preserve their cultural identity, they are subjected to racist remarks or 'targets for racist behavior (CASSA & SAWC, 2000, p. 48). A male participant from Pakistan (R2) expressed that when he first came to Canada in 1980s the treatment he got from native people was discouraging he said:

¹¹ Burkha is a shrouded veil that Muslim women wear due to religious reasons

During that time there was not much south Asian people in Canada and everybody was looking at us with hate and even sometimes when we wore our traditional dress they would stare at us... as if we were some kind of animals.....I was so discouraged...

The above narrative also shows that, the cultural identity that refugees want to preserve make them alien and subject to differential treatment in the country. This also influences how people around view and interact with them having impact on their experiential reality.

Social barrier

There are social barriers which make the settlement of South and South East Asian refugees equally challenging. The process of settlement is stressful, as we need to get accustomed to western lifestyle, attitude and behavior. This could be particularly challenging for rural refugees. This could be overwhelming as they need to understand the local culture. One of the male Karen refugees (R4), who came to Canada two years back, had a challenging experience.

Oh it is very difficult to talk about this...it was very difficult for me to come to the city, I grew up in the jungles and when we moved to the refugee camps we were not allowed to go to the city to work anywhere so we just stayed in the camp and we are very used to that and no area to see the big city like Canada also the multi cultural, different ethnicity....from different country... it was very difficult.....Even grocery shopping was very difficult...when I first came here when I went to buy some food there were people ahead of me and I did not know and when went to get on the bus, and I used to go ahead and people shout at me and say oh its not your turn its our turn and people used to get mad at me...but I did not know you know?

Refugees are uprooted from familiar and comfortable environment. Fitting in could be a challenging experience as there are many differences in the host culture and culture of origin (Naidoo J 1984; A.K. 1984; Wakil, S.P., Siddique, C.M and Wakil, F.M. 1981; Kurian

1991 cited in CASSA and SAWC, 2000). This was the experience of one of the female Karen refugees (R5),

We don't live in the city or town...so we don't have any money....most people don't have own money....we just have Thai money some little that's it....we exchange thingssometimes some people go to town and change food umm...vegetables to salt, they don't need other food they only need salt to cook....they exchange vegetable and stuff....we don't buy anything....we don't have electricity....it was very difficult for me to understand the concept of bank, because I had never seen one before....leave alone using a bank card, you know?

The unawareness of local culture that refugees demonstrate in their daily interaction with the mainstream society could also be one of the reasons; they face racism and harassments. The mainstream community views these groups as barbaric and unsophisticated who create chaos in their society. There remains a general tendency among many native born Canadians that 'culturally different' refugees are incapable of adapting to modern, technologically oriented and urban society in Canada and some also believe that they bring problems such as divided loyalties, drugs, gangs, illegal immigration, rackets etc, with them (Fleras and Elliot, 1992). This makes it difficult for refugee to belong to host society. The negative attitude of host society toward immigrants creates a hostile situation, where refugees often find themselves.

Therefore the definition of settlement I discussed in my earlier chapter seems irrelevant to actual settlement experience of South and South East Asian refugees. In their daily experiential reality they face varying degree of discrimination and racism which makes it difficult for them to fully integrate and participate in the mainstream society.

3. Skin Color Racism in day to day lives:

One of the major barriers that refugees from South and South East Asia face is that of skin color racism. A male participant from Pakistan (R2), who came to Canada in 1980s, said that the prevalence of discrimination was more overt back then as there were not many immigrants from South Asian countries coming to Canada, he discussed about this by giving the following example:

One day I was sitting in a restaurant in a table...slowly slowly the restaurant got crowded and there was no room to sit anywhere else.. I was alone...sitting...but no was sat beside me...everyone came they looked here and there...while I had the whole table to myself...they were four or five chairs, I was sitting on one chair and all four chairs were empty but people did not sit beside me because of my different face, different color, it was so bad at that time. One day I cried I cried so much and I decided that I should not live in this country..I should run away even if I get killed by Mullas¹² and other people instead of living here with people who don't even want to sit beside me...is this because of my race because of my color...during that time there was not much south Asian people in Canada and everybody was looking at us with hate and even sometimes when we wore our traditional dress they would stare at us... I was so discouraged ...

Evidently, in Canada the color of the skin has an important role to play in ones daily interaction with the wider community “a person’s skin color becomes extremely relevant in how s/he is treated, what s/he can access, what a opportunities are available, basically what would be the quality of his/her life” (CASSA & SAWC, 2000: 21). The research participants in the study experienced some form of discrimination in their daily lives. The above narrative also elucidates that ethno-racial refugees are targets of racial discrimination and therefore find it difficult to belong to the mainstream society.

As mentioned in the earlier section, the discrimination due to racism that South and South East Asia refugees face is not sporadic event or an individual act, but in fact it is

¹² Mullas are religious and ethnic majority in Pakistan

systemic and is rooted in States’ institutions. The racial discrimination that they face in their everyday lives limits their ability to make choices in all spheres of their lives for instance they end up in low paying jobs, they lack of confidence, they harbor lower self esteem, feel rejected or unwanted. Their participation and involvement in the community is also hampered.

Sometimes skin color racism could also be subtle and one might not know why he/she is being treated differently. One of the male Karen refugees (R4) said that he does not know whether it is racism or not but there are many instances where he feel he is being treated differently.

Sometimes little bit.....not actually discrimination but different.....some people do this but we don’t mind you know...sometimes we go somewhere to receive service....like in the clinic or some agency, we have to stay there for a long time.....we have to wait till late in the evening when the appointment is in the early afternoon so you know...different, I guess

From his narrative it is clear that the treatment received by ethno-racial minorities is different that those who belong to mainstream community. Although the participant himself could not spell it out as racism, I see this as one of the racist behavior we witness in our everyday lives. When one is denied of equal opportunity as member of a society at par with others of the same society due to his/her the color of the skin, this is called is racism. Henry et.al (2000) suggests that skin color discrimination is one of the instances of racial discrimination. CASSA (1998) suggest there is a perpetuation of racial stereotypes by mainstream agencies, which the refugees from South and South East Asia face on a daily basis. This was also reflected in the narratives of the participants of the study.

