frontiers in Human Dynamics

ORIGINAL RESEARCH
published: 11 May 2021
doi: 10.3389/fhumd.2021.625358

Sustaining the Private Sponsorship of Resettled Refugees in Canada

Jennifer Hyndman[1]*, *Johanna Reynolds*[1], *Biftu Yousuf*[1], *Anna Purkey*[2], *Dawit Demoz*[3] and *Kathy Sherrell*[4]

[1]Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada, [2]Human Rights Program, St. Paul's University College at the University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON, Canada, [3]Department of Social Science, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada, [4]Centre for Refugee Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada

For more than 40 years, groups of Canadian residents have raised funds and offered their time and energy to support over 325,000 refugee newcomers to Canada through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program. In 2020, targets for private refugee sponsorship in the Canadian context were double the number of government-assisted refugees. Private sponsorship is therefore an important focus of analysis in relation to refugee resettlement, representing a complementary pathway to refugee protection through civil society mobilization. Yet, little research to-date has focused on private sponsorship. Based on an original qualitative study, this paper probes how voluntary sponsorship has been *sustained* over decades, despite the high personal and financial costs it entails, by analyzing the insights of those who have experienced sponsorship: former refugees who came through the program, long-term sponsors, key informants, and other community leaders. The authors argue that private refugee sponsorship is a community *practice*, a routine action that is part of a collective commitment, a way of connecting local community actions to global politics of injustice and displacement. Furthermore, refugee newcomers who land in Canada as permanent residents become *part of* the communities and society in which they stay. Having left family members behind in refugee camps and cities of refuge, many become sponsors themselves. This phenomenon of 'family linked' sponsorship is a defining and sustaining feature of the program, motivating family members in Canada to team up with seasoned sponsors to 'do more'. Our data show that sponsorship occurs across scales—linking local sites in Canada to countries where human atrocities are common and neighboring states that host those who flee. Sponsorship connects people in various communities across the world, and these transnational links are important to understanding the sustainability of sponsorship over time in Canada. Our research pays attention to the narratives of sponsors and those they support with the objective of documenting the momentous contribution of this complementary, and expanding, pathway for refugee protection.

Keywords: Canada, refugee resettlement, private sponsorship, community sponsorship, non-state actors, civil society, complementary pathway

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:
Naoko Hashimoto, Hitotsubashi University, Japan

Reviewed by:
Patti Lenard, University of Ottawa, Canada
Barbara Treviranus, Independent Researcher, Toronto, ON, Canada

***Correspondence:**
Jennifer Hyndman
jhyndman@yorku.ca

Specialty section:
This article was submitted to Refugees and Conflict, a section of the journal Frontiers in Human Dynamics

Received: *02 November 2020*
Accepted: *22 April 2021*
Published: *11 May 2021*

Citation:
Hyndman J, Reynolds J, Yousuf B, Purkey A, Demoz D and Sherrell K (2021) Sustaining the Private Sponsorship of Resettled Refugees in Canada. Front. Hum. Dyn 3:625358. doi: 10.3389/fhumd.2021.625358

INTRODUCTION

> *As long as the refugee crisis does not go away, the need to help someone will not go away.... we have humanity so there are always people who would respond to the refugee crisis. It could be based on.... because of their faith, maybe because of their connections, sense of justice. So there are always some good people who would like to respond.* - Selam, Key informant[1]

Canadian residents have privately funded and supported refugee resettlement to Canada for more than 4 decades. The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP)—a collaboration between the Canadian state and different segments of its civil society, which enables groups of (private) Canadian residents to sponsor a refugee or household for a year—has brought more than 325,000 former refugees to Canada (Government of Canada, 2020a; Government of Canada, 2020b). The category of privately sponsored refugee (PSR) is *in addition* to that of government-assisted refugee (GAR). In 2013, a third hybrid category of resettled refugee was introduced: the 'blended visa office-referred', or BVOR, refugee. BVORs are sponsored by volunteers but 50% of the financial support comes from the federal government.

This paper focuses on private refugee sponsorship, sometimes called community sponsorship, as a complementary pathway to government-sponsored refugee resettlement in providing concrete, permanent protection to displaced persons. Sponsorship is also a unique and widespread mobilization of civil society members who put their own money, energy and time toward supporting people identified as being in need of protection. Specifically, we analyze how such a demanding program of voluntarism and community engagement has been *sustained* for so long, given the intense commitment often required upon people's arrival in Canada. Sponsors are responsible for receiving newcomers at the airport, finding them housing, providing funds to cover basic expenses, and getting them linked into health, education, language services and employment during their first year.[2]

Based on our original research with sponsors, former refugees, and key informants who are community leaders in five provinces in Canada, we contend that sustainability is galvanized by sponsors' transnational commitments to social justice for those facing displacement and violence on a global scale, but also their intimate connections to individuals who may be family members of those already sponsored, or ethnonational 'kin' who face persecution, violence, or displacement from their place of origin.

We begin by briefly reviewing private refugee sponsorship as a civil society-led form of refugee resettlement and a complementary pathway for refugee protection. We contextualize the PSRP in Canada, while outlining the parameters and methods of our project. Given the longevity of the program and the existence of other types of sponsorship to Canada prior to it (Cameron, 2020), we address the question of how sponsorship is sustained over the *longue durée*. Answering this question is vital to the continuity of the program in Canada, but also to other countries that have adopted the idea of sponsorship and seek to put it into practice.

In the second and third sections we address the motivations of long-term sponsors in our sample. Sponsors remain a relatively dispersed, diverse, and unexplored segment of civil society that mobilize to facilitate the first year of settlement in Canada. Like Macklin et al. (2018) who examine sponsors' motivations for Syrian sponsorship, we find that sponsors' commitments to global human rights concerns and a sense of social justice drive a great deal of participation. Some 80% of Macklin et al.'s 2018) sample, however, consisted of new sponsors and our focus in this research is on longer term, seasoned sponsors who were engaged long before the world's focus fell upon the Syrian refugee movement. In particular, we point to the vital, if often invisible, support and sponsorship by former refugees themselves. The diaspora community sponsorship helps to illustrate how *commitments* to social justice at a global scale are enacted through *connections* to extended family members still living in protracted refugee situations or ethnonational kin in need of protection. In the third section, we show specifically how these transnational linkages across scales sustain sponsorship, from local sites of voluntarism in Canada to specific camps or cities of refuge where people displaced by violence, with little chance of return, live in temporary settings.

CONTEXT: SPONSORSHIP AS A 'COMPLEMENTARY PATHWAY'

In recent decades, protracted refugee displacement across world regions has become the rule, not the exception. Not until 2015, with the dramatic increase in migrants crossing the Mediterranean to Europe by boat, risking (and too often losing) their lives, was a migration "crisis"[3] declared (Crawley and Duvell, 2017). By the end of that year, one million people had arrived in Europe by sea, with some 4,000 suspected to have died (Zilio, 2019).

Faced with this "crisis", Government leaders from around the world met in September 2016 at the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants to discuss a plan for addressing the international governance of refugee and migrant movements. In a rare show of international solidarity, Member States agreed by consensus to The New York Declaration, an expression of the political will of states to protect the rights and lives of refugees and migrants, and share responsibility globally. This meeting launched consultation processes for developing the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)

[1]All research participant names are pseudonyms.

