BRINGING HOME, HOME: PLACE-MAKING AND THERAPEUTIC LANDSCAPING THROUGH CULTURAL RITUALS AND PRACTICES AMONG AFRICAN REFUGEES IN WINNIPEG

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Fifteen people participated in our study of African refugees' mental health (stress, burden, hardship) and coping. In individual and group interviews, they related experiences of settlement in Winnipeg through photographs they took and presented in group sessions. We have written elsewhere about the challenges the African refugees survived in Winnipeg (King and Heinonen in press), but here we focus on how they coped through cultural expression, social connections, spirituality, rituals and celebrations they continued in their new country. Maintaining ties to their former homelands and cultures helped them to survive in Winnipeg, the place where they now make their home.

According to the UN General Assembly (1951), a refugee is a person who fears "being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his [sic] nationality" (p. 189). A refugee does not feel safe in her or his own country and therefore, needs to flee from it.

CONCEPTS OF HOME AND PLACE-MAKING

Refugees usually experience multiple losses due to flight from their homeland and moves between refugee camps and other settings. They are neither able to take belongings with them nor can they easily maintain social connections, cultural practices and objects they knew in their home communities. Thus, they lose home (Kaiser 2008). The mulit-faceted? meanings that represent the concept of home to immigrants and refugees have been discussed by a number of authors (Taylor 2013; Rosbrook and Schweitzer 2010; Simich, Este and Hamilton 2010; Sampson and Gifford 2009; Baffoe 2009-2010; Heinonen and Harvey, 2001). Other literature has contributed to the conceptualization of place, particularly in relation to health and well-being and neighbourhoods (Mcintyre, Ellaway, and Cummins 2002; Cummins, Curtis, Diez-Roux, and Macintyre 2007; Macintryre, Maciver, and Sooman 2009). In relation to refugee well-being, some useful perspectives from the concept of place-making (Hoffstaedter 2014; Palmer 2012; Turton 2005) and landscape (Sampson and Gifford 2010; Kaiser 2008) are particularly useful and can add insights that provide a lens to view our research.

Kaiser (2008) refers to place-making as a process in which refugees mediate material and socio-cultural environments and make compromises and adaptations in order to make one's daily life within a new setting or changed landscape (Sampson and Gifford 2010). Cummins et al. (2007) remind us that place is not static or fixed and that "there is a mutually reinforcing and reciprocal relationship between people and place" (p. 1835). As Turton (2005) asserts, what this means to people who are displaced is "to understand how a sense of place becomes bound up with a person's social and individual identity, we must treat place, not as a stage for social activity but as a 'product' of it" (p. 258). Making a place for oneself and one's family may be viewed as a process of events, negotiations, adaptations and mediations. In this process it is important to avoid viewing refugees as victims but to acknowledge that they are, in fact, "social agents" (Turton 2005).

In our research, the participants originated from different African nations and had differing histories related to their flight from conflict, war and refugee camps. They came from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Southern Sudan, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone. Analysis of the data uncovered strategies and methods that were used in the process of place-making in Winnipeg. Due to the need to make substitutions in what they would have done in their home country and cultural context, the refugees attempted "to protect, preserve and develop a certain kind of cultural identity" (Kaiser 2008) as they faced the current challenges and possibilities in their new Winnipeg environment. The study participants actively engaged in creating better lives for themselves and their families; health and well-being were at the core of their efforts. Sampson and Gifford (2010) view such efforts as necessary for place-making as they help to establish places of recovery and renewal, to achieve what they term "therapeutic landscapes" (p. 116). They add that therapeutic landscapes are important "for facilitating positive connections to place, promoting well-being and contributing to new arrivals' becoming at home in their country of resettlement" (pp. 116-117).

AFRICAN REFUGEES' PLACE-MAKING AND THERAPEUTIC LANDSCAPING IN WINNIPEG

CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The African refugee participants described strategies and activities that helped them to cope and counter challenges in their daily lives and settlement in Winnipeg. Some used writing and reading to set down thoughts and ideas and gain new knowledge; they found satisfaction in this activity. They also maintained and used cultural artefacts from their home countries in their Winnipeg homes, making it possible for them to remember and enjoy their culture of origin and to include it in cultural rituals and social gatherings in Winnipeg. In the photo below are some art images that represent African homelands. These were prominently displayed in African refugee homes.



For some, social events that involved cultural traditions were important to continue in Canada. One of these was a ceremonial coffee ritual where coffee and refreshments were served to guests. As one study participant stated, "We have ceremonial coffee or [spend time] chatting together." Different types of coffee are served in different sets of cups as participants move through different stages of the ceremony.



Palmer (2012) described such a ceremony as utilizing material artefacts such as a unique clay pot and traditional dishes and offering "a sense of belonging, self-esteem, internal and external coherence and… continuity of their beliefs and traditions" (p. 73). This type of ceremony, usually held in the home, generates well-being as it brings people from the same cultural background together in a pleasurable and relaxing environment.