All of these experiential realities of South and South East Asian refugees bring us back to the definition of settlement that we discussed about in the previous chapter. When we look into the definition of settlement that OCASI and CCR talk about it seems that the mainstream community i. e. both government and people of Canada have not made any attempt to integrate refugees in their society. Settlement as being a two way process where both immigrants and native community should work together to achieve becomes only one way process, wherein only refugees are struggling towards achieving but are being constantly humiliated, rejected and demoralized.

Refugees apart from facing racism in their daily lives from the mainstream community, they also see themselves being distinctive from other immigrant groups such as skilled laborers who come to Canada on point-based system. They feel that they are being treated unjustly by those who have come under skilled labor category, which makes their situation more hostile. One of the female refugees from Pakistan (R3) said,

I don't know much....may be people don't have good perception towards refugees, immigrants think they are better off than refugee they say these are refugees so they are good for nothing....we are living with somebody's assistance...I have feel this...those who come on point system say we have come on our own effort...they don't know what we get or don't get being a refugee what..... we get is in front of us right.....but I still think that some people think that we are living only because of government's help....and this is not good that's what they say....people don't understand our problems...so people don't see us in good light...so immigrants who come on point system think that they are very independent.....this is the misconception.....right?

The above narrative highlights the challenges that refugee face fitting in, making friends or getting a sense of belonging in a new country. This makes their settlement experience stressful and overwhelming. The attitude of immigrant groups towards refugees is

also an indication that they assume power over weaker communities when they feel that the community is less privileged than them. Refugees therefore have to make double the effort to belong to the wider immigrant community as well as to the mainstream society. This adds to their struggles and challenges.

It is equally crucial to understand how settlement is viewed from gendered lenses so that we get a more complete picture of settlement. The following section explores the settlement experiences of women refugees from South and South East Asia.

4. Settlement and Gender:

The settlement challenges that women refugees face are in many ways distinct from that of male refugees and during the discussions I felt that their understanding of settlement depicted a different picture. They often worried about their children's education, their husbands' jobs and how to maintain their culture and tradition to be a 'good wife' in Canadian society. And while I was having conversations with them I felt that although settlement challenges that South and South East Asian refugees face in general are similar in many respects but how this is grappled with is different among women refugees. I have therefore devoted a separate section on settlement and gender to examine settlement through gendered lenses. The settlement challenges that women refugees face can be broadly divided into three categories such as language, employment and cultural.

a) Language:

Women refugees' interaction with the outside world is limited as they face difficulty communicating due to their limited language skills. They feel more lonely and isolated because of their restricted interaction with the outside world as compared to their male

counterparts. This was one of the major barriers reflected in their discussion. One of the woman participants from Pakistan (R3) who came to Canada three months back also sees language being her biggest barrier to participate with others she said “I can only communicate with people when I understand them and they can understand me but I cannot speak English so how will I talk”. This creates stress and isolation in many women refugees.

There are English training classes in the community which can be accessed to improve their communication skills and women participants I interviews did access these services and expressed that they have been helpful to them in improving their language skills.

I go to English classes though..and it is helping me a lot...there are 10-15 students and the teacher is very good too...if there is some difficult words I don't understand she breaks them up and makes me understand slowly...now I am getting better I think...I can't speak much but can understand a lot (R3).

However it was also highlighted that they found it difficult to access these services in the community due to their gender roles. Boyd (1992) suggests this is because women are engaged in double day work. They have to take care of household chores, care for the family, work, which makes it challenging for them to be regular in attending classes. The woman participant from Pakistan (R3) reiterated that:

I think the classes are good.....but you know I have to take bus to go there...with my one and a half year old...its difficult...sometimes I miss the class and sometimes I reach late....I feel I miss out when I do this.....

The above narrative also proves that apart from the differential gender roles, the location of the services is an obvious hindrance for women from accessing the services. Therefore although there are services available in the community, the location of these services and residential locations of the service users create a barrier as they have to travel for longer hours to access the services. In a study conducted by Sadiq (2004, p.29), he has

suggested that there is a ‘spatial mismatch’ between the location of settlement service agencies and residential locations of newcomers and their needs in Toronto. Although Hamilton is a smaller city in terms of its population and land mass, it was still found that the service were not always easily accessible to refugees and immigrants. Therefore, even though refugees are aware that there are services in the community that are beneficial, the accessibility of such services could pose difficulty especially for women due to their gender roles.

b) Employment:

As discussed in the previous section, the correlation between language skills and employment opportunity is strong among and this applies to women refugees as well. This makes women all the more susceptible to ending up in low wage income sectors as they do not possess sufficient language skills. Added to this there is a differential treatment of Canadian labor market towards women. Maitra (2007, p.1) suggests that Canadian labor market is ‘structured around complex race, class and gender lines’. Due to several barriers such as limited language skills, lack of education and training, cultural and social differences that women refugees from South and South East Asia possess, they get excluded from ‘better, desirable and more secure jobs in the market’ (Hou and Balakrishnan, 1996 in Maitra, 2007, p.2). In one of the working paper series conducted by Bauder & Cameron (2002) suggests that many visible minority women work in low paying jobs such as in factories, farms or at home, under sweatshop conditions.

I don’t have good skills and I cannot communicate in proper language so I wonder where will I end up working....I think in factories and farms.....but I am ready to do it (R5).

The anxiety shown by a woman refugee in the above narrative shows the likeliness of ending up in secondary jobs. The Canadian labor market is also unable to provide valuable jobs for make women which make them feel undervalued. Many of such jobs are ‘non-unionized’ and are dangerous for workers health and safety conditions, provide lower wages without adequate opportunities for ‘upward mobility’ (Dasgupta, 1996). Thus women refugees ‘experience the phenomenon of ghettoization and segmentation, which achieve both a divided work force and a cheap, captive labor pool’ (Maitra, 2006, p. 2).