[2]Resources and time put into sponsorship include pre-arrival fundraizing (a minimum of approximately $28,000 for a family of four), and additional settlement supports once the family arrives in Canada (which includes social networking, employment, housing, etc.)

[3]The term "crisis" is used with caution as the events leading up to the New York Declaration constituted not so much a crisis of migration as a crisis of governance and political leadership.

and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) respectively. The Global Compact on Refugees was affirmed by the UN General Assembly in 2018 and calls upon states to explore complementary pathways to the three official 'durable solutions' of the international refugee regime, namely voluntary repatriation, local integration, and UNHCR-referred *resettlement*:

> 95. The three-year strategy on resettlement (Section 3.2 above) will also include complementary pathways for admission, with a view to increasing significantly their availability and predictability. Contributions will be sought from States, with the support of relevant stakeholders, to facilitate effective procedures and clear referral pathways *for family reunification, or to establish private or community sponsorship programmes that are additional to regular resettlement,* including community-based programmes promoted through the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI) (*p.* 19; emphasis added).

The PSRP is first and foremost a resettlement program. Interest in complementing government resettlement programs through establishing private or community-based sponsorships has increased in recent years. In the absence of the ability to return home or integrate locally, resettlement is the only 'durable solution' currently providing secure and permanent protection spaces for some refugees (Van Selm, 2004a; Van Selm, 2004b; Hyndman and Giles, 2017; Garnier, 2018; Van Selm, 2020). Refugee resettlement is a wholly discretionary act of international cooperation, and available to less than 1% of refugees. While more than two dozen nation-states have opted to participate in the resettlement of refugees, only a few currently allow private sponsorship, known more widely as 'community sponsorship' in the United Kingdom and Europe, as a refugee resettlement pathway (Bond and Kwadrans, 2019).

Despite the recognition of the potential of private/community sponsorship and increasing demand for resettlement in recent years, the actual number of resettlement places available worldwide has declined drastically since 2017. In 2016, at the New York meeting hosted by former US President Barack Obama, the Declaration was penned, and the US resettlement target was 85,000 refugees, with a commitment by Obama to resettle 110,000 refugees in 2017.[4] Dramatic cuts to refugee resettlement in the United States by the Trump administration (down to no more than 15,000 refugees in 2020–2021)[5] meant that Canada led the world in refugee resettlement for a time (Radford and Connor, 2019; Zilio, 2019). In 2019, Canada welcomed 30,100 refugees out of a global total of 107,800 spread over 26 countries (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2020).

As evidenced by the situation in the United States under the Trump administration, the social and political contexts in which private sponsorship and other resettlement programs operate are crucial indicators of their potential success. With anti-refugee and anti-immigrant sentiment on the rise in many parts of the world and political leaders using such messaging for political gain, not all societies are 'welcoming communities' for newcomers (Gill, 2018). Writing in a United Kingdom context, Darling (2017) has remarked upon the vital role that communities play in shaping newcomer prospects, providing tacit information, resources, and relationships to sustain and facilitate their security and well-being in very immediate ways. According to Hiebert (2016), Canadian public opinion has been pro-immigration in general over recent decades because the arrival of newcomers and high levels of immigration are framed as part of a nation-building narrative and as key to economic prosperity.[6] Yet support for refugees specifically has not been unwavering. Under the Harper Government (2006–2015), public support for refugee resettlement waned. This shifted again during the federal election of 2015, when all major political parties in Canada made explicit commitments to resettling Syrian refugees as displacement from the region mounted.

Having facilitated resettlement to Canada for 25,000 Syrians in the first four months of its new government, and more than 40,000 Syrian newcomers by January 2017, the Trudeau government then announced a significant increase in all of its resettlement pathways, but especially private refugee sponsorship. In a planned three-year increase from 2018 to 2020, the number of PSRs was to increase to 20,000 people, up from 4,500 ten years earlier (in fact, COVID-19 dramatically reduced resettlement arrivals). At the same time, the government committed to resettling 10,000 GARs, up from 7,500 in 2010. An additional 1,000 BVORs would also be sponsored, with costs shared equally between private sponsors and the federal government, though McNally (2020: 135) shows that the BVOR pathway has "struggled to remain sustainable." In a single decade, private refugee sponsorship increased, at least on paper, by 400% (accounting for two-thirds of all refugees resettled to Canada in 2020), while government assisted refugee resettlement increased by only 25%.[7] Based on numbers alone, the private sponsorship of refugees is evidently a central component of Canada's approach to refugee resettlement and protection.

While all refugee resettlement is discretionary, private sponsorship depends not just on the political will of the state but on the commitment, mobilization and resources of members of civil society. Drawing from her experience as a Canadian civil servant who monitored the resettlement of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees beginning in 1979 and has been a private sponsor herself, Alboim (2016) identifies the key

[4]For more on Obama's pledge, seehttps://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/20/remarkspresident-obama-leaders-summit-refugees.

[5]See:https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/08/29/statement-national-security-advisor-susan-e-rice-syrian-refugee.

[6]In 2019, a record 341,000 immigrants came to Canada, about 14% of which were from the refugee and protected persons class (Cheatham, 2020).

[7]Actual arrivals among all resettled refugees slowed dramatically in 2020 due to COVID-19.

'ingredients' of private refugee sponsorship as political leadership, a prepared civil service with operational capacity, positive media messaging and pro-refugee public opinion. She notes that all of these are related to one another, but without all elements private, community sponsorship might not be possible. Hence, private sponsorship cannot simply be mandated by states. People, as members of civil society and in a personal capacity, must be mobilized and high levels of voluntarism have to be sustained for sponsorship to work. While sponsors technically sponsor for 12 months, the networks of support for many extend far beyond 'month 13' (Lenard, 2019).

The importance of private/community sponsorship as a path to resettlement for a modest number of refugees in Canada stands in sharp contrast with the paucity of scholarship about it, other than what has been written about the establishment of the program in response to Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugee movement (Molloy et al., 2017) and the recent resettlement of Syrians beginning in 2015 (Reynolds and Clark-Kazak, 2019). Yet, understanding the dynamics of this under-utilized complementary pathway is critical for broader discussions about refugee resettlement and the potential expansion of these programs globally. These two historical moments and peaks in sponsorship numbers have shaped the national narrative about the program, but say little about how it has been sustained from 1979 to 2015 in communities across the country. Garnering much less attention are the sponsors -individuals, communities and organizations-that have quietly been doing this work for decades.

The Canadian context offers over 40 years of experience and 'data' about PSRP. As we have learned in our research, many sponsors maintain long-term commitments to the program and continue to volunteer over a period of years or even decades. What can we learn from these 'seasoned' sponsors? What keeps them engaged and how is this vital pathway to protection sustained over the long term? Partial answers to some of these questions are offered in *Strangers to Neighbors: Refugee Sponsorship in Context* (Labman and Cameron, 2020), the most comprehensive treatment of private sponsorship to date, but the issue of sustainability for this growing program has not yet been directly addressed in detail. Analyzing the responses to these questions from sponsors, those who have been sponsored, and those who administer or facilitate the program is vital to understanding how this international resettlement pathway works. Based on our findings, we contend that the program is not just international in its arrangement, but transnational, in that sponsors and former refugees maintain intimate contacts with those who remain in conflict zones or sanctuary spaces for refugees abroad, and that this is in part what drives the motivation to continue sponsorship.