Other ways of connecting socially with friends were adapted to their lives in Winnipeg. "We sometimes get together at Tim Horton's and talk. Colleagues and friends are an important part of my life. They help me out." The help that refugees gave one another contributed to development of a "therapeutic landscape" that was conducive to improving well-being.

FOCUSING ON FAMILY LIFE

All participants referred to family life and ways to find time to be with children and spouses as necessary for coping in Winnipeg. The study participants reported, "I enjoy talking with my wife at the end of the day when the children go to sleep," and, "I enjoy being with my children and seeing them grow." One said, "I'm lucky. I have two brothers and my mom here. We enjoy time together." Another added, "God gives me the joy from my children. My last child was born in Canada." For some, worrying about other family members far away occupied their minds. Faith, the Church, and finding activities to enjoy were important for coping with loneliness or loss and instilling a sense of home. Being part of a Church and cultural

community foster place-making and contribute to refugees' therapeutic landscapes.

A study participant stated, "I am always happy. I like to teach dancing to the young. I also enjoy going to Church. God is there for me. He is the only comfort I have. The Church is important, the first to help me to solve my problems." One other person added, "I am a happy person and am grateful for my family and for being here. My house and family create happiness." The strength of family relationships was critical to well-being and often included family members who remained in the refugees' home countries, with whom they communicated by telephone or computer.

CONFRONTING COLD WEATHER

For many refugees the harsh Winnipeg winter was an unfamiliar hardship. Winter winds and heavy snow can be challenging, but some participants reported being able to face these by drawing on what they learned and adapted from experiences in their own country and in Canada. They stated, "I wear warm clothes and eat warm food; coffee, soup, hot chocolate and African heavy food. It helps to warm up the body", "I told the kids to use blankets to lower bills and to wear sweaters", and "We cope by turning [up] the heat." A comfortable home is an important component for a therapeutic landscape, especially in the cold winter, when the outdoors can feel like a formidable place.

IMPROVING PROSPECTS IN WINNIPEG

Another strategy that African refugees used to improve their lives related to adult learning and finding work. Being able to communicate in English and becoming employed are critical in the process of place-making in settling into a new environment. "I go for training programs, go to meet people. We share information. We have to find a way to laugh here." "You go for it. You can succeed and even enjoy it. I leave the stress of my job for a new workplace." The resiliency and hopeful attitude during the process of settlement are evident in the voices of the refugee participants.

The refugees' strategies for place-making as they settled in Winnipeg are included under the themes; cultural, recreational and social activities, focusing on family life, confronting the cold weather and improving economic prospects in Winnipeg. All the themes include features of place-making by refugees, parallel to those proposed by Sampson and Gifford (2010) who refer to types of places that offer: opportunity (meaning and purpose); restoration (reduction of fear and promotion of human dignity); sociality (relations with other people); and safety (fostering feelings of security) (p. 128). All of these contribute to well-being during refugees' settlement processes. "The qualities of [these] four types of places that make up the therapeutic landscapes of settlement" (p. 129) help refugees in successful place-making in Winnipeg.

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HOW DO THE ECONOMIC OUTCOMES OF ECONOMIC VERSUS FAMILY SPONSORED IMMIGRANTS COMPARE?

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Policy and debates around immigration over the last two decades have focused on immigrants' capacity to make meaningful contributions to the Canadian economy. This paper uses the Longitudinal Immigrant Data Base (IMDB) to analyze the economic outcomes of five cohorts of economic and family sponsored immigrants to Canada and Nova Scotia between 1990-1994 and 2010-2012. Analyses show that family sponsored immigrants achieve meaningful economic outcomes and at times even outperform economic principal applicants.

Policy and debates around immigration over the last two decades have focused on immigrants' capacity to make meaningful contributions to the Canadian economy. This can be seen in the rapid increase in number of "economic" immigrants over other categories, it is seen through the introduction of "Canadian experience" category, and it can be seen in the launching of the "Express Entry" program. All of these policies emphasize the importance of immigrants' ability to smoothly integrate into the labour market.

Because of the economic focus of Canadian immigration policies, the levels of admission of non-economic immigrants, such as sponsored family, have declined considerably (McLaren and Black, 2005; Triadafilopoulos, 2006). An assumption is that these immigrants are a drain on the economy (Gunter, 2011). Research on non-economic immigrants, however, has shown that they make numerous undocumented contributions to families and Canada, such as taking care of extended family, offering language and cultural ties to ethnic communities, and being front and center in diversifying the population (VanderPlaat, Ramos and Yoshida, 2012). This is not to mention that getting a job and generating income for a household is important for immigrants who come to Canada under any category, even if the criteria for selection specify other reasons for entering.

Economic focused immigration policy, however, might not work for regions with smaller immigrant populations, struggling economies, and high rates of outmigration (Dobrowolsky and Ramos 2014) and the vast majority of immigrants come to Canada for non-economic reasons, such as lifestyle and family (Angus Reid 2013). Likewise retention rates for spon-