I don't think I can work in offices right?...I don't have enough education to do that....I want my husband to work...I will stay home and take care of my family.....I will be happy with that... (R3).

The above narrative of a female refugee from Pakistan indicates that they internalize the discriminatory structures and try to justify it by saying “it is all right to stay home” or “have a secondary job”. As Maitra (2006) suggested this works in favor of the labor market as they can reckon women refugees and immigrants as continuous supply of cheap labor to maintain and perpetuate racial stenotypes against them.

c) Culture:

The discussion on cultural differences between the country of origin and the host country came strongly with women refugees. This was probably due to the society's expectation from women to be ‘custodians’ of their family values, culture and heritage. Women were more anxious about their daughters not retaining their traditional dress. A female participant from Pakistan said that she would be very upset if her daughter dresses up in pants and tea-shirts and that she would make sure that she wears *burkha*.

This becomes significant in protecting one's identity and culture which also impacts the settlement experience in host countries. How do people look at you? This has a great role to play whether one is accepted or not in the mainstream community.

Also the culture was seen as a determinant of letting or not letting women interact with the world outside and this was seen significant for women from Pakistan. There are studies which suggest that 'South Asian women in Canada have unflinching commitment to their family and home; deeply held values entrenched in their cultural heritage; and they simultaneously exhibit future oriented aspirations which are very contemporary' (Naidoo and Davis, 1998 in CASSA & SAWC, 2000, p.16).

Actually in Pakistani life we can't even think of working coz in our culture women don't work...its my husband's wish so I hope I don't have to work...hope my husband gets a good job.....I have to take care of my baby and take care of the house but here life is different here we have to do everything ourselves. (R3).

This is the narrative of a female participant from Pakistan who was struggling to keep her culture and traditional values intact and at the same time try to fit into the mainstream norm. This becomes overwhelming for women due to the difference in expectations from them in their country of origin and the host country. One of the women participants (R5) had difficulty balancing both the expectations, and shared her view as follows:

For Koran women it is very difficult....because in our culture most women don't go to schools so.. in a family if you have three brother and three sisters...two brothers will go to school an um... probably no sisters will go to school...so...and schools are expensive too...most people survive by planting vegetables and rice so they don't have money to send their kids to school....we come to Canada without any education... so it is very difficult for us for us to go to school at this age....

This balancing of different roles and responsibilities, what one needs to carry and what needs to be abandoned has a tremendous effect on the settlement experience of women refugees from South and South East Asia.

Therefore, settlement to a new country becomes stressful for them as they have to make adjustment in every aspect of their lives. Women come to a completely different society and they face ‘socio-economic and psychological problems’ as they have left behind their friends and families, their homes, rituals, customs etc (Segal and Mayadas, 2005, p.1). Women witness more confusion due to change in their gender roles. On the one hand they appreciate the freedom that western society endows on them but on the other feel responsible to give continuation to their culture and tradition. The Western literature suggests that ‘assimilation’ and ‘acculturation’ of women from different culture into the modern Canadian culture will lead to gender equality. This confusion changes the relationship in the family and creates conflicting situations, which the immigrants and refugees have difficulty dealing with (CASSA & SAWC, 2000, p.16). The cultural difference also hinders their speedy integration into the mainstream society causing mental health problems, grief and trauma in many (Nash et.al, 2006).

Hence women refugees from South and South East Asia view settlement as a stressful process where they have to struggle to maintain their cultural identity and tradition and at the same time seek acceptance from the mainstream community. I could also find difference of understanding of settlement between women refugees from South and South East Asia. For South Asian women successful settlement meant good education for their children, maintenance of cultural heritage and good jobs for their husbands on the other hand for South

East Asian settlement was making the ends meet and finding a job which is just enough to get by.

Now half of our lives have past....we have come here for our son, you know...he should get the opportunity that we were not able to....and I know he will get good education her....that is enough for us....(R3).

This is the narrative of a female refugee from Pakistan, for her the main priority is her son's future and if his future is secure she would feel settled. However for a female Karen refugee (R5) settlement is not being dependent on Ontario Works

In our country we survive on very little money....so whatever we get from Ontario works is enough for us to live here....nobody wants to get off from OW...but I want to....if I get a job I would want to get off from OW....I will feel much better.

From the above narratives, one can see that settlement is a relative term. As discussed in the earlier chapter it is multi-dimensional and subjective as how one individual views settlement is different from another and is different from one community to another. Settlement for women refugees is doubly stressful as institutional, social and cultural barriers make settlement for them slow and difficult to achieve.

Once again, the formal definition of settlement is not able to capture every aspect of settlement. There is cultural aspect which came strongly during the discussion with participants, is missing in the definition that government and non-government organizations have proposed, which proves the narrow definition of settlement once again.

5. Informal and Formal Services in the Community

In this section I will explore both formal and informal services available for refugees from South and South East Asia. I will be examining the perception of research participants on the benefits, their understanding of gaps in these services and areas for improvement.

In my previous chapter I have explored various formal settlement services. Ethno racial refugees rely on formal services provided by local service providing or ethno racial agencies to meet their settlement needs such as translation services, language classes, interpretation, helping in applying for health cards and social insurance number etc. But the participants discussed limitations of relying solely on formal services. The first limitation discussed was that it was time consuming to access formal services and sometimes the agencies had rolled back the services the participants wanted to access. A participant from Pakistan (R1) said “if you wanted to look for an interpreter to visit a doctor, you have to travel all the way to the agency and wait for somebody to help you, this takes a lot of time, especially during emergency situations”. This made it difficult for participants to access formal services and had to rely on informal sources of help. Here by informal I mean services provided by friends, family members, social network and religious institutions.

a) Informal support through family and friends

Friends and family members were seen as a very reliable form of informal support and most of the participants were happy to have their friends and family support in the host country. A male participant from Pakistan (R1), who came to Canada three months ago, said:

My wife's brother lives here, which is why we chose to come to Canada....he lives in Hamilton....I have support from him...I don't feel that I am in a different country..if my wife's brother wasn't here then it would be very difficult...we would have had to do everything on our own...and we have language problem so it would be very difficult...you know?