Despite the central role that these actors play, existing research about sponsors is sparse. One can identify two main groups of sponsors: 1) the (semi-)retired, often faith-based affiliated volunteers, the vast majority women, described by Macklin et al. (2018); and 2) those who themselves came as refugees to Canada and have become sponsors of family members left behind or ethnonationals who remain at risk 'back home'. Krause (2020) in turn describes two types of sponsors: Type A are strangers to the refugees; Type B are extended family members often involved in family linked cases. Our sample and analysis suggest that this binary oversimplifies the portrait of sponsors across the country, and the breadth of lived experience that sponsors bring to this work. Absent from Krause's typology, for example, are those sponsors who join as friends or funders of the sponsors already involved in organizing a sponsorship. Our research illustrates the range of different sponsors and supports the idea of sponsorship as a *community* practice: both a practice performed *by* a community and that *creates* a community, thus helping to sustain sponsorship over time.

We advance the idea that sponsorship can be best understood as a *practice,* a routine action that is part of a commitment to community and others. To elucidate this dedication, we show in our findings that sponsorship is seen less as a 'to do' list (though such lists may also be an important tool to guide and train sponsors, especially new groups without experience) than a more generalized commitment to global human rights and social justice, particularly for those displaced in conditions not of their own making. As civil society actors (in secular groups, communities or as members of faith groups), volunteer sponsors see themselves as acting locally but having impact globally by helping create new homes for refugee newcomers.

As such, this work by civil society can be better understood as sustained transnational networks supporting refugees displaced in one part of the world and resettling in a new local community. Linking scales of volunteer engagement is important to our analysis, as *local* sponsors are connected to *global* refugees who come to Canada, a *nation-state* willing to grant them permanent legal status. Refugee resettlement is facilitated too by *international organization*s, such as UNHCR. While the sponsorship program requires non-partisan political will and government partnership, it is only sustained because of these non-state actors performing quotidian tasks at a local scale. In other words, without sponsors who commit substantial resources in terms of time, money and energy, the program would collapse, leaving thousands of precariously displaced people without any possibility of resettlement.

While transnational connections and the state's cooperation in sponsorship is key, sponsorship ultimately occurs at much finer scales. The focus on the scale of the household is important (Marston, 2000), as social reproduction and the well-being of people are cultivated at this very intimate scale of analysis (Domosh and Seager, 2001). Often the household is excluded from analysis, as it is considered 'the private sphere', the gendered space of unpaid work, support, and home (Domosh and Seager, 2001). Sponsorship may be an international resettlement pathway for people in need of protection, but it is also supported at scales that are intensely local and based 'at home'. Sponsorship is fully reliant on the funding and hard work of volunteers who engage in this transnational community practice at a local scale.

The demands and costs of sponsorship are high—personally and financially, with sponsors expressing fatigue. "*I am so burnt out*," says Lois, a sponsor since 1983 who has taken a few 'breaks' since she started this volunteer work. And yet these volunteers *continue* to sponsor, and expand the members of their communities by bringing refugee newcomers into their circles.

Why? While the basic requirements outlined by the PRSP provide a structure, recommendations on how to proceed, and contractual obligations, none of these elements reveals how and why sponsors do this work *repeatedly* over time.

A NOTE ON METHODS

The analyses and arguments developed in this paper are based on findings from a research project that explores the motivations, relationships, and practices of private refugee sponsorship in Canada over time.[8] Between 2017 and 2020, the research team canvassed over 100 people in five of ten Canadian provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Québec) with participants from rural and urban settings. Participants were recruited through public notices on community forums and listservs, as well as through personal and professional networks, and participant-driven sampling.

Our research team conducted in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 'seasoned' sponsors—that is, those who have sponsored several times and for many years, sometimes decades, as part of a 'group of five', community sponsorship, or constituent group affiliated with a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH).[9] Sponsors were asked questions about their experience and motivations for becoming refugee sponsors, as well as their views on what keeps sponsors going over time. In most cases, respondents had been sponsors for 10 years or more, though some with more than a 5-year sponsorship record were also included. Interviews were conducted with formerly sponsored refugees who had been in Canada for more than five years. No central repository exists and thus it is difficult to trace privately sponsored refugees unless they have maintained contact with their sponsorship group or responded to our outreach. Former refugees were asked about their experience in the program, the relationships they forged with their sponsors, and the broader communities in which they settled.

Key informant interviews and focus groups were also conducted with refugee advocates, members of community organizations working in private sponsorship, and individuals in management positions in national SAHs. Key informant interviews were centered on questions about the history and sustainability of the program. It is important to note that cross-over exists between these three categories. For example, in some instances formerly sponsored refugees were also sponsors, and key informants were part of sponsorship groups outside of their organization. Most interviews were conducted in English. Interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim prior to being coded using NVivo, a data analysis software. Extensive field notes were also coded. For the purposes of this paper, interviews and focus group discussions with sponsors, and key informants will be discussed, though it should be noted that several sponsors cited herein did come to Canada as resettled refugees.

In what follows, we observe that long-term sponsors are vital to the sustainability of sponsorship over time. They are key civil society actors and vital players in the viability of the PRSP going forward. Sponsors are members of faith, ethno-specific and community-based groups, and/or have a connection to a 'core' sponsor, who is often the key motivation for their friends or community members to join a sponsorship group. Other volunteers are simply motivated to get involved in support activities for refugee newcomers. The role that each sponsor plays in their groups varies and ranges from giving financial contributions, to filling out paperwork, to the more hands-on and daily settlement supports (including finding and securing housing and household items, transportation, banking, education, employment, and healthcare), to providing emotional and moral support. Sponsors in our sample were also commonly involved in broader volunteerism beyond refugee resettlement, as will be described in more detail below.

LINKING GLOBAL–LOCAL CONNECTIONS: SPONSORSHIP MOTIVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Having provided the context for sponsorship above, as well as a brief description of methods employed for this study, we now probe the motivations of sponsors and how sponsorships are sustained over time. We begin with motivations, identifying and distinguishing between two groups of responses from research participants: first, those who expressed a commitment to 'do the right thing' and enact local social justice with global impact; and second, those who experienced a sense of obligation or urgency to assist family members still at risk who were left behind, and/or a commitment to 'ethnonational kin,' a broader group of people with a shared background fleeing the same source of violence or enmity.

One of the salient themes that emerges through the interviews and focus group discussions is that sponsorship is predicated on a commitment to social justice and human rights across local, national, and global scales. When asked what motivated her as a sponsor, Kate replied, "*So you know, it's the social justice thing!*" Indeed, social justice appears as a motivation both to become involved in private refugee sponsorship initially and to remain engaged over time.

> I think that people who have faith in humanity, who are interested in human rights, who see it as a justice issue are more apt to continue and it doesn't matter whether the experience has been all warm, fuzzy or difficult or. . . all these things! But for people who see it in those terms,

[8]For more information and the project description, see: https://jhyndman.info.yorku.ca/exploring-private-refugee-sponsorship/

[9]Sponsorships are based on a public-private partnership that do involve government's permission and contractual obligations with sponsoring groups. In many cases, Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) are the umbrella groups that hold these contracts on behalf of smaller constituent groups. In all cases, a minimum of five sponsors is needed to get approval, except in Quebec where at least two sponsors are required. Yet a faith group may have many constituent groups, each of which may have built-in structures that are responsible for refugees, or outreach, or social justice that meet regularly to support newcomers on housing, employment, official language learning which, in turn, sustain sponsorship.