Also in the interview one of the male participants from Pakistan (R2) expressed informal support being crucial during the initial phase of settlement as one is not accustomed to the local culture of the host country. He said:

When I came here I knew some people they gave me shelter, if I had come all alone... there would be lots of problems....and later I sponsored my family....the people who shelter also gave me food.... but of course I had to work and contribute to the household expenses....yeah it would be very difficult when you are alone.

Studies indicate that South Asians and many other ethnic communities mostly depend on ‘informal networks and community links’ for social interaction, source of information exchange and resource (ISPR, 2000). Also due to time consuming immigration process for family reunification “kinship among non-related individuals and families become a basis for mutual support” (ISPR, 2000, p. 41). This was evident in Pakistani refugees. This community was seen more closely knit with their relatives and friends, easing their settlement challenge to some extent. Another participant from Pakistan (R3) said that “I have my brother in Hamilton...that is why we came to Canada....otherwise we would not have chosen to come to Canada”.

Having family relations also influences their decision to choose Canada as their second home. Obviously, they feel assured that by having close family members to help would make it easier in their settlement process. This brings us to the critical role that informal sources play in the settlement experience of refugees from South Asia.

However, this was not the case for Karen refugees or those from South East Asia who came as GARs as they did not have a choice to come to a particular city. One of the male Karen refugees (R4), who came to Canada two years ago, said that:

We don't have anybody here...we did not have any choice to come to Hamilton. They know we are refugee and we apply and they give so they tell us you have to go to the city...most people even mother and father...brother and sister go to different cities....we don't have a choice....there is a very old lady her children are in Regina... and she is alone here so it is very difficult for her.

Therefore lack of support from family and friends for Karen refugees had impacted their settlement and had also lead to isolation and loneliness in them.

b) Informal support through religious institutions

In the study Karen refugees were seen to be mostly reliant on religious institutions for support. The two Karen refugees whom I interviewed were Christians and they visited the closest church from their residence for both social interaction and recreation. One of the male Karen refugees (R4), said that:

I am a Christian....the church community is very helpful. We go to our own church..In the organization I am a part of the HOST program....where we get to meet people from Canada and make friendship and this person who a friend of mine is from the same church so we go with him...I like going there.....I am a Baptist...

Many participants from South Asia were also seen very much reliant on their religious institutions as Buchignani et al (1984) suggests, religion based organizations among South Asians are older than community based organizations and these religious centers are growing (ISPR, 2000). The participants from Pakistan therefore enjoyed going to church and practicing their religion. One of the participants from Pakistan (R3) said:

We go to the Hamilton Ahemdi¹³ Mosque. There is a separation of Ahemdi and non Ahemdi even here...In Pakistan as well as in Canada....even here there are different mosques....Allah is for everybodyeverybody should have same respect as they are talking about Allah right? I go there every Friday...but my son is still small so I can't take him often...but when he is grown up he can go with his dad to read *Namaz*¹⁴...I can't even think of not going to mosque....we can't live without our religion....everywhere in the world people miss their countries and religion...no matter how happy they are.....

¹³ Ahemdi is ethnic and religious minority of Pakistan.

¹⁴ Namaz is religious way of offering prayer to the God in Muslim religion

The above narrative suggests that religious institutions for participants tended to provide immense comfort and assurance. Amidst, challenges they face in the host country, visiting his/her religious centre was seen as soothing and comforting experience for many. This is central in understanding how they perceive happiness and comfort. All the participants expressed their inner desire to practice their religious sentiments which would help them connect with their community members and give a sense of security and belongingness in a foreign country. The role religious institutions play in their settlement experience is therefore crucial and rewarding.

c) Formal Support through Community Service Agencies

There are several formal services that can be obtained from sectors such as general public services, community-based organizations and ethno-service specific agencies (Leung, 2000). The participants in the study also relied on formal source of support from community service providing agencies for language training (ESL classes), interpretation and translation through LINC program, connecting with local community through HOST program and RAP (Refugee Assisted program).

In Canada, the growth of community based organizations proliferated after the introduction of multiculturalism policy in 1971 (Buchignani et al, 1984 in ISPR, 2000). In Hamilton there are many community based organizations that provide settlement services to refugees to meet their linguistic and cultural needs. The participants said that the help they received from local organization was central to their settlement experience as soon as they arrive in Canada. A participant from Pakistan (R2) also expressed that sometimes they do not get adequate information regarding existing support in the community as a result of which

they struggle more. He said that when he came to Canada he did not know that there was any professional help available in the community and would have been happy to get such help if he had known they were. He said:

I never contacted any local organization...I did not ask for welfare....I did not ask any government assistance.....after my wife came to Canada she supported me... At that time I did not know that these things were available...if I knew.....I would have definitely contacted the organization...but I did not know and no one was here who could guide me and what to do and where to go. Even when I was here in Hamilton,...I came to Hamilton in 1995 the first time I knew that government gave any kind of welfare..... I did not know that there was any kind of help available.. ..that's why I was desperate to get a job....

In a situation where refugees are unaware of the existing services in the community, their settlement challenges become overwhelming. Although not accessing formal support does not necessarily mean that they are not getting any help informally. In a situation where one is not able to access formal help, informal support from friends, family and other social network becomes important.

Benefits of service providing agencies or formal support

The participants, who were accessing formal services from local service providing agencies, said they were really helpful especially when they were new to the country. A

male participant from Pakistan (R1) shared a similar feeling and said:

If this organization wasn't there we wouldn't have known where to do what to do.....It guided us in everything.....they showed us the market to buy things.....they said you have to buy things from here...I don't have good English you know and they did everything for us...they helped us get bank card...market to buy food..they guided us in everything...They talk to me in Hindi...there are a few people who talk in Hindi...they are Indians...hmm...hmmm...by the way for translation when we were in the hotel there were some Pakistanis....when they know that there are people coming from Pakistan then they send people from Pakistan.....they talk in Hindi...

It is apparent that formal support that refugees receive from settlement organizations is very important in their initial phase of settlement. This helps them get accustomed with the new environment and learn new ways of living in the new country. They also expressed that ‘they would feel lost, if the organization was not there’ (R1 & R2). There are major benefits of receiving formal services from local service providing agencies as the services. These services are mainly delivered by native community worker in both culturally and linguistically appropriate manner. When they see persons from the same background delivering services they said they would “feel at home” (R3).

Association with local service providing agencies has also been empowering for one of the participant. A male Karen refugee was hired as an interpreter by the same organization to work with other members of his community due to his language skills.

Oh yes! They help people a lot, actually its good for them because when they are new immigrants.... people they don't know the language.... so services they receive is very helpful for them... especially Karen people, Since I came here...I lived in Hamilton and I know little bit of English and they used me as an interpreter to help other Karen people and I worked as a volunteer to help other people to take them to hospital and to other social services.....I worked with the life skill trainer...now I work as a community outreach person and right now this organization has recruited me as Community Outreach Worker....(R4).

The above narrative indicates that the association with local agency also widens his/her opportunity to enter into Canadian labor force. This is particularly encouraging because economic integration is one of the major aspects of successful settlement and it could be seen that the local service providing agencies contribute to successful settlement of ethno-racial refugees.

But on the other hand it could also be argued that the service providing agencies create hierarchy and power differential within the community they serve. By hiring a person from a community having “adequate” English speaking skills renders other members of the same community inefficient due to the lack of it. Like the mainstream society, the service providing agencies which are supposed to work with ethnic minority consider English language as a parameter for one’s economic empowerment, which creates a sense of worthlessness and hopelessness in other members of the same community. They feel that they would never get a job due to their limited language skills and therefore are only fit for “working in chicken or mushroom farms” (R5).

Although service providing agencies could be seen as an important support system for newcomers, it could also be the source of creating competition and hierarchy within and among their service clients in this case refugees from South and South East Asia.

Limitations of Service providing agencies

The participants eluded that due to funding restrictions they see many limitations of accessing support from service providing agencies. As CASSA (1998) suggests the service providing agencies are facing financial challenges due to changing environment in policy development, which has impacted the services they provide. In the study although the participants were happy that they were receiving services which helped them cope with their settlement needs, they also felt that the services they received were too general and short-term. One of the Karen refugees (R4) shared his opinion as follows:

I know there are programs for getting jobs in the organization....but it really hardly get good job through the program because they help make our resume and look for ads in the newspaper.... But we won’t get jobs....then you have to wait for a long

time.....they don't help according to the urgency of your need.... I mean we already know we have to do that....why do you need their help, right?

The above narrative also speaks to the reducing quality of services due to funding restrictions. (Mwarigha, 1998) argues due to funding cuts many services have not only shut down but also their qualities have been impacted. This has also impacted the quantity of time refugees receive from the service providing agencies, which they feel is not sufficient to meet their unique needs. All four participants reiterated that the time agency staff/community workers spend with them is not enough and sometimes they have to deal with their issues on their own. One of the female participants from Pakistan reiterated that “they cannot be with us all the time right? I guess we need to make the most out of the time they spent with us.....some times 2 hours a week”(R3).

The Karen refugees said that the limited time spent by service providing agencies with them has more impact on this community. One of the male Karen refugee said that it is very difficult for Karen refugees to learn the life skills in Canada as they come from rural areas. They are not exposed to wider roads and electronic gadgets. Some of them are seeing cars or traffic lights for the first time in their lives. They need more help in terms of learning new ways and coping to new environment. The same participant (R4) also said

In the beginning even getting up from the bed and making tea was challenging because I had never seen a stove before..... that the time the agency staff spent with me was not enough for me to learn how to live in a modern society...like Canada.... since we come from jungles...it takes longer for us to learn how things are done here...we have never seen a TV before.....so the time is not really enough...you see.

Hence, the above statement substantiates the fact that funding cutbacks have negative impact on the quality of services that refugees receive and sometimes the duration of services they receive is inadequate depending on the severity of their settlement needs.

While there is a continuous funding cutback in the province of Ontario (United way, 1999), I wonder how the quality of services to ethno racial communities such as refugees from South and South East Asia can be improved. In my previous chapter I have argued that ethno-specific services are more culturally and linguistically compatible refugees as ‘they provide informal, ongoing support that are located within the ethnic immigrant community and are easily accessible geographically, linguistically and culturally (Shakir, 1995 p. 50) as compared to mainstream agencies. In this chapter we saw that refugees from South and South East Asia do feel that the services they receive from ethnic organizations or local service providing agencies are helpful in meeting their basic settlement needs. They also expressed the importance of having such organizations to help them cope with their daily struggles. However, in the current scenario of budgetary restrictions it is difficult to expect a more meaningful interaction of these organizations with ethno-racial refugees. Most of the services they provide are getting more and more superficial, which the refugees themselves realize.

The refugees are struggling in a new country to integrate and participate amidst structural issues such as systemic racism in their everyday lives. The service sector, which is supposed to help refugees cope with settlement challenges, is grappling with funding cuts, as well as “narrow definition of settlement services, low morale of overworked staff, low pay, and lack of staff development (Leung, 2000, p. 14) is weakening the sector. These factors

have lead to poor quality of settlement services impacting daily settlement experiences of South and South Asian refugees.

Towards a new definition of Settlement

From the perspectives of South and South East Asian refugees ‘settlement’ is a complex and stressful process; one needs to constantly compromise in order to be settled in a foreign country. Their settlement experience is largely influenced by their history of migration, ability to communicate with people, economic integration, cultural and racial identity, religious beliefs, social networks and the like. But most importantly for them to be accepted by the mainstream community as they are - their backgrounds, their cultural heritage and their way of living are crucial for their success. They are struggling to belong and adapt to the mainstream society but are being consistency rejected and pushed to the margins by the mainstream because the dominant culture sees them as threat to their culture. This has created a hostile situation for refugees, which has hindered their full participation and integration in the wider Canadian society.