> it's not something that you just do once and then go off and do something else. And we learn so much about resilience and about human nature. We learn so much about our own culture and how we complain about things that are inconsequential. And when you see how resilient people are, and when you see people together . . . - Kate, Sponsor #038, 2019.

Kate has been a refugee sponsor of more than 40 years: sponsorship is just "part of who we are." "I was probably born to it," she points out, as she references her own family's Mennonite displacement history. Her sponsorship involvement followed the needs of those stuck in humanitarian emergencies as they emerged: the first sponsorship was a Chilean refugee, long before the PSRP was even initiated, followed by Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian refugees, beginning in the late 1970s. She supported sponsorships from the Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Eritrea, Bosnia, and Sudan. Throughout this time, despite changing communities and even provinces, Kate continued her sponsorship involvement in each new place she came to call home, whether through a group of five or church groups. She describes her involvement as "hands-on" but in later years it also transitioned into a more advisory role for new members. The leadership exemplified by Kate exists in small communities and larger cities across the country. Kate is one of many more people who propel sponsorships forward across the country.

Building on the theme of social justice identified by Kate, Tony, Lorena and Lucy in separate interviews also mention the same motivation, along with responsibility, ethics, and values: as Tony puts it, sponsorship is "the right thing to do, so you do it."

> I mean, it's all those things and basically social justice. Yeah, social justice is a great catch-all. It's values, sort of, ethics. Basic social ethics. Responsibility, it's the right thing to do, so you do it. - Tony, Sponsor #012, 2018.
>
> So you know when you see and you're so deeply, deeply immersed on the raw edge of human suffering—I call it the bleeding edge of human suffering—and then I come back and I see my home with everything. Every creature comfort that one would imagine. A life of privilege. I can do no less. It tells me that I have a great responsibility, a level of accountability that I need to rise to. And doing this work [long pause] it enriches my life. It gives meaning and purpose. To my life and to who I am as a person. If I—in some small way—can enrich and bring meaning and purpose to the life of another person. - Lorena, Sponsor #032, 2019.
>
> Also, I mean, now I can put it into words: a motivation now would be social justice. Doing something that fits my reason . . . which my work does, to a degree, but not entirely. Whereas with volunteer work I can just do it. - Lucy, Sponsor #017, 2018.

These 'reasons' for getting involved in sponsorship are slightly abstract, but sponsorship emerges to create meaning and purpose. It is an expression of values, beliefs, and a commitment to justice in the world.

Other sponsors we interviewed came from countries that created significant numbers of refugees, and were more concrete in their rationale, specifically wanting to create better conditions and contribute to better, safer lives for people they knew or did not know:

> And the other one [reason for sponsoring] is since they grew up in refugee camp it's just to give them life, just to make them leave there because nothing is there for them.-Faduma, Sponsor #016, 2019
>
> You know this guy as I told you, we don't know him, but we felt his pain. And we can just try to do something to help him. That's what we are doing. - Fikre, Sponsor #010, 2018

Faduma, who worked in the settlement sector herself, had no family members in Canada. She could help sponsor her two nephews through a Group of Five sponsorship arrangement. Upon arrival, they lived with her and she supported them in attending school and eventually finding work. During her interview, Faduma discussed the importance of sponsorship for building her *own* community.

Conversely, Fikre contributed to the sponsorship of a man he had never met, but felt compelled to provide him protection and peace. The man had been jailed for engaging in political dissent related to human rights atrocities by the Ethiopian Government and subjected to torture. As Fikre described, "they took out his toes nails . . . they broke his ribs and he can't have a baby." The pain Fikre felt upon learning these details galvanized him and others to undertake the sponsorship of a person who might be called 'ethnonational kin' in need of safety and protection.

For another sponsor, Aisha, the push to sponsor was personal.

> I am originally from Iraq and . . . still there is a lot of tragedy there . . . I have a lot of family a lot of people there, friends, they talking to me and please, please save us, please if you can do something for us, I really feel so bad about them. I don't know how to help them. And one day I was so mad, so sad so I picked up the phone and I tried to look how to save them, especially I started with my family, which is my mom and dad because they are still there and on the TV, there is a lot of bombing, and killing, and, and, and, and.... - Aisha, Former Refugee, #036, 2019.

For former refugees who are members of a diaspora now in Canada, the desire to sponsor is deeply personal when family remains overseas and in need of safety. For Aisha, the urgency of sponsorship was palpable. Her parents remained in the middle of a war zone while she desperately tried to find a way to get them out of Iraq. While they waited, her father died.

Since 2003, Aisha describes being involved in a number of other sponsorships, including for two siblings. A third sibling never made it to Canada because she died of breast cancer in the middle of the sponsorship process.

> And I have to say the truth. If you are believer, whatever you believe in, what kind of religion, I'm sure, it doesn't

> matter from which country, who is your mom, who is your believer whatever, you believe that you are human, you can help another human. This is the big success that you can do. If you are here, or outside. - Aisha, Former Refugee, #036, 2019.

The idea that faith and nationality do not matter is notable here: "you can help another human." And so one does.

> Well, basically the idea was that many people are suffering in refugee camps and if we can help them directly, why not? As well helping these who are really helping refugees so the sponsorship group . . . the sponsorship agreement holders are helping our own relatives so that encouraged me to go and help the SAHs. But basically, it is . . . more than they benefit, we [as a community] benefit from that because it is all refugees that we are helping at the end of the day. - John, Sponsor #28, 2019.

As noted, 'social justice' is just one concept that sponsors use to capture a sense of responsibility to others. James is now on his sixth sponsorship, not including those his family was involved in while he was a teenager in the 1970s. As the son of a United Church minister, he attributes his commitment to 'growing up' with sponsorship, observing and absorbing the philosophy of the motto, Think Globally, Act Locally:

> We had a phrase in the United Church which was "Live Love", that was popular in the late 60s and the 70s, but that was also when the kind of "Think Globally, Act Locally" kind of . . . that phrase started. I mean, it's a bit cliché now but that was kind of the philosophy that I grew up with . . . that we're not isolationists, we're people who can share the world . . . And, so I grew up with this sense of borders being very porous. And that's more appropriate rather than all of this nationalism, so that was my dad's philosophy. - James, Sponsor #FG21–23, 2018

Sponsorship is a shared and ongoing *community practice* that is linked to social justice for James, as it was for his parents. It is also something one *does*. For some, faith and community practice are difficult to separate, and they both provide motivation. Sponsorship is, arguably, the community practice of social justice: essentially inviting new members to join one's community and become more secure through this outreach and social inclusion. Actions can also be based on community leadership or the request of a friend who asks one to get involved. As Tony puts it,

> . . .We are just all out there, but then Lois kind of ropes you in and says "hey, I think you should do this," and we say "ya, I guess we should!" And so we do. Quite frankly, that's really what so much of it comes down to . . . people need to be networked and there's somebody that has the energy to tie it together. In my opinion, that's what I've seen. -Tony, Sponsor #012, 2018

Lois emerges as a kind of 'sponsorship mobilizer,' someone who connects with others and gets people in her community to 'step up,' engage, share skills, and take kids to the movies or to the ski hill. She leads by example, taking sponsored children swimming or tobogganing, depending on the season, filling out registration forms for sponsored family members who struggle in English, cultivating new volunteers who, as retired teachers, might help tutor newcomers in English. Community networks allow members to ask others for help in the *practice* of sponsorship.