“I do not want to be seen as Alien....I want to be one of them” said a male participant from Pakistan (R2). The refugees from South and South East Asia want to be accepted by the mainstream society. They want to be able to communicate the way they want because that is how they have always learnt to communicate, dress the way they want because it is an integral part of their cultural identity and heritage, practice their religious beliefs and not be worried about being subjected to judgments and prejudices. This how they view themselves as being settled in Canada.

Depending on the length of stay in Canada the settlement experiences and also their perception towards the host culture differed. Ones who were fairly recent immigrants were found to be rejecting host culture and the ones who had been living in Canada for a long time had already undergone the cultural changes. Hence process of acculturation was seen contingent on the length of stay in Canada which implicated on the acceptance or rejection of the host culture. However, acculturation is seen inevitable in the process of settlement over the period of time.

The perception of settlement among the research participants does reflect some aspects of acculturation. They want to be included into the Canadian mainstream society where they are no longer viewed as being different from native Canadians. But they also expressed their strong desire to be accepted along with their cultural differences. Hence the understanding of settlement for refugees is the creation of a space where their differing identities interact and cooperate as equals; so that they could negotiate their dual identities both as members of their distinct communities and with common expanded culture. The definition of settlement that the participants have identified differs from that of acculturation as cultural and linguistic identities remain critical in the process of settlement. The participants in the study were passionate to preserve and give continuation to their heritage, which gave them personal freedom and a sense of belongingness in a new country.

There has to be a freedom to speak one's language, practice one's culture and religion, these are the fundamental rights of various human rights and federal and provincial policies in Canada. Creating an environment which confers equal opportunities to access services such as economic, education, health and social sectors regardless of one's class, race

or gender is a common belief among Canadians. Yet the settlement experiences of refugees participating in this study do not feel that they are being treated the way they should be according to Canadian law and policies. Their experiences reveal contempt and discrimination from mainstream society against them. Their inability to speak the language is used as a tool to deny equal opportunities at par with other white members of the society, this is seen as a method of translating ‘cultural supremacy’ and ‘language superiority’ on their lives (Ku, 2000). They are subjected to injustices which they come across on a daily basis. Racism and discrimination makes their settlement experience challenging and stressful.

Settlement for South and South Asian refugees therefore is not merely adaptation, integration, or participation in the society as many organizations government and non government view settlement as (CCR, 1998; OCASI, 1998), for them settlement is beyond these concepts, it is about equality, justice, acceptance of diversity by the mainstream community. It is about valuing them as “South and South East Asians” and as members of the wider Canadian society.

Conclusion:

In this chapter there were four major themes that cut across every interview. In every interview, it was seen that the participants came to Canada due to a dangerous situation in their home countries which forced them to leave their belongings, friends and families, after coming to Canada they faced multiple barriers to integration such as language barrier which hindered them from accessing employment opportunities. They also faced cultural and social differences between their country of origin and host country; the settlement services they received from mainstream agencies were not adequate to meet their cultural and linguistic

needs. These agencies often reflected Eurocentric perspective and did not understand the cultural difference between their society and the society of refugees. Service providing agencies did meet their unique linguistic and cultural needs but were only able to fulfill their basic settlement needs such as housing, language training, and interpretation as newcomers to Canada. Funding cuts in the social service sector impacted the functioning and quality of services provided by service providing agencies which meant that after a certain time, refugees were expected to fend for themselves although some were not fully capable of being independent. This created a lot of anxiety and stress in many participants. Also racism and skin color discrimination made the settlement experience challenging and overwhelming.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is definitely better here...but I do not know how to explain you...the difficulties we face...not physical but psychological and emotional...we struggle a lot.... ...we have food and shelter...there is no problem with that....our problem is lot more than that....socially it is very difficult...to talk to people... to communicate with other people... we are actually very shy....we do not feel confident to talk to other people.... we feel very isolated...you know?

A Participant (R4)

The study demonstrates serious settlement challenges faced by South and South East Asian refugees in Canada. From the findings, it can be concluded that ‘settlement’ is a very subjective term that cannot be defined from a single perspective. It is the way that a person navigates and lives his/her life and therefore could be different from person to person. This cannot be fully explicated through “one size fit all” policies, programs or legislation. The definitions of settlement proposed by various government and non government organizations do not take into account the various dimensions involved in the settlement experience of refugees. The services developed based on these definitions to meet the settlement needs of refugees are therefore broad and general. The systemic barriers that refugees face in their experiential realities do not appear to be considered when settlement is defined and services are developed. As a result refugees are unable to access most settlement services, which make their settlement and adaptation in the host country a challenging process.

The experiences of refugees from South and South East Asia suggest that they are subjected to systemic racism and discrimination by the mainstream society. The concept of settlement as a continuum from initial phase to intermediate to long term phase as suggested by OCASI (1998) becomes questionable as the refugees may find themselves unable to rise from initial phase of settlement to the next phase i.e. intermediate phase. They are

continually struggling to adjust, to fit in, make friends, and cope with the situation. The initial adjustment itself is so weak that they are unable to graduate to the next level of settlement where they are expected to learn to manage their situations independently. Reaching the third level where they are supposed to be able to fully participate and integrate into Canadian society becomes extremely challenging as they continue to struggle to overcome the barriers they face in the initial stages of settlement. For these reasons, long term settlement for refugees can seem almost impossible. Also the two way process of settlement where the mainstream community and refugees are expected to work together for successful settlement and adaptation, becomes only a one way process in practice, where only refugees are struggling to be included to the mainstream community. The attitude of the government of Canada and people towards refugees from South and South East Asia suggests that racism and discriminatory attitudes run deeply and strong in the body politic.