> I think the other thing, too, speaking about [name] and others who have been such terrific leaders in the community, along these lines. I mean there's been several ministers, including some priests in our own church, who have been very supportive, and. . . demanding [laughs] of people stepping out and being part of the whole world and not just so insulated. And others, I can only speak of some of our parishioners --others have been very insulated-- but some of them have been over the years. And also, to me, the mere Peace Centre in the university has brought a lot to the community. Not only as the Centre itself but as training people throughout this area to be much more aware of our responsibility to the world and to trying to create a peaceful [community]. . . - Alvin, Sponsor #FG21–23, 2018

Alvin connects world issues of 'peace' to more concrete issues of outstanding community leadership as well as pushback and the privilege of being insulated from human right atrocities and the human displacement they create.

If social justice-based 'community practice' constitutes one category of motivation, another is made up of the more urgent 'demands' for resettlement among the family members and ethnonational kin still at risk in precarious refugee situations. Former refugees living in Canada who have family members and/ or diaspora links through kinship networks not necessarily related to family ties (Macklin et al., 2020) still in need of protection often feel obliged to sponsor them. Below, we illustrate how the possibility of 'naming' particular people who meet the government's refugee definition can lead to successful family linked cases in which they become privately sponsored refugees. This phenomenon is sometimes called the 'echo effect', the idea that sponsorship of one group leads directly to subsequent sponsorships of additional family members or ethnonational kin. While naming and then sponsoring family linked cases is a core feature of the PSR program, there are other instances where individuals might be named for other reasons, including, for example, referrals by human rights organizations or as outstanding refugee students who come to Canada (McKee, Lavell, Manks, and Korn, 2019; Lehr and Dyck, 2020). These instances and programs are not discussed in this paper.

THE TRANSNATIONAL ECHO EFFECT: FAMILY-LINKED SPONSORSHIPS

Refugees sponsored to Canada come from across world regions where family members and ethnonational community members are left behind in first countries of asylum. The familial links and community connections they bring with them do not disappear once refugees arrive in Canada. In fact, Lehr and Dyck (2020) found that most people who were privately sponsored had family links to Canada or ties to ethnonational, or faith communities persecuted elsewhere who were already in Canada. In short, many privately sponsored refugees to Canada are not 'strangers' to those who are sponsoring them. In turn, as new former refugees are included in Canadian communities, familial and ethnonational networks extend farther afield, often across borders to include those who are still refugees in countries of asylum, thus making Canadian communities increasingly transnational.

In this section we deepen the evidence base for the idea of sponsorship as a *community practice* that operates at household, local, national, and global scales, but we also aim to illustrate *how* such links are forged. In short, the sponsorship of family and community members still in need of protection abroad connects scales of social justice and global outreach, linking households and sponsorship networks in one Canadian locale to others in cities, camps, and countries far away.

One seasoned sponsor elaborated on how he specialized in doing the paperwork for his sponsorship group and how family linked cases provide invisible supports for potentially sponsored family members:

> Well, right now a lot of what I'm doing is supporting the family members [family-linked sponsorship] in doing the paperwork; getting them the services they need when they first arrive. So for the few that have come our way through Vancouver, I haven't felt burnt out because it's not one of those old-fashioned sponsorships we used to do in the old days, where we had to spend a lot of time fundraising 'cause there wasn't a family there to do that. So, I can see myself continuing at this level. To actually get more engaged and bring new families over without a network, no, not unless I was in another community where I had enough people … - Kim, Sponsor #011, 2018

Kim's experience and story as a long-term sponsor are instructive. Having volunteered as a sponsor in more than one community before moving to Vancouver, Kim had a comparative perspective on sponsorship, adding that non-family-linked sponsorships (naming BVORs specifically) were not possible in Vancouver because housing was too expensive given the official levels of support provided. Unless there were family members willing to house sponsored refugees upon arrival, this option was not viable given the high rents.

On the same theme but in a different city, Lois noted that no one sponsorship group can support only BVORs (recall that this group is comprised of UNHCR referrals called Blended Visa Office-Referred refugees), as the needs of such families tend to be higher on average that PSRs, and BVORs normally have no family support to draw upon in Canada. Affirming this point, McNally's (2020, 143) study of BVOR sponsorships in small, often rural communities with limited or no settlement services, notes that "[m]any sponsors reported needing a break after completing one year of sponsorship," and that BVOR sponsors are unlikely to commit to a second sponsorship after just finishing the first. She notes that many sponsors prioritize their commitments to existing relationships, often providing support well beyond the initial housing, orientation, school and employment assistance to newcomers the 12-month period. Some have subsequently used the PSR program for "applying to sponsor relatives of an original sponsored [BVOR] family" (ibid., 142). BVORs are selected specifically based on UNHCR 'vulnerability' measures that select refugees based on their higher than average protection needs.

Sponsorship practices and commitment are forged at the nexus between sponsors, former refugees, and related community members. In the Canadian context, sponsorship organizations and researchers have identified the 'echo effect' (Chapman, 2014; Haugen, 2019; Hyndman and Giles, 2017), a reference to subsequent sponsorships of family or community members by those resettled as refugees to Canada but also by the settlement agencies that assist them, their friendship networks, and other people who wish to sponsor. In many cases, extended family members are left behind and sponsorship groups are asked to support additional family members, for example an adult sister and her daughter who remain in a refugee camp in Kenya, or parents who were left behind in Beirut or Baghdad.

The possibility of 'naming' gives sponsors some autonomy and say in the resettlement process. It allows networked requests for subsequent sponsorship of persons who meet the Canadian Government's criteria for refugee protection. The principle of naming allows sponsor groups to submit referrals for family members, received from former resettled refugees now living in Canada. Naming is also leveraged in cases where there is no family connection but where parties are linked by shared country of origin or shared ethnonational identities. Only privately sponsored refugees to Canada can be named for resettlement (Lehr and Dyck, 2020). Both BVORs and GARs are based on referrals by UNHCR or other authorized organizations and screened by Canadian visa officers posted abroad. While some mechanisms of naming are being adopted in other countries, Canadian PSRs are the only category of resettled refugees in the world where sponsors, communities, and former refugees themselves can *name* specific persons *for sponsorship*.[10]

Based on the findings above and building on existing research, we contend that subsequent sponsorships, whereby specific family members or ethnonational 'kin' are named, help to propel sponsorships forward. Naming sustains sponsorship groups even when members may be tired, ambivalent, or

[10]See Kumin (2015) (pp. 30–34) for a list of countries where particular naming elements have been incorporated into resettlement policies.

reluctant to sponsor again immediately, as indicated in the excerpt above from Kim.

Based on data from Macklin et al. (2018), Labman and Hyndman (2019) examined the echo effect among sponsors of Syrians who came to Canada after November 2015. They found that of 530 privately sponsored Syrian refugee sponsors surveyed, well over half of the sponsors were asked to support a *subsequent* family linked sponsorship after their year of support was complete. Specifically, 58.2% of sponsors (of PSRs and BVORs) who answered this question reported that they had been approached for subsequent sponsorships. For BVOR sponsors, the proportion of former refugees requesting a subsequent sponsorship for family reunification from their sponsors was higher at 66.3%. This is concrete evidence that the naming of family members by resettled refugees already in Canada places a degree of pressure on sponsors to consider additional sponsorship.

Likewise, in our sample, regardless of refugee resettlement pathway to Canada (i.e., PSRs, GARs, or BVORs), a significant number of former refugees *and* sponsors had named requests of people whom they wanted to sponsor. Those named included core and extended family members, friends, and people at serious risk of harm. Several participants described how this type of sponsorship develops as a partnership among former refugees, established sponsor groups, and related friendship networks. Former refugees are often the ones who take the lead on initiating sponsorship and soliciting sponsors from among family members or friends while the sponsorship group, once fully formed, undertakes the formal sponsorship, including the contractual financial obligations and background security checks. Both Nadia and Massy elucidate the division of labor in a number of sponsorships:

> "So, they [former refugees now Canadian residents] had enough money, so I asked sponsor Colleen [from a faith-based group, for] just formal sponsorship and so she brought them." - Nadia, Former Refugee #006, 2018
>
> "Through our community. No, the community at that time, you just pay the application fee. They sponsor, but I take responsible. So, yeah." - Massy, Former Refugee #001, 2018.

Former refugees in Canada who become sponsors often take the lead on finding housing, employment, and getting family members settled in the first instance, but the formal sponsorship group is there too should something happen.

The desire to name family or friends, however, did not always translate into sponsorships. For Faduma who wanted to sponsor her sister and family after they fled Yemen, the cost of supporting several sponsorships (her sister's children were adults with their own families so they would each be considered an individual household and sponsorship, as would her mother) would require a sizable sum that exceeded Faduma' financial means, and so she was exploring possible faith groups that might be able to help. Her first experience of sponsorship brought her two nephews to live with her from camps in East Africa, and she could afford to cover their housing, food and related costs because they could live with her. Her sister and extended family would need more space, and yet their situation was dire: they were caught in a remote, poorly serviced camp without access to UNHCR registration at the time of the interview.

From the perspective of sponsors and key informants, the echo effect plays a significant role in *producing* subsequent sponsorships. Lois, a sponsor of more than 34 years, estimates that 50% of the refugees she has helped to sponsor are family members of formerly sponsored refugees. While her SAH has sponsored many refugee families referred by UNHCR with high needs in the past, Lois notes that such families want and need extended family for their own support and peace of mind. Sponsors support this idea too, so that they can continue to sponsor additional refugee families.

Talia (Key Informant, #007, 2019) states, "*we also have had a number of requests from community groups that were involved in government-sponsored refugees who then did support, not actually echo effects of our [PSR] cases but we are doing the echo effect sponsorship with them, for them.*" Several other key informants including Jeremiah, and Nicolas, as well as sponsor Kim also spoke at length about how their agencies or sponsorship groups provide opportunities to reunite with family members of PSRs and GARs who remain at risk and without permanent status to remain where they are abroad.

The drive to bring family linked refugees to Canada through private sponsorship does not happen only at the individual or family scale. SAHs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that serve refugees also facilitate such sponsorships. A key informant sponsor, Eyob, notes that at the SAH organization where he works, "*most of PSR cases are family linked sponsorships.*" Similarly, key informant, Manuel, explains how the immigration and refugee-serving agency for which he works applied to become a SAH in order to sponsor and provide family reunification opportunities for the GARs the agency welcomes and assists.

This organizational strategy of becoming a SAH in order to reunite refugee families is an important example of complementarity. Reception and settlement services at agencies for GARs across Canada are funded by the federal government, and yet there are no affordable pathways for GARs to reunite with their family members who are still refugees elsewhere *except* through private sponsorship. Subsequent research by the team found that a number of refugee-serving agencies for GARs across Canada have become SAHs, while Faduma noted that others have informally 'coached' new sponsors on how to fill out the long application forms required.

Not all SAHs and sponsors in our sample supported the idea of family linked, or named, sponsorship. Jeremiah explained that the SAH he works for decided not to accept new PSR applications, even though requests continue to stream in:

> We have lots of Syrians, we have lots of Eritreans and Ethiopians, those are the three highest number of groups that are reaching out to us and wanting us to assist with the sponsorship of their relatives who are refugees. - Jeremiah, Key Informant #011, 2020.

All those sponsored for resettlement must still meet Canada's definition of a refugee, yet those who are family linked in the PSR category are sometimes perceived as being less vulnerable than other groups identified by UNHCR for sponsorship. This issue of ranking people who meet the refugee definition is a difficult one, especially in light of the objectives of Canada's *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* which include "to support the self-sufficiency and social and economic well-being of refugees by facilitating reunification with their family members in Canada" (IRPA, Article 3 (2) (f); cited in Lehr and Dyck, 2020, 50). Both GARs and BVORs are selected based on vulnerability criteria outlined by UNHCR. Some Canadian SAHs focus on sponsoring BVORs specifically, to address the protection needs of those who meet these criteria (Bergen, 2018). While former refugees, sponsors, and key informants cultivate a community of practice motivated by their shared commitment to sponsor and support refugees linked to those already in Canada, there is disagreement about whether protection spaces allocated for privately sponsored refugees should be offered to people known to former refugees in Canada or to those who meet more of the vulnerability criteria of refugees as espoused by UNHCR.

Certainly, the challenges of family separation among resettled refugees are a major vulnerability and should be treated as such. Research on the separation of Syrian refugees and their newly resettled family members in Canada signals evidence that it has a negative impact (Morris et al., 2020: 8):

> Our minds are continuously thinking about my daughters back home and we are continuously worried about them... I still suffer from depression. As long as my children are away from [us] I will never find comfort. had to leave because of our situation and we enjoyed our first year here and we were happy but then reality kicks in and you realize that you have been dispersed as a family.

A number of the resettled Syrians in Canada expressed exasperation about adult children and siblings abroad still being at risk, contributing to uncertainty about whether the Syrians in Canada would stay if separation could not be resolved:

> We do not completely feel happy or at ease knowing some of our family members are not safe and are out of reach. As a result, we do not feel like we are secure nor stable here in Canada. If they are here with us, we could have opened up a business or started something but at the moment we cannot think straight. We are not sure that we will remain here. I will pursue any opportunity that will allow me to reconnect with my sisters (ibid.: 10).

In a final example from Morris et al. (2020: 8), one Syrian man highlights the tension between separation from family and feeling 'at peace', lamenting that his adult son is not in Canada:

> The Canadian government was beyond generous but the problem is how it has separated our family... If I lose my son, what would I have gained from coming to Canada? I did not come here to eat and sleep, I came here to settle down and have a piece [sic] of mind and live in peace with my children. But we are currently living in this nightmare because our son is not with us.

Naming will remain a debated feature of Canada's sponsorship program, and refugee resettlement will continue to generate demand for it resulting in the 'echo effect'. One observation that has not been made, however, is that naming is not simply about linking families together across space, but also about community-building *in situ,* since sponsors and formerly resettled refugees are motivated and involved in undertaking (some) subsequent sponsorships to improve the lives of those separated.