The findings support the assertion that existing settlement system in Canada (Leung, 2000) is weak as the services are developed without analyzing the barriers faced by them to access these services. As mentioned above these services are good examples of how narrowly settlement is defined in the sector and the failure of refugees to be able to access these services is an indicator of their lack of effectiveness. The settlement systems fail to remove the systemic barriers refugees' face, which prevents them from becoming equal members of the society.

One among many limitations of current settlement system is that it labels ethno-racial minorities as being weak and passive. The current system blames the ethno racial minorities whenever they fail to adjust to the mainstream society for “not trying enough”. This is the

persistent and perennial problem of the current system- individualization of the problem. All of these factors conspire to impede long term development, participation and inclusion of refugees from South and South East Asia or anywhere else.

At the policy making level the voices of marginalized are not included. Wharf and Mckenzie (1998, p.123) suggest “there is no greater power than the right to define the question. When the capacity to define the problem becomes a professional prerogative, citizens no longer exist. The prerogative removes the citizen as problem definer, much less problem solver” (Leung, 2000, p.15). Therefore as long as people are not involved in articulating their own issues, their real issues can never be understood. Refugees have been labeled as target population, service recipient and so on in policy documents, which will and continue to reinforce their positivity in the mainstream society. The labeling of these groups simply as service recipients will continually push them to the margins and their problems, struggles challenges never surface in mainstream discourses.

The findings of the study also suggest that constant rejection of refugees by the mainstream society has lead to isolation and vulnerability of this community impacting their civic engagement in the community. One of them major reasons for their lack of civic participation is cultural and linguistic difference between them and the mainstream society and the non-accommodative attitude of the host society.

Recommendations:

The settlement system should envision contributing to the creation of an atmosphere where refugees and immigrants feel equal members of the society. There is a need for developing programs and policies that are accommodative of the whole society so that not

only ethno-racial minorities are targeted but the whole society feels responsible for successful settlement of these groups. Settlement should not only be limited to how ethno racial minorities adjust to mainstream society but it is also be about how mainstream society becomes tolerant and accommodative towards diversity. This is a two way process and there have to be efforts made to make this a two way process.

There is a need to understand that refugees are not simply victims of world gone wrong; they are actors in their own history (Montgomery et.al, 2001). The findings of the study indicate incredible skills and potential in them to survive in difficult circumstances. The refugees are the future citizens of this country. In providing such limited and narrow resources society should ‘weigh the balance between short term savings and long terms costs, both economic and social’ (Montgomery, et.al. 2001, p. 116). Adequate resources should be invested in capacitating and developing skills of the refugees so that they are fully able to participate and contribute to the community and to the society.

Apart from supportive institutional policies and structures there is also a need for local level social service agencies to develop their programs and skills to encourage racially marginalized communities such as refugees to feel a sense of belonging to the society of the host country (Nash, 2006). Powell (2001) in Nash et.al (2006:14) argues that immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees seek integration and not assimilation in the host countries and therefore their understanding of integrations should be included in every level of policy development.

There is a need for persistence and continuous reiteration of the needs of the marginalized at the policy making level. There is a need for advocating for positive social

policies and ‘social justice organizing and advocacy isn’t something that a person takes on once and puts aside forever more’ (Baines, 2007, p.62). The anti-oppressive (AOP) perspective encourages us as social workers to think of collective change and individual advocacy as something that is undertaken as central and integral to ones career as well as everyday life (Lundy 2004; Carniol, 2005; Mullaly 2002; Baines, 2007, p.62-63). Therefore “there is a need for advocacy, activism and organizing for social justice to be a part of larger collective strategies rather than random, individual acts that expose smaller policies or practices of injustice but leave the larger systems untouched” (Lundy, 2004; Mullalay, 2002; Withorn, 1984; Bughardt, 1982; Bailey, 1980; Baines 2007, p. 63).

My personal perspective is that researchers/writers/social workers/development workers who belong to this community need to come forward and voice ‘our’ concern in social research and at policy level. As Shakir (1995) suggests the very articulation of needs and experiences of minorities “decenters the mainstream discourse”. This has the potential to advance the development of new ‘epistemological map’, as well as assist the marginalized classes in their unique struggle (CASSA & SAWC, 2000, p.16). I hope this study has created a platform for the articulation of settlement issues of South and South Asian refugees to negotiate policies, programs and services that are oppressive and discriminatory towards them.

Implications for social policy

The study identifies following areas for improvement for future policy planning. They are:

- Proper understanding and acknowledgement of barriers faced by refugees when conceptualizing ‘settlement’ among government departments, jurisdictions as well as among the private and public sectors.
- Settlement sector more sensitive and abreast with the challenges faced by refugees for appropriate settlement programs.
- Stable funding to agencies working on settlement issues including longer funding and flexibility in their programming.
- Settlement is the responsibility of ALL institutions of the society and there is a need for developing programs that incorporate every section of the society for its success.

Dissemination plans

Today, concepts such as knowledge translation or knowledge transfer are growing requirements in all types of social research. It is being realized that the researcher has an obligation to share the findings of the research to the participants (Baines, 2007). Kovach (2005) suggests that researchers should be able to give back what they have taken from the community. They need to develop sincere and authentic researcher-researched relationship and learn to honour and value it. In this study, I do not know whether I was provided me with the opportunity of developing this relationship, but throughout the study I was conscious my responsibility and obligation of sharing the findings to the research participants. Therefore, I will make a sincere effort to disseminate findings of the research to the wider South and

South East Asian refugees as well as service providing agencies through various channels. I have chosen four ways for the dissemination of the findings of the study.

First of all, upon completion of my study I will develop a two page brochure, stating the title, purpose and findings of the study. I will print about twenty-five or more copies of the brochure and mail them in bulk to various service providing agencies in Hamilton.

Secondly, I will have an informal discussion with the participants about the findings of the study. I will prepare handmade charts and posters to explain the findings of the study. As most of the research participants are not proficient in English language, I will explain to them the findings through graphical representation such as pictures and sketches. I know a local person who is very good at sketches and is interested in the activities that would benefit refugee population. I will contact him and request him to prepare posters for dissemination purpose. I will provide him with compensation in cash or in kind.