Susan Fratzke (2017) contends that close connections between sponsors and refugees builds trust, community cohesion, and a sense of ownership around refugee protection. Lehr and Dyck's (2020, 48) analysis of family linked cases within the PSRP in Canada shows how private sponsorship meets UNHCR's goals set out in its *Agenda for Protection* by partnering with civil society for refugee protection, and by providing complementary forms of protection for those who fall outside the 1951 Convention definition of refugee. They note that the vast majority of PSRs are named, making family linked refugee resettlement possible. A 1995 Government of Canada report stated that 90% of PSRs were named, and suggested that naming should continue as a sponsorship practice to ensure continued cooperation of NGOs who wanted named sponsorships and to recognize that not all named sponsorships were family linked: "From a financial point of view, it has historically been advantageous for Canada to give sponsors the power to select refugees" (Lehr and Dyck, 2020, 44). As the community practice of sponsoring refugees adds new members to faith groups, social justice organizations, or 'groups of five' in communities across Canada, networks expand and so too does awareness of those refugees who remain in protracted refugee situations with few options (Milner and Loescher, 2011).

Family linked sponsorship demonstrates that some sponsors feel a compelling obligation to support another sponsorship for other refugees who remain at risk. Others are simply asked to help out. Many former refugees now living in Canada *become* sponsors, precisely to ensure that family members are brought to safety.

The sustainability of sponsorship is also built on community practice that is embedded in the structures, committees, and outreach commitments of faith-based institutions and community organizations. For example, one large congregation in a very large Canadian city has a 'refugee committee' that has been sponsoring people for more than 35 years. According to Colleen, all aspects of the sponsorship are, in theory, shared among committee members, though historically a few core people have provided the major supports, from picking up and welcoming those sponsored at the airport to organizing housing, furnishings, and initial assistance in obtaining health cards, enrolling children in school, and getting transit passes. She was yet another 'sponsorship mobilizer', chairing this committee and cajoling sponsors and new volunteers for more than 25 years.

Private sponsorship in the Canadian context also involves linking small community groups with larger, well-funded organizations that have greater capacity across different scales. As Mark, a key informant with a faith-based national SAH, recounted, his organization has cooperated with an LGBTQI-based community group to sponsor queer refugees in a small Canadian city of less than 50,000 people. While the national faith-based group holds the sponsorship agreement with the federal government, the LGBTQI group on the ground at the municipal scale works to create the 'constituent group' of the SAH, made up of five formal sponsors, and a larger web of services and supports specific to these refugee newcomers. The SAH may be faith-based but the collaboration with the LGBTQI group is entirely secular and driven by both parties' motivation to show solidarity and support refugees persecuted for reasons related to gender identity and sexual orientation.

As another key informant notes,

> We see people coming together, who are not connected to church but they work together and they wanted to do something together. That's becoming more and more [a] thing. From the perspective that they are people, at least. . .. official for the organization. . .. how do you say, as a workplace, as a place that brings people together. As a community of individuals because we are as colleagues, you're always working together for many years. These people are always your brothers and sisters and you meet them every day for many hours. You probably spend most of your active hours with them, right? [Laughs.] - Selam, Key Informant #008, 2019

Many of Canada's largest sponsorship agreement holder organizations are faith-based (and nominally Christian), and yet their myriad partnerships with ethno-specific and community-based organizations and communities are wide-ranging. As with many other features of the sponsorship process, this diversity of sponsors demands more research, particularly as countries like Canada expand the protection spaces available for refugees through sponsorship.

CONCLUSION: EXPANDING 'COMMUNITIES OF CONCERN'

Private—or community—sponsorship has been a workable complementary pathway that has afforded additional protection space for refugees over the past 40 years in Canada. It also represents an immense community mobilization and sustained, voluntary effort of civil society that may be without precedent. Sponsorship is a community practice that takes place at an intensely local level, and yet is maintained in part through transnational linkages among displaced persons across borders. In a quotidian and local way, sponsorship addresses refugee protection needs and human displacement generated in other parts of the world.

While sponsorship is a community practice performed at a local scale, it also represents an international 'durable solution' authorized by the Canadian state, and a complementary pathway for permanent refugee protection. What sustains this demanding, if rewarding, voluntary work? Why would a private citizen or permanent resident sign on to support - both financially and socially for a year - a displaced person or family deemed in need of protection on the other side of the world? Two salient answers emerged from the data: 1) a commitment on the part of sponsors to 'do something', to enact a global sense of justice, whether the person needing to be resettled is known to them or not; and 2) a commitment on the part of former refugees now living in Canada *and* their sponsors to pay forward this protection space to help family members, or ethnonational friends and activists still living as refugees in precarious conditions. Sponsorship, we were told, is 'the right thing to do.'

Without repeat volunteers who enact this community practice year after year, the private refugee sponsorship program would be unsustainable and collapse. Reflecting on the sponsorships she participated in, Kate says

> Well, it was through the church, but I think it was also. . . it was just the right thing to do. And you can do it! It's something that we could actually do. And much less complicated then now [laughs]. Not so many rules and how things are done. But I come from a very optimistic family. . . who feel that if there's something that's the right thing to do, and you can do it . . . - Kate, Sponsor #038, 2019

The relationships forged by sponsorship extend social networks *in situ* and across borders. Such links propel and compel sponsors to commit to subsequent sponsorships, a phenomenon known colloquially as the 'echo effect.'

We have demonstrated that all three pathways of refugee resettlement to Canada—PSRs, BVORs, and GARs—generate more demand for subsequent refugee sponsorship through 'community practice'. Private sponsorships represent the only pathway that allows sponsors to name family members who are at risk, or ethnonational 'kin,' to join them in Canada. This has proven to be an important channel for refugee protection, and one recently expanded four-fold by the Canadian Government. As Macklin et al., 2018 observed in a study of sponsors supporting Syrians who came to Canada in and after 2015, more than half were asked by those they sponsored to assist in a subsequent sponsorship.

Canada remains one of just a few countries in the world that has a private, or community, sponsorship program, and may be the only one in which refugees living abroad and meeting the refugee definition, can be named for private sponsorship. While named private sponsorship may not be the optimal way forward for refugee family members to be reunited with family or 'ethnonational kin' in Canada, it has proven to be a workable option in the absence of other pathways. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the demand for named refugees sustains new sponsorships, even when long-term sponsors say they are weary. While the protection needs of the world's 26 million refugees will not be met by private sponsorship alone, it allows people who want to support those who have chosen to build new homes in Canada to,

in the words of our research participants, 'do something' concrete and build communities in Canada.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this article are not public. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to and https://jhyndman.info.yorku.ca/exploring-private-refugee-sponsorship/.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Office of Research Ethics (York University). The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written consent to record and use interviews was obtained from all research participants. Their names and other identifying information remain strictly confidential.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors confirm being the sole contributors to this work and have approved it for publication.

FUNDING

Funding for this research was provided by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada's Insight Program (#435-2017-1308).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank all sponsors, former refugees and key informants who kindly gave us their time and shared their experiences so openly. We would also like to thank Anna-Lisa Brewer and William Payne for their valuable research assistance.

REFERENCES

Alboim, N. (2016). "Lessons Learned from the Indochinese and Syrian Refugee Movements," in *Policy Options Politiques: The Public Forum for the Public Good*. Available at: https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/may-2016/lessons-learned-from-the-indochinese-and-syrian-refugee-movements/

Bergen, R. (2018). MCC Resettles One-Third of Canada's BVOR Refugees. *Mennonite Central Committee Website*. Available at: https://mcccanada.ca/stories/mcc-resettles-one-third-canadas-bvor-refugees (Accessed August 10, 2020).

Bond, J., and Kwadrans, A. (2019). Resettling Refugees through Community Sponsorship: A Revolutionary Operational Approach Built on Traditional Legal Infrastructure. *Refuge: Canada's J. Refugees* 35 (2), 86–108. doi:10.7202/1064822ar

Cameron, G. (2020). "Reluctant Partnership," in *Strangers To Neighbours: Refugee Sponsorship In Context*. Editors S. Labman and G. Cameron (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 19–41. doi:10.2307/j.ctv176ktqs.6

Chapman, A. (2014). Private Sponsorship and Public Policy: Political Barriers to Church Connected Refugee Resettlement in Canada. Citizens for Public Justice. Available at https://www.cpj.ca/private-sponsorship-and-public-policy.

Cheatham, A. (2020). What Is Canada's Immigration Policy? Council on Foreign Relations. Available at: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/what-canadas-immigration-policy (Accessed July 30, 2020).

Crawley, H., and Duvell, F. (2017). *Unravelling Europe's 'Migration Crisis', in Journeys over Land and Sea*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Darling, J. (2017). Forced Migration and the City. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* 41 (2), 178–198. doi:10.1177/0309132516629004

Domosh, M., and Seager, J. (2001). *Putting Women in Place: Feminist Geographers Make Sense of the World*. New York: Guilford Press.

Fratzke, S. (2017). "Engaging Communities in Refugee Protection," in *The Potential of Private Sponsorship in Europe. MPI Europe Policy Brief 9*. Available online at: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/engaging-communities-refugee-protection-potential-private-sponsorship-europe (Accessed August 03, 2020).

Garnier, A., Jubilut, L. L., and Sandvik, K. B. (2018). *Refugee Resettlement: Power, Politics, and Humanitarian Governance*. London: Berghahn Books.

Gill, N. (2018). The Suppression of Welcome. *Fennia* 196 (1), 88–98. doi:10.11143/fennia.70040

Government of Canada (2020a). *By the numbers: 40 years of Canada's private sponsorship of refugees program, July 21*. Available at: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2019/04/by-the-numbers–40-years-of-canadas-private-sponsorship-of-refugees-program.html (Accessed August 23, 2020).

Government of Canada (2020b). *Notice—Supplementary Information for the 2021-2023 Immigration Levels Plan, October 30*. Available online at: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/supplementary-immigration-levels-2021-2023.html

Haugen, S. (2019). "We Feel like We're Home": The Resettlement and Integration of Syrian Refugees in Smaller and Rural Canadian Communities. *Refuge: Canada's J. Refugees* 35 (2), 53–63. doi:10.7202/1064819ar

Hiebert, D. (2016). *What's So Special about Canada? Understanding the Resilience of Immigration and Multiculturalism*. London: Migration Policy Institute, 1–21. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/whats-so-special-about-canada-understanding-resilience-immigration-and-multiculturalism.

Hyndman, J., and Giles, W. (2017). *Refugees in Extended Exile: Living on the Edge*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Krause, M. (2020). Understanding the Evolving Nature of Refugee Sponsors in Canada. Mitacs Project Report. Available at https://www.mitacs.ca/en/projects/understanding-evolving-nature-refugee-sponsors-canada.

Kumin, J. (2015). *Welcoming Engagement: How Private Sponsorship Can Strengthen Refugee Resettlement in the European Union*. Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/Asylum-PrivateSponsorship-Kumin-FINAL.pdf

Labman, S., and Cameron, G. (2020). *Strangers To Neighbours: Refugee Sponsorship In Context*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Labman, S., and Hyndman, J. (2019). *BVOR Briefing Note, Working Paper, Centre for Refugee Studies, 1–4*. Available at: https://crs.info.yorku.ca/files/2019/04/BVOR-Briefing-2019-May1.pdf?x44358

Lehr, S., and Dyck, B. (2020). "'Naming' Refugees in the Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program: Diverse Intentions and Consequences" in *Strangers To Neighbours: Refugee Sponsorship In Context*. Editors S. Labman and G. Cameron (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press), 19–41.

Lenard, P. T. (2019). How Do Sponsors Think about "month 13"? *Refuge: Canada's J. Refugees* 35 (2), 64–73. doi:10.7202/1064820arhttps://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/40591

Macklin, A., Barber, K., Goldring, L., Hyndman, J., Korteweg, A., Labman, S., et al. (2018). A Preliminary Investigation into Private Refugee Sponsors. *Can. Ethnic Stud.* 50 (2), 35–57. doi:10.1353/ces.2018.0014

Macklin, A., Barber, K., Goldring, L., Hyndman, J., Korteweg, A., Zyfi, J., et al. (2020). "Kindred Spirits?," in *Private Sponsorship In Canada (Montreal/*

Kingston). Editors S. Labman and G. Cameron (London: McGill-Queens Press), 177–197. doi:10.2307/j.ctv176ktqs.14

Marston, S. A. (2000). The Social Construction of Scale. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* 24 (2), 219–242. doi:10.1191/030913200674086272

McKee, C., Lavell, L.-A., Manks, M., and Korn, A. (2019). Fostering Better Integration through Youth-Led Refugee Sponsorship. *Refuge: Canada's J. Refugees* 35 (2), 74–85. doi:10.7202/1064821ar

Milner, J., and Loescher, G. (2011). Responding to protracted refugee situations: Lessons from a decade of discussion, Forced Migration Policy Briefing 6. Available at GIDA-global.org/care (Accessed April 30, 2021).

Molloy, M. J., Duschinsky, P., Jensen, K. F., and Shalka, R. J. (2017). *Running on Empty: Canada and the Indochinese Refugees, 1975–1980*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP.

Morris, S., Lenard, P. T., and Haugen, S. (2020). Refugee Sponsorship and Family Reunification. *J. Refugee Stud.* 12, 33. doi:10.1093/jrs/feaa062

Radford, J., and Connor, P. (2019). Canada Vow Leads the World in Refugee Resettlement, Surpassing the US. Pew Research Center, June 19. Available online at: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/06/19/canada-now-leads-the-world-in-refugee-resettlement-surpassing-the-u-s/

Reynolds, J., and Clark-Kazak, C. (2019). Introduction: Special Issue on Private Sponsorship in Canada. *Refuge* 35 (2), 3–8. doi:10.25071/1920-7336.40706 https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/40706

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (2020). Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2019. Available online at: https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/5ee200e37/unhcr-global-trends-2019.html (Accessed September 5, 2020).

Van Selm, J. (2004a). The Strategic Use of Resettlement: Changing the Face of Protection? *Refuge* 22 (1), 39–48. doi:10.25071/1920-7336.21316 https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/21316/19987

Van Selm, J. (2004b). Great Expectations: A Review Of the Strategic Use Of Resettlement. Policy Development and Evaluation Service. Geneva: UNHCR.PDES/2013/13

Van Selm, J. (2020). Complementary Pathways to Protection: Promoting the Integration and Inclusion of Refugees in Europe? *Annals Am. Acad. Polit. Soc. Sci.* 690 (1), 136–152. doi:10.1177/0002716220935868

Zilio, M. (2019). Number of Forcibly Displaced People Tops 70 Million in 2018: UNHCR Report in Globe and Mail. June 19. Available online at: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-number-of-forcibly-displaced-people-tops-70-million-in-2018-unhcr/.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Copyright © 2021 Hyndman, Reynolds, Yousuf, Purkey, Demoz and Sherrell. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.