I would also contact local community service agencies in Hamilton and request half an hour from the agency staff and board members for presenting the findings of my study. I will use the same charts and posters prepared during the informal interaction and also make a power point presentation.

Lastly, there is a Nepali community radio in Toronto (Mississauga) area which broadcasts programs on Nepali issues on Saturday morning. This program is very popular among Nepali community in Toronto and Hamilton. They are always on a look out for new and creative ideas to run the show. I know the program manager personally and would make arrangements of talking about the findings of my study in the show.

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APPENDIX-I

Interview Guide

Interview schedule

The following themes and/or questions will only serve as a guide for a semi-structured interview with the participants. The themes and/or questions will be discussed flexibly, utilizing an open-ended in-depth qualitative interview methodology.

Name: (optional)

Gender:

Age:

Ethnicity:

Religion:

Education:

Caste:

Occupation:

1. Please describe why and when did you come to Canada. How did you come here?
2. What are your day to day struggles and challenges being a refugee from South Asia? Give examples

Probing

- a. Did you come with your family members? Does it make it easier or difficult having/not having family members with you?
 - b. What kinds of support system do you have- friends/religious institution/associations? How regularly do you visit the place or person? How helpful is this contact?
3. What are the kinds of services provided by NGOs in the community do you access?

Probing

- a. Could you name some of the services?

- b. Are the services useful/helpful? Describe, how?
- c. Do you access the services individually or along with family members?

4. In your opinion are there enough of settlement services provided by NGOs in Hamilton?

Probing

- a. Do you think the services provided by the NGO cater to your cultural needs?
- b. Does it provide services in your own language?
- c. Do you think these services are accessible to people in your community?
- d. If they are not accessible, what are the major barrier preventing people from your community from accessing them?

5. What are the suggestions/recommendations you would like to make to improve the services of NGOs in the community?

Probing

- a. In your opinion what are the services that need improvement?
- b. What can be done to improve these services?

Note for the researcher: to follow up on issues which have been identified in earlier discussion.

6. Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss?

APPENDIX II

Consent Form

(Was translated in South Asian languages)

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your consideration in participating in my study. I am currently pursuing my master's degree in social work at McMaster University, Hamilton. This study is conducted for the academic fulfillment of MSW course. It is an attempt to gain insights into debates and discussions on immigration and settlement issues and also to have hands on experience of conducting a qualitative research. The study will be submitted to School of Social Work at McMaster University.

Purpose of the Study

This study will explore the daily experiences of South Asian refugees in Hamilton. It will also attempt to assess the impact of services provided by local Community Service Agencies have on these populations to deal with their daily challenges. Here by Community Service Agencies I mean local community based organizations which are nongovernmental in nature catering to settlement needs of refugees for example Settlement and Integration Services Organization (SISO) and St. Joseph's Immigrant Women's Centre (SJIWC).

Procedures involved in the Research

I will conduct an in-depth face-to-face interview. The interview will last for an hour and a half. I will have a semi-structured interview guide, as a research participant you will receive a copy of the guide in the beginning of the interview. The questions will be asked from but will not be limited to the guide. The researcher will take notes while interviewing with your permission. During the interview questions such as- Your challenges and struggles being a refugee in Canada? What services provided by Community Service Agencies in Hamilton do you access and if these services are helpful to you, will be asked. I would be sending the copy of your transcripts where you will have an opportunity to provide me with your feedback if you wish to do so.

With your consent the interview will be tape recorded and transcribed for data analysis. In case if you have any concerns or questions about the information in the transcript, please feel free to contact me directly.

Potential Harms:

There is little chance that you will be harmed by participating in this study. Some of the questions may raise issues that are worrying or stressful for you. Also you may worry about how others, including the organizations and agencies that will see the report, might

react. You do not need to answer any question you prefer not to answer. I explain below the steps I will take to protect your identity.

Potential Benefits

The study will highlight the strengths and limitations of service providing agencies and create a need for improving the quality of services aimed at marginalized sections such as refugees. I think the refugee/immigrant community at large will benefit from this study as this study aims to unravel the problems/struggles/experiences faced by them and the role of Community Service Agencies to assist them participate/integrate into Canadian society. The study may also help in the production of new, locally informed knowledge about the impact of Community Service Agencies on refugees/immigrant population.

Confidentiality:

Your participation in this study is confidential. I will do everything I can to protect your privacy. I will not be using names or any information that would allow you to be identified. Nevertheless, you may be identified based on events you describe or views you express. Please keep this in mind during the interview. No information will be shared with any organization beyond the final report. All raw data collected during this research study, including any information that would decipher the coding system, will be secured in a locked file in my office at faculty of social work. During the interview some deeply personal conversations might emerge. However, due focus will be given on discussing thoughts, perspectives and experiences of the participants that could be publicly shared. All raw data, including observation notes, audiocassettes, and transcript noted will be destroyed after the project is successfully concluded. Any questions or queries regarding the study can be asked to the researcher directly.

Participation and withdrawal:

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may feel free to withdraw from the study anytime. During the interview you can choose not to answer any question but remain in the study. If you decide to withdraw any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise.

Information about the Study Results:

I expect to finish the study in August 2008. You could contact me or my supervisor Prof. Rick Sin after the date if you wish to obtain the summary of my research. Rick Sin's e-mail address is sinr@mcmaster.ca and phone number is 905-525-9140 Ext: 23785 and my e-mail address is sugam_nepal@hotmail.com and my phone number is 289-426-1014.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact:

McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat

Telephone: (905) 525-9140 ext. 23142

c/o Office of Research Services

E-mail: ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca

CONSENT TO TAPE RECORDING

I consent to tape record the conversation during our interview for transcription.

Name of Participant

CONSENT

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Sugam Nepal, of McMaster University. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study, and to receive any additional details I wanted to know about the study. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, if I choose to do so, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant