

2021-08-26

Autism in the Context of Humanitarian Emergency: The Lived Experiences of Syrian Refugee Parents of Children on the Autism Spectrum

Bernier, Abdullah Salahuddin

Bernier, A. S. (2021). Autism in the Context of Humanitarian Emergency: The Lived Experiences of Syrian Refugee Parents of Children on the Autism Spectrum (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>.

<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/113795>

Downloaded from PRISM Repository, University of Calgary

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Autism in the Context of Humanitarian Emergency: The Lived Experiences of Syrian Refugee
Parents of Children on the Autism Spectrum

by

Abdullah Salahuddin Bernier

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIRMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

AUGUST, 2021

© Abdullah Salahuddin Bernier 2021

Abstract

Autism is a heterogeneous neurodevelopmental condition that varies in severity, presentation, and behavioural expression. Given this heterogeneity and the importance of early intervention, appropriate support, and service is crucial to promote positive outcomes. Research suggests differences in the diagnostic understanding, support acquisition, and service use among diverse, minority, and/or migrant populations. There is a gap in research investigating support and service use among Syrian refugee parents of autistic children in Canada. This study explored the support and service experiences of resettled Syrian refugee parents of autistic children in terms of their pre- and post-migration. These lived experiences were investigated with participants ($n = 3$) through semi-structured interviews using interpretive phenomenological analysis. This study identified the supports and services parents received, their experiences with those services, their overall experiences with resettlement having an autistic child(ren), the implications of culture in support/service provision, and their perceived areas of service need during and after their resettlement in Alberta, Canada. Parents all had unique experiences that were delineated through clustered emergent themes and subsequently organized into a superordinate conceptual structure. The results of the study are discussed in the context of theory and relevant literature to elucidate and make findings applicable. Practical implications and future directions are discussed.

Acknowledgements

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Bismillah ar-rahman ar-raheem.

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. I am grateful to and thank God for giving me the strength, knowledge, and ability to undergo and complete this project.

I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to my committee members (Dr. Adam McCrimmon, Dr. Elisa Lacerda-Vandenborn, Dr. Meadow Schroeder). Thank you for making this process insightful and enriching through the expertise and the wisdom you have imparted.

Adam, your contribution to my learning and growth as a student has been nothing short of exceptional. I am deeply appreciative of your mentorship, guidance, and supervision.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the crucial roles that several individuals had in the development and completion of this research project. I would like to thank my research team, Sumaya Nsair and Henna Hans, for your commitment to this project. Fatima, Mahdi, and Bindu, thank you for your dedicated recruitment efforts. Hala, thank you for your expertise in being the language liaison. Without each of you, this project would not have been possible.

I thank all my family and friends for their ongoing encouragement. I am thankful for the role that my mom and dad have played in supporting me in all my lifegoals as well as my sisters who have afforded me with their encouragement to boost my morale.

Importantly, to my wonderful wife and daughter for your enduring patience and support throughout this entire process. You both inspire me. You both were and continue to be beacons.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
The Syrian Crisis, Resettlement, and Autism	1
Purpose of the Study & Research Question	2
Chapter 2: Literature Review	4
Syria	4
The Syrian Crisis	5
<i>Impact of War and Displacement</i>	6
<i>Mental Health Services in Syria</i>	10
<i>Contextualizing the Syrian Refugee Experience</i>	12
Syrian Refugees and Resettlement in Canada	13
<i>Refugee Acculturation and Adaptation</i>	14
<i>Refugee Lived Experiences with Resettlement in Canada</i>	17
<i>Refugee Lived Experiences with Resettlement in Alberta</i>	19
<i>Impacts of Resettlement on Syrian Refugees</i>	20
Autism	21
Raising a Child on the Autism Spectrum	23
Raising an Autistic Child from the Perspective of Arab Populations	26
Syrian Refugee Children and Autism	28
Syrian Refugee Parents and Autism	29

Autism in Syria	30
Screening and Diagnosis of Autism in the Arab World	30
<i>Diagnostic Barriers in Arab Countries</i>	32
<i>Prevalence Rates in the Arab World</i>	33
<i>Diagnostic and Screening Tools in Arab Countries</i>	33
Special Considerations for Syrian Refugee Families of Autistic Children	34
<i>Considering COVID-19 and Service Provision</i>	34
<i>Considering Cultural Competency and Social Justice</i>	35
Chapter Summary	36
Purpose of the Study & Research Question	38
Chapter 3: Methodology	40
Research Design	41
<i>Comparing Qualitative and Quantitative Designs</i>	41
<i>Qualitative Research</i>	43
Theoretical and Philosophical Considerations	45
<i>Ontology</i>	45
<i>Epistemology</i>	48
<i>Axiology</i>	51
<i>Theoretical Considerations</i>	54
Evaluating Qualitative Research	56
<i>Sensitivity to Context</i>	56
<i>Commitment and Rigour</i>	57
<i>Transparency and Coherence</i>	58

Reflexive Disclosure. -----	59
<i>Impact and Importance</i> -----	60
Literature-Informed Techniques for Quality Control -----	61
Alternative Analytical Methods -----	62
Chosen Research Design -----	63
<i>Phenomenology</i> -----	63
Husserl. -----	64
Heidegger. -----	65
<i>Hermeneutics</i> -----	65
Gadamer. -----	66
<i>Idiography</i> -----	67
<i>Characteristics of IPA</i> -----	68
Conducting IPA Research -----	68
<i>Collecting Data</i> -----	68
<i>Analysis</i> -----	69
Step 1: Reading and Rereading. -----	70
Step 2: Initial Noting. -----	70
Step 3: Developing Emerging Themes. -----	71
Step 4: Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes. -----	72
Step 5: Moving to the Next Case. -----	73
<i>Bracketing and Bridling.</i> -----	73
Step 6: Looking for Patterns Across Cases. -----	76
<i>Writing</i> -----	76

Strengths and Limitations of IPA	77
<i>Strengths</i>	77
<i>Limitations</i>	78
Research Procedure	79
<i>Sample Size, Sampling, and Recruitment</i>	79
<i>Data Management</i>	81
Member-Checking.	83
<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	85
Issues in Language and Interpretation	87
<i>Using Interpreters in Qualitative Research</i>	87
<i>Interpreters are not Mechanistic</i>	88
<i>Using Interpreters in IPA</i>	89
<i>Language and Power</i>	91
<i>The Interpretation Process</i>	93
Chapter Summary	94
Chapter 4: Results	96
Analytic Considerations	97
<i>Essential Qualities of IPA Data</i>	98
<i>Emergent Themes</i>	99
<i>Clustering Emergent Themes into Superordinate Status</i>	100
<i>Higher Order Superordinate Conceptual Themes</i>	101
Participant Summaries	101
Analyses	101

<i>Participant 1: Jenny</i>	101
Clustered Emergent Themes.	102
<i>Experiencing Negativity.</i>	103
<i>Everyday Barriers to Everyday Living.</i>	105
<i>Positives that Outweigh the Negatives.</i>	106
<i>Loss and Unfamiliarity.</i>	108
<i>The Importance of the Family Self.</i>	109
<i>Gratitude.</i>	111
<i>Priorities.</i>	112
<i>'I have Humanity to Share with'.</i>	113
<i>Welcomed and Unwelcomed.</i>	114
<i>'God Listened to Us'.</i>	115
<i>Defining Support and Service.</i>	116
Summary.	118
<i>Participant 2: Hannah</i>	118
Clustered Emergent Themes.	120
<i>Barriers and an Adapting Lifestyle.</i>	120
<i>Acclimatizing as a Child.</i>	122
<i>Services at Home Versus Here.</i>	123
<i>Service Satisfaction.</i>	126
<i>Navigating the System.</i>	127
<i>Language as a Persisting Challenge.</i>	128
<i>Family Anchors of Support.</i>	129

<i>Being Autistic While in Crisis.</i>	130
<i>Being Autistic in Syria.</i>	131
<i>Imperceptible Culture.</i>	133
<i>The Deprived Social Being.</i>	133
Summary.	134
Participant 3: Sam	134
Clustered Emergent Themes.	136
<i>Factors that Ease or Strain Resettlement.</i>	137
<i>Being Self-sufficient.</i>	140
<i>Support and Service Satisfaction.</i>	141
<i>Recognizing Service Gaps.</i>	144
<i>Slipping Through the Cracks.</i>	145
<i>Comparing and Contrasting.</i>	147
<i>Stigmatizing Autism.</i>	148
<i>A Guardian Advocate.</i>	151
<i>Happy.</i>	154
<i>War-related Adversities.</i>	155
<i>The Cultural Identity.</i>	156
Summary.	157
Higher-Order Superordinate Conceptual Themes	158
Crises Affecting Autism.	158
Cultural Importance and Relevance.	161
Impactful Perceptions.	164

Support and Service Gaps. -----	166
Positive Attributions. -----	169
Quotidian Adjustment Difficulties. -----	175
Vital Relational Networks. -----	178
Summary -----	180
Chapter 5: Discussion -----	182
Summary of the Study Results -----	183
Participant Member-Checking -----	184
Considering Minority and Vulnerable Populations in Research -----	185
Theoretical Frameworks in Refugee Resettlement -----	187
<i>Reveal Culture</i> -----	188
<i>Acknowledge Pre-migration Experiences</i> -----	189
<i>Identify Post-Migration Systemic Barriers</i> -----	192
<i>Support Family and Community Strengths</i> -----	193
<i>Establish Connections Between Environments</i> -----	194
<i>Determine Child Outcomes Together with Families</i> -----	196
Relevance to the Literature -----	197
<i>Crises Affecting Autism</i> -----	198
<i>Cultural Importance and Relevance</i> -----	201
Culture and an Understanding of Autism. -----	203
<i>Impactful Perceptions</i> -----	205
<i>Support and Service Gaps</i> -----	208
<i>Positive Attributions</i> -----	211

<i>Quotidian Resettlement Difficulties</i>	212
<i>Vital Relational Networks</i>	216
Addressing the Research Question	218
Practical Implications	222
<i>Support and Service Implications</i>	222
Addressing the Need for Support Groups.	222
Addressing the Need for Helpful Information.	223
Addressing the Need for Crisis Sensitive Practice.	224
<i>Culturally Responsive Practice</i>	225
Contributing New Knowledge	227
Considering Generalizability in Qualitative Research	229
Limitations	230
<i>Considerations in Cross-Language Studies</i>	230
<i>Considerations in Culture and Theory</i>	232
<i>Parent Diversity</i>	232
<i>Sample Bias</i>	233
<i>Researcher Bias</i>	235
<i>COVID-19</i>	236
Future Directions	236
<i>Sampling Autistic Refugees</i>	237
<i>Autism and Refugee Adults</i>	237
<i>Diverse Populations</i>	238
<i>Understanding Autism</i>	238

Lessons Learned -	239
Conclusion	241
References	243
Appendix A: Select Arabic Quotes	284
Appendix B: Interview Schedule	289
Appendix C: Member-Checking Table	292

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis investigated the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents of children on the autism spectrum through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to understand the pre- and post-migration experiences of support and service access among participants from Syria that resettled in Alberta. The overall purpose was to understand the first-hand experiences of a culturally and linguistically diverse resettled minority group.

The Syrian Crisis, Resettlement, and Autism

The Syrian crisis has spanned a decade and impacted millions of fleeing or internally displaced people who have witnessed loss and violent disruption (Hassan et al., 2016; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2021). As autistic Syrian refugee children and their families resettle in Canada, it is important to understand the impact of their experiences. Indeed, considering the pre- and post-migration factors of a resettled population is crucial to practice that is responsive and sensitive to their needs (Brosinsky et al., 2018).

The Syrian crisis has led to a steep decline in wellbeing, requiring appropriate psychological interventions in both Syria as well as host countries for Syrian refugees (Cheung et al., 2020). Importantly, culturally responsive practice toward Syrian refugees is underdeveloped (Bhui, 2015; Perkins, 2018), but important for best-practice strategy development (Rice, 2017). Developing these strategies is crucial because, since the Syrian crisis, there are reports of increased mental health concerns (UNHCR, 2015) and risk for neurodevelopmental disabilities (Abdullahi et al., 2017). Indeed, it is crucial to understand the interaction between various pre- and post-migration experiences on resettlement for Syrian refugee parents of autistic children to inform policy makers, service providers, and professionals of ways to optimize support and service acquisition and use among refugee families with autistic children.

Autism is a neurodevelopmental condition with variable diagnostic presentation regarding social-communication and restrictive, repetitive behaviour and/or interests as outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)*; American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). Autism has numerous implications for both the autistic person as well as their family that are important to consider. More specifically, investigating autism in minority groups is informative for enhancing diversity research as there is variability in how autism and support/service is experienced across culture (e.g., Alkhateeb et al., 2019; Mandell et al., 2009).

Purpose of the Study & Research Question

The purpose of this study was to understand how Syrian refugees experienced resettlement as well as accessed support and services in Syria, throughout their displacement, and upon their resettlement in Alberta, Canada, in the context of humanitarian crisis. This study stands to benefit migrant populations through optimizing intercultural support and service provision. Understanding the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugee parents and their access to support and services in Alberta and throughout their pre-migration (Syria and areas of displacement) can inform psychoeducational resource dissemination, professional practice, bolster practitioners' cultural awareness, and inform service providers of ways to optimize support delivery. This study aims to fill gaps in research regarding vulnerable populations and their child development outcomes through the voices of parents who are the gatekeepers of how supports and services are used. The following research question guided this project: How has the lived experience of resettling in Alberta and accessing supports/services been for Syrian refugee families with an autistic child?

This thesis consists of five chapters. This first chapter introduced the main topic of study, outlined the purpose of the study, and stated the research question. Chapter two will provide a comprehensive review of the relevant literature in the topic areas of the Syrian crisis, Syrian refugees, resettlement, Arab research, and autism. Chapter three will describe qualitative research design, the suitability of the current method of inquiry, and the research procedure. Chapter four will outline the participants' background information and results of the interviews. Lastly, Chapter five will conclude with an overall discussion, which will be followed by this study's implications, limitations, future directions, lessons learned, and concluding remarks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study sought to understand the experience of resettlement in Alberta and the support and service access among Syrian refugee parents of children on the autism spectrum. Specifically, the project examined participant lived experience with supports and services during their resettlement in Alberta, and aspects associated with their resettlement experience. This topic of study is important for understanding support and service access among Syrian families in the context of humanitarian emergency to elucidate ways to optimize service provision. This chapter will provide a description of the geographic, political, and cultural factors contributing to the Syrian crisis, which led to a mass exodus of refugees seeking asylum in countries around the world. The hardships of refugee resettlement will be discussed, including the additional challenges experienced by refugee families with children with developmental conditions. The existing literature base will situate this chapter within the context of diversity research and humanitarianism. Next, autism will be introduced and placed into the context of Syrian refugee families resettling in Alberta. There is a dearth of literature pertaining to autism amongst Syrian refugees as well as Syrian parental experience regarding their children. Therefore, autism research within the Arab world, the state of social services in Syria, the importance of diversity research, and the mental state of displaced Syrians will be reviewed to emphasise parental experience in addressing the needs of both autistic children and the mental health of parents. This literature base will illustrate the importance of exploring the lived experiences of resettled Syrian refugee parents of autistic children within the sociocultural context of Canada.

Syria

Syria is a Middle Eastern country that shares borders with several nations, including Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey (Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], 2021). Syria gained

independence from the French mandate in 1945 and has undergone political turmoil since (Al Hessian et al., 2016). Syria is characterized by its desert climate and several environmental concerns, including deforestation and drought (CIA, 2021). Syria's official language is Arabic and is home to just under 20 million people, 87% of which are Muslim (CIA, 2021). The governmental structure is authoritarian (CIA, 2021), which contributed to the spark of the crisis under Al-Assad's regime (Karim & Islam, 2016). The capital of Syria is Damascus; other major cities include Aleppo and Homs (CIA, 2021).

The Syrian Crisis

Amid democratic transitions across nations worldwide, many Arab countries stabilized long-lasting authoritarian regimes despite their unpopularity amongst citizens (Gause, 2011). Arab citizens who exercised a desire for change risked suppression by armed forces (Gause, 2011) as seen throughout the Arab Spring uprising, of which Syria was part (Khashanah, 2014). This uprising was sparked by demonstrations beginning in Tunisia, which activated protest of the sociopolitical infrastructure among other Arab nations (Blakemore, 2019). Ultimately, the Arab Spring led to the eruption of civil wars in various countries, including Syria (Blakemore, 2019).

Although the Syrian crisis emerged due to an amalgamation of various factors, agents, and incidents, the onset of the crisis can be traced to a single incident where individuals drew graffiti in opposition to the Al-Assad regime, which was met with a violent retaliation (Khashanah, 2014; Musarurwa & Kaye, 2017). This retaliation urged citizens to protest cruelty, which further escalated into armed force from the Syrian government and the establishment of rebel groups to combat them (Musarurwa & Kaye, 2017). However, beyond the events of that specific incident, several factors contributed to the inception and continuation of the Syrian crisis. These factors include citizen opposition to the systemic inequality of the Al-Assad regime,

tensions over finite natural resources, climate change, (Musarurwa & Kaye, 2017), religious tensions, and proxy involvement from other nations that were interested in the energy rich and strategic geographical location of Syria (Karim & Islam, 2016). In addition, the lack of ideological and political agreement among different groups contributed to the unfolding of the Syrian crisis (Khashanah, 2014). Indeed, the crisis impacted many facets of Syrian life; for example, Syria boasted a well-established educational system pre-crisis where Syrian youth were among the most-educated relative to nations in the same region (Al Hessian et al., 2016). War-related adversities and mass displacement contributed to the derailment of the educational system in Syria and a lack of formal education to many Syrian youth (Al Hessian et al., 2016).

Despite the efforts of United Nations' (UN) peace plan, the Syrian crisis progressed into a civil war with the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) merging into Syria (Karim & Islam, 2016). The involvement of these internal groups coupled with the direct involvement of various countries further aggravated the Syrian crisis, which has resulted in numerous casualties (Karim & Islam, 2016). To date, the Syrian crisis is in its tenth year and over 5.6 million Syrian refugees have fled to various countries (UNHCR, 2021).

Despite extensive coverage via various media outlets regarding the Syrian crisis, the impact of the crisis on refugees is an understudied topic (Sirin & Aber, 2018). The lack of information regarding the impacts of the crisis on refugees is a significant barrier to literature aimed at promoting diversity since, as indicated in statistics published by UNHCR (2019), "At the end of 2018, Syrians still made up the largest forcibly displaced population". This paucity of knowledge extends to research investigating challenges experienced by Syrian refugee parents of children with developmental conditions.

Impact of War and Displacement

The Syrian crisis has produced trauma in the form of violence, death, execution, torture, and displacement, which negatively impacts the mental health of Syrians (Hassan et al., 2016). During the war, violence ensued in the form of physical and psychological torture (Khashanah, 2014). Experiencing violence or torture can have long-lasting physical and mental health impacts (Mishori et al., 2017). Existing mental health conditions can also be exacerbated by traumatic experiences (Mishori et al., 2017). Certainly, refugees are at higher risk for physical, dental, and mental health conditions due to situations of war, displacement, and migration (Mishori et al., 2017). Indeed, the Syrian crisis has had negative impacts on cognitive, behavioural, and social-emotional functioning due to a multitude of factors including challenges with displacement and adapting to a new reality (Hassan et al., 2016). For example, the Syrian crisis may exacerbate existing mental health concerns and trigger new concerns (Hassan et al., 2016). In addition, some areas of displacement pose challenges to Syrian refugees attempting to satisfy their basic needs (Capps et al., 2015), which may contribute to difficulties with adjustment (Hassan et al., 2016).

There are varied experiences with displacement depending on the host country's investment in support and services for incoming refugees (Capps et al., 2015). Some refugees may be less serviced in urban areas whereas others may live in austere conditions and/or lack basic access to education (Capps et al., 2015; CMAS, 2015). Moreover, many displaced refugees struggle with securing legal status and rights within the host country (Capps et al., 2015). The language competency of resettled refugees varies, but increased language proficiency contributes to higher rates of self-sufficiency, economic stability, and less complicated settlement experiences (Capps et al., 2015). Clearly, Syrian refugees with poor language competency of the host country may face increased challenges with resettlement.

Decreased access to education, employment, treatment, and the two bottom-most tiers of Maslow's hierarchy (physiological and safety needs; Maslow, 1943) negatively impacts psychosocial development and are risk factors for psychological disorders (UNHCR, 2015). Indeed, displacement elicits increased psychosocial distress (Abou-Saleh & Hughes, 2015) and has significant impacts on wellbeing (Al Hessian et al., 2016). The reality for many individuals experiencing forced displacement includes one or some of the following situations: negation of one's sense of identity, reduced belonging, social and economic instability, and "exploitation of vulnerable populations" (Almoshmash, 2015, p. 179). Indeed, the impacts of war and displacement, including traumatic experiences, torture, and other "war atrocities" (p. 179), contributes to anxious, hyper-vigilant, withdrawal, relational, and post-traumatic symptoms for many individuals (Almoshmash, 2015). In addition to these difficulties of crisis and resettlement, parents of children with developmental conditions face hardships regarding obtaining pertinent supports for their child(ren) and family (Dababnah et al., 2019).

The impacts of war and displacement have adverse impacts on the mental health of children who make up over half of the displaced Syrian refugee population (Syrian American Medical Society, 2018; UNHCR, 2015). The significant impact of displacement on Syrian refugees is evident through the emotional and behavioural challenges of many Syrian refugee children in Turkey and high levels of isolation, discrimination, bullying, and exploitation among adolescents in Jordan and Syria (UNHCR, 2015). Many such children experience clinically significant levels of anxiety, withdrawal, lingering fear and have been physically afflicted by the conflict, witnessed destruction, ongoing violence, experienced forced displacement, and have undergone disrupted family systems (UNHCR, 2015). The lack of access to basic services, reduced wellbeing, and compromised psychological health can thwart academic and social

functioning (Çeri et al., 2018). Indeed, these adversities of war and displacement contribute to the manifestation of psychosocial distress and elevated symptoms of mental health conditions, including both internalizing and externalizing behaviours (UNHCR, 2015). Syrian refugee children's social-emotional, linguistic, and cognitive development are impacted by the traumatic experiences of being a refugee as well as the state of their parent's mental health (CMAS, 2015). Certainly, the impacts of parental trauma can adversely impact children born outside the of direct crises (Diamond & Oberg, 2019). This is important as research (Diamond & Oberg, 2019) indicated that trauma affects the brain, which impacts how children learn.

As a result of the Syrian crisis, parents may also struggle with mental health concerns, experience psychosocial distress, and endure loss, which can impact responsive parenting and connections with their child (CMAS, 2015). For some, complexities with accessing and providing basic needs to their children in refugee camps disrupts secure childrearing and emotional development, and enhances psychosocial issues, such as anxiety (CMAS, 2015). To alleviate child distress and promote psychological wellbeing, parents require assistance with childrearing and addressing their children's psychosocial concerns because many parents have disrupted support systems due to displacement (El-Khani et al., 2018; Bhugra et al., 2014). Considering the needs of parents is important because of the protective role that parents have during displacement and, when unsupported, parental stress contributes to a trickle-down effect that leads to distress in their children (Tol et al., 2013). In addition to disrupted support systems, parents are inundated by the complexities of being displaced (Tol et al., 2013). Therefore, enhancing support systems for families are crucial to child welfare as it "may be one of the most important contributing factors to improving psychological health in children affected by conflict" (Tol et al., 2013, p. 26). Supports include culturally responsive psychosocial interventions,

reducing barriers to support acquisition, seeking counsel in navigating parenting struggles, and parenting interventions to guide them through new challenges in the face of crisis and displacement (Tol et al., 2013).

As illustrated in Al Hessian et al. (2016), there has been a decline in educational attainment during the Syrian crisis. In fact, “approximately half of displaced Syrian children, especially older children, are unable to continue their education” (UNHCR, 2015, p. 20). Clearly, Syrian refugees have experienced lamentable conditions associated with war and displacement. Oftentimes, there is need among Syrian refugee migrants for accessible support and service that appropriately addresses the residual impacts of the conflict (UNHCR, 2015). As the Syrian refugee population in Canada grows, it becomes increasingly important to promote scientific productivity related to their lived experiences. Enhancing diversity research of this nature is significant because Syrian refugees introduce a wealth of diversity and value to the Canadian context (Perkins, 2018) and should be considered in servicing (Mirza & Heinenmann, 2012). Ultimately, the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) protects those with disabilities, which extends to refugee resettlement (Duell-Piening, 2018).

Mental Health Services in Syria

Prior to the Syrian crisis, mental health was an underdeveloped field and has seen minimal collaboration among humanitarian agencies to address mental health needs throughout the crisis (Almoshmosh, 2015). In fact, there were a limited amount of mental health centers, many of which were in a select few cities, which is a barrier for those without transportation, without private funds, and the many Syrians with limited insurance (Assalman et al., 2008). Indeed, Syria experienced scarce mental health resources and limited psychological intervention provision. The lack of knowledge and insurance coverage, presence of stigma toward mental

health (Hedar, 2017), and systemic governmental resistance (Hijazi & Weissbecker, 2014) contributed to gaps in treatment for Syrians.

Akin to the mental health care system pre-crisis, there are significant gaps in knowledge regarding the mental health needs of Syrians as the crisis persists (Raslan et al., 2021). In fact, Raslan et al. (2021) indicated that “research from within the country is extremely limited” (p. 13) and there are substantial barriers to children receiving mental health services. Despite having sought asylum and obtaining safety in external countries, Syrian refugees experience the residual effects of the trauma they were subjected to and that can generate difficulty with resettlement efforts (Almoshmosh, 2015; CMAS, 2015). Migrant refugee children are diverse with varying experiences, which may render unique learning profiles due to displacement and trauma (Tangen, 2009). As a result, professionals should be sensitive to the needs, supports, and learning profiles as well as distinct developmental considerations of refugees to foster success upon their resettlement (Minhas et al., 2017).

Certainly, exposure to conflict can lead to lasting mental health concerns, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hassan, 2019a; Raslan et al., 2021). Treating these conditions, as well as others, in refugee youth is particularly difficult because “identifying disability in refugee populations is challenging and often goes unrecognized” (Rice, 2017, p. 1). In fact, approximate and loose estimates suggest that 26.6% of Syrian refugee children have a developmental condition (Hassan, 2019a). In Syria, the war-related widespread risk factors are conducive to threats to the psychosocial development and wellbeing of Syrians (Raslan et al., 2021). This continued impact of the crisis, coupled with reduced funding to programmes that aim to alleviate these stressors, can impact the social, psychological, and daily living outcomes of Syrians long-term (Raslan et al., 2021).

Contextualizing the Syrian Refugee Experience

Remaining cognizant of Syrian refugee experiences is important to contextualize when designing research with this population. To ensure that practitioners are responsive and researchers navigate study topics appropriately, it is important to be sensitive to the fact that many Syrian refugees have experienced trauma, including exposure to violence (Hassan, 2019a; Karim & Islam, 2016). Certainly, in research, it would be amiss to ask Syrian refugees about the types of traumas they endured or details about their experience in refugee camps and with war. In fact, CMAS (2015) cautioned individuals against inquiring about refugee camps because the harsh conditions of these camps render such questions triggering and inappropriate.

Global literature has described the experiences of Syrian refugees in many different contexts. For example, Akesson and Sousa (2020) found that Syrian refugees with economic instability in Lebanon had disrupted family structures and increased distress, and adversely affected child wellbeing. Similarly, the trauma consistent with violent conflict can generate residual effects that impact parent-child relationships, wellbeing, and childrearing negatively (Akesson & Sousa, 2020). These compiling adversities have required many Syrian refugees to demonstrate resilience and perseverance (Akesson & Sousa, 2020; Mishori et al., 2017).

Most Syrian refugees resettled in neighbouring countries with varying commitments by industrialized nations to grant refugee status and/or asylum (Ostrand, 2015). The influx of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries had implications for economy, policy, and societal tensions, such as reduced political support, lacking resources, and arduous living conditions (Ostrand, 2015). These implications are important to consider because, with increased demand on various services, there are instances where Syrian refugee needs are not adequately met (Ostrand, 2015).

Although research worldwide has contributed to the growing literature base concerning Syrian refugees, this thesis will examine research pertinent to refugees in the Canadian context.

Syrian Refugees and Resettlement in Canada

As part of the process to accept Syrian refugees, the Canadian government began their recruitment process with mass SMS texts to eligible individuals that were registered with the UNHCR (Government of Canada, 2020). Interested individuals underwent a comprehensive screening, inspection, and background check prior to being granted access to Canada. These individuals were given permanent residency upon arrival. Refugees were unable to apply for asylum directly as they needed to be identified and referred to Canada by UNHCR (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, 2019). In addition, to claim refugee status an individual must “fear persecution or would be in danger if they had to leave (Canada)” (Government of Canada, 2020), which includes torture, punishment, or risk to one’s life.

Refugees fell into three broad categories: government-assisted, privately sponsored, and blended-visa office referral programs (Agrawal, 2019). The blended-visa office referral program matched UNHCR referrals to eligible sponsors in Canada, whereas the private sponsorship program was initiated by the private sponsor to provide full support to refugees (Agrawal, 2019). Upon acceptance and entrance into Canada, refugees were placed in proximity to family and/or appropriate supports to address their specific needs, such as those with disabilities (Government of Canada, 2020). Refugees were offered 12 months of support to address their basic needs. Many groups and organizations provided refugees with support for learning English, obtaining employment, completing necessary documents, pursuing education, and identifying housing. There were numerous organizations, such as governmental bodies, stakeholders, and service

providers that were equipped to offer supports and aide with transitions for Syrian refugees in various capacities (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, 2019).

The Government of Canada committed to accepting 25,000 Syrian refugees between 2015-2016 as part of *Operation Syrian Refugees* (Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019). As of 2016, Canada became home to nearly 40,000 Syrian refugees, half of which were children and adolescents (Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019). This number has since increased to 54,560 in 2019 (Bose, 2020). The influx of Syrian refugees has prompted researchers, organizations, and institutions to explore their social wellbeing and adjustment outcomes (Oudshoorn et al., 2020; Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019).

Refugee Acculturation and Adaptation

There are several existing theoretical frameworks describing acculturation and adaptation among migrant populations. According to Berry (1997), acculturation entails the degree of “cultural changes” (p. 6) among individuals that emerge from certain experiences, which give rise to adaptation at an individual level. Berry’s acculturation framework described the complex interplay between how migrant populations experience post-migration societal variables, pre-migration moderating variables, change at an individual psychological level, and the overall acculturation process that contributes to the degree of adaptation (Berry, 1997).

Although a useful model, Ryan et al. (2008) outlined critiques of Berry’s framework and proposed an alternative theory that builds upon Berry (1997) as well as other prominent theories, which inform migrant adaptation (Hobfoll, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Specifically, Ryan et al. (2008) asserts that the acculturation framework “presents an *overculturalized* view of the migrant adaptation process” (p. 5) as refugees also face various daily living barriers that are not necessarily tied to stressors associated with culture. Ryan et al. (2008) proposed their resource-

based model of migrant adaptation, which will be described throughout this section. Afterward, a brief discussion of psychosocial adaptation among Syrian refugees in Alberta will be introduced to link current literature to the population under study.

Ryan et al. (2008) described migrant adaptation as “the process through which individuals seek to satisfy their needs, pursue their goals, and manage their demands encountered after relocating to a new society” (p. 7). This resource model contained three main components:

1. Resources
2. Needs, Goals and Demands
3. Migration-Related Resource Loss and Gain

Resources are “the means by which individuals satisfy needs, pursue goals and manage demands” (p. 7), which are delineated as “personal, material, social and cultural resources” (p.7), yet still extensively intertwined. Personal resources are at the individual level and entail both physical and psychological capacity whereas material resources are the financial or worldly assets a person possesses. Social resources include the beneficial relationships, networks, and/or connections with others while cultural resources refer to the various capacities that one’s cultural experiences affords them in adapting to a particular environment.

Next, the degree to which a refugee experiences loss or gain in resources, aspiration, constraints around attaining their life goals, and stress associated with experienced demands impacts their degree of adaptation. The level of distress and deprivation that a migrant experiences in their pre-migration experience contributes to their contentedness during the early stages of their resettlement. That is, Ryan et al. (2008) indicated that greater levels of distress in a refugee’s pre-migration enhances satisfaction levels with basic needs being met, which “are likely to change over time if migrants perceive a gap between their life conditions and those of

the resident population” (p. 9). Importantly, demands are defined as “events or situations which require the mobilization of human resources” (Ryan et al., 2008, p. 10). These researchers assert that stress transpires from demands when refugees experience a significant encumbrance of existing resources, a lack of resources, adverse situations, and a reduction of existing resources.

Lastly, Ryan et al. (2008) elucidated that migrants experience fluctuations of gains or losses in their resources across their migration experience. In addition, these researchers indicate that the term ‘relevance-based changes’ refer to the salience that a more static resource has in various contexts. That is, if refugees possess a resource in a certain language competency but migrate to a nation with a different language, this resource is less adaptive. Indeed, it is important to be cognizant of a refugee’s pre-migration and post-migration experience. More specifically, Ryan et al. indicate that refugee resources should be examined at three stages: pre-migration, migration, and post-migration. Briefly, pre-migration is associated with resource loss for refugees, which includes experiences associated with crisis and conflict. The migration or flight phase is also characterized by a loss in resource, such as with circumstances of displacement. Refugees also experience further resource loss in the post-migration phase where their cultural resources may be particularly strained due to a “decrease in the adaptive value of certain skills and knowledge in the new socio-cultural setting” (p. 13). In the host country, post-migration adaptation is associated with the restoration of lost resources as well as gaining new resources. Although not outlined as a major component, a fourth consideration is the “environmental constraints” (p. 13) in a host country, which refers to the extent that potential resources are systemically regulated.

Ryan et al. (2008) provides a theoretical model specific to the migrant adaptation process of refugees that relates to Yohani et al. (2019) in their description of strengths and challenges

among resettled Syrian refugee families in Alberta. Yohani et al. (2019) described psychosocial adaptation outcomes of Syrian refugees based on the RAISED between Cultures model (Georgis et al., 2017). The RAISED between Cultures model is a framework to promote adaptation among immigrant and refugee populations through acknowledging the role of multiple environments in child developmental outcomes (Georgis et al., 2017). The present study investigated Syrian refugee parents of autistic children in terms of their resettlement and support and service experiences. Therefore, considering the role of psychosocial adjustment and child development outcomes is a unique consideration for the population under study. Specifically, the role of language, resilience, social connectedness, and service access were important aspects of psychosocial adjustment according to Yohani et al. (2019), which is important to consider in the context of the present study with Syrian refugee parents of autistic children.

Refugee Lived Experiences with Resettlement in Canada

Within the last year, there has been considerable advancements in research investigating the experiences of Syrian refugees in Canada. For example, Ayoub (2020) investigated the school experiences of Syrian refugee children by sampling both students and parents. In line with Al Hessian et al. (2016) citing detrimental impacts to the educational attainment of Syrian children, Ayoub noted that most students and parents expressed significant learning gaps due to several years of missed schooling throughout the Syrian crisis. These findings echo previous research suggesting that refugees have interrupted educational experiences, especially those that have special education needs (Beltekin, 2016; Melton, 2013). However, many Syrian refugee students value the education they receive and embrace confidence in their future goals, which consists of supporting others, employment, and closing their learning gaps (Ayoub, 2020).

Although seeking refuge in a host country offers inherent positive aspects, such as increased safety, there are several drawbacks and barriers from becoming a refugee (Oudshoorn et al., 2020) such as lower socio-economic status, poorer language proficiency, cultural maladjustment, and higher rates of discrimination (Oudshoorn et al., 2020). In their study of the lived experiences of adolescent Syrian refugees in Ontario, McCleary (2020) found an increased need for mental health services for Syrian refugee adolescents because of war-related traumas. Additional resettlement experiences for Syrian refugee adolescents include, but are not limited to, language barriers, complex health-care processes, adjustment to the educational system, reduced happiness, and reduced community integration (McCleary, 2020).

Through interviewing several Syrian refugee families, Oudshoorn et al. (2020) identified themes consistent with the Syrian refugee resettlement experience. On the one hand, refugees emphasised their gratitude toward being able to settle in Canada and ability to obtain a safe environment that satisfies their basic needs. This gratitude was echoed by their faith in God as well as positive attributions with their decision to make Canada their new home. However, Syrian refugees also yearned for increased connection with Canadians, the opportunity to learn English to communicate, and adequate housing to suit their family's needs. Families felt isolated from their heritage, distant from the Syrian community, and were limited geographically due to transportation barriers. These findings resembled those in Aldiabat et al. (2021) who investigated the lived experiences of Syrian refugees in Canada through a social determinants of health model. In this study, Syrian refugees experienced both appreciation and continued need regarding social support, adjusting to living in Canada, and receiving education. In addition, they expressed concern regarding preserving their culture, comprehensive access to health care (e.g.,

dental and pharmaceutical), learning English, integrating into the labour force, and financial instability (Aldiabat et al., 2021).

As evidenced in Perkins (2018), the process of resettlement for Syrian refugees in Canada necessitates a reciprocal relationship between refugee and the community. As Syrian refugees are unique in many aspects, including their mental wellbeing, it is important to provide culturally sensitive services to this specific population, which Canada has yet to accommodate (Bhui, 2015; Perkins, 2018). Syrian refugees demonstrated resilience and coping in terms of their migration, which is important to consider in the context of adjustment within one's settlement experience (Perkins, 2018). Indeed, investigating the lived experiences of Syrian refugees is important for bolstering culturally responsive practice, enhancing the development of social service agencies, and addressing basic services as determinants that can adversely impact mental health.

Refugee Lived Experiences with Resettlement in Alberta

In Alberta, research has aimed to investigate the settlement experiences of Syrian refugees, which is informative to the present study. According to Agrawal (2019), there are approximately 6,565 Syrian refugees in Alberta with the majority resettling in Calgary and Edmonton. Like Perkins (2018), Agrawal found that language, employment, education, and housing were resettlement barriers. The language barrier contributed to communicative challenges and the inability to integrate socially. Similarly, the employment barrier was exacerbated by English language obstacles and contributed to lower socioeconomic status. Despite feelings of frustration, Syrian refugees were grateful for the support of Islamic community entities, access to health care, and the overall feelings of safety and respect.

Akin to Agrawal (2019), Syrian refugees interviewed by Drolet and Moorthi (2018) in Alberta faced similar barriers to integration. Integration is understood as being "individualized,

contested, and contextual” (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018, p. 104). Integration is an important part of successful resettlement and is promoted through social connectedness, which fosters belongingness (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). However, social integration is thwarted by language, socioeconomic, and transportation barriers, in addition to experiences of discrimination. Participants found it difficult to build connections with Canadians due to communication impediments. In addition, difficulties with building connections with the Syrian community was due to less receptiveness toward asylum seekers. Cultural differences were challenging for many Syrian refugees to grow accustomed to. For example, Syrian refugees spoke to the how social connectedness and the overall social fabric in Syria was embedded within their culture and was more deeply rooted than the influence of the Canadian culture (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018). Similarly, Agrawal described how participants drew on diverging cultural values that were challenging for them to adjust to. Overall, Syrian refugees experienced tensions between gratefulness in being afforded a safe enriching home and challenges with the process of resettlement that posed unique stressors to their overall wellbeing. Undoubtedly, there are various positive and negative experiences of Syrian refugee resettlement in Canada. Becoming aware of these experiences through the voices of Syrian refugees urge researchers, policy makers, service providers, and professionals to evaluate current services.

Impacts of Resettlement on Syrian Refugees

Mirza and Heinenmann (2012) found that disability services in the United States (US) did not adequately collaborate with refugee systems nor sensitively address the needs of refugees. These findings relate to Canada because research suggests that there are barriers to Syrian refugees obtaining service (Guruge et al., 2018). Syrian refugee children may experience strains to their development as well as challenges with adjusting to the social and cultural atmosphere in

Canada (CMAS, 2015). Relatedly, Syrian refugee parents may require support with parenting practices due to adjusting to a novel and complex role in a foreign country (CMAS, 2015). Since seeking asylum and providing care to their children are significant parts of their lived experiences as migrants to Canada (Oudshoorn et al., 2020), it is important to be aware of parental perspectives of services in Canada. Indeed, many parents sacrificed leaving their homes to establish safety in an unfamiliar environment (Oudshoorn et al., 2020).

In recent years, Canadian literature has investigated the lived experiences of Syrian refugees pertaining to resettlement. Most notably, research has found tensions between gratefulness and barriers to adaptation owing to challenges with social, socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural adjustment (Agrawal, 2019; Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Oudshoorn et al., 2020). In Canada, there are several physical and mental health needs that Syrian refugees require but do not obtain, as varied perceptions, language ability, and/or systemic barriers in finding supports contribute to this reduced access (Oda et al., 2019; Tuck et al., 2019). To address the state of mental health amongst Syrian refugees, Hansen and Huston (2016) noted that social programs should consider how the refugees' socioeconomic wellbeing contributes to their psychological wellbeing. However, research has yet to consider how access to supports and services acquisition in Canada versus Syria pertains to refugee children with developmental challenges, such as those on the autism spectrum and their families. Hence, exploring the lived experiences of resettlement and support and service access among Syrian refugee parents of autistic children can help contextualize the necessity of community, family, and psychosocial supports in line with considerations in the literature (e.g., Hansen and Huston, 2016).

Autism

As a brief preamble to preface the terminology that will be used in this thesis, readers may reference Kenny et al. (2016) for a more complete justification for why the terms ‘autism’, ‘autistic’, and ‘on the autism spectrum’ will be used in lieu of ‘autism spectrum disorder’. Although professionals tend to subscribe to the philosophy of person first language, the consensus among autistic individuals consists of disability first language because autism is part of their identity as opposed to merely something they have. In addition, the terms ‘low-functioning’ and ‘high-functioning’ will also be avoided as they can either undermine one’s potential or underplay an individual’s challenges. In the context of autism, the terms ‘deficit’, ‘disability’, and ‘disorder’, will also be avoided wherever possible because these terms imply stigma and a sense of “being broken” (Kenny et al., 2016, p. 459). Instead, the terms ‘condition’, ‘impairment’, ‘difficulty’, or ‘diversity’ will be used, given the context of what is written.

Autism has undergone various shifts toward its current conceptualization in the *DSM-5* (APA, 2013), which varies from the previously stratified trichotomy (autistic disorder, Asperger’s disorder, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified). Currently, the *DSM-5* characterizes autism as a heterogeneous neurodevelopmental condition that varies in severity and behavioural expression in the domains of social communication impairments in conjunction with restrictive repetitive behaviors and/or interests (APA, 2013). Severity levels are delineated based on the level of support required within each of these domains (APA, 2013). Behaviours of autism include reduced eye contact, reduced sociability, impaired relationship development, and inflexibility toward change (APA, 2013). It is important to be cognizant of the fact that some behaviours, such as eye contact, are “largely culturally idiosyncratic” (Bernier & McCrimmon, 2021, p. 9; Fox et al., 2017). Autism can co-occur with various clinical conditions, including intellectual disability (Baio et al., 2018), internalizing disorders (Kirsch et al., 2020;

Volkmar et al., 2014), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; Matson & Goldin, 2013), and various physical (Cawthorpe, 2017) and medical conditions (Tye et al., 2019).

Akin to autism's heterogeneity regarding co-occurring conditions, the etiology of autism is diverse with contributing neurobiological and environmental determinants (Bai et al., 2019). Importantly, researchers have found that underlying genetic factors primarily account for the manifestation of autism (Bai et al., 2019; Taylor et al., 2020). Moreover, there is immense variability in behavioural expression and presentation of autism (Grzadzinski et al., 2013) rendering it a spectrum condition in the *DSM-5* (APA, 2013). For example, some children may have trouble with emotional expression and linguistic reciprocity (Al-Qaryouti et al., 2017) whereas others have limited language skills (Vidal et al., 2020).

Globally, the prevalence of autism is estimated at around 1 in 161.3 or 62 in 10,000 children (Elsabbagh et al., 2012), or 1 in 160 according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021). However, these rates vary across countries and cultures. For example, in 2014, the prevalence of autism in the US was 1 in 59 (Baio et al., 2018), which varied from the Canadian rate of 1 in 66 (Ofner et al., 2018). Since autism is a spectrum condition with inherent heterogeneity in behavioural expression, severity, and presentation (APA, 2013), quality of life varies on an individual basis but, generally, autistic people are found to have a poorer quality of life when compared to allistic peers (van Heijst & Guerts, 2014). Overall, autism is a neurodevelopmental condition that impacts approximately 1-2% of the population with a complex etiology and varying levels of behavioural presentation across the domains of social communication and restrictive and repetitive behaviours (APA, 2013; Park et al., 2016).

Raising a Child on the Autism Spectrum

There are several challenges that raising an autistic child places on relationships and, thus, exacerbate the rate of divorce in comparison to families without an autistic child (Hartley et al., 2010; Seltzer et al., 2001). In addition, there are several supports and services that are offered to autistic children as well as their families to alleviate pressures as well as provide growth. This section will first define supports and services and discuss support and service provision in the Albertan context, including various available supports and services that parents can receive. Afterward, a description of parental experiences with raising autistic children will be elucidated.

Although frequently used, the term ‘supports and services’ can be elusive, but critical to consider when providing aide to children with special needs, such as those on the autism spectrum. Although there are various contextual nuances and understandings surrounding these terms, services can be described as a method of providing help in which professionals work directly with children or families whereas supports are typically provided to child or family so that the clinically impacted person can continue to help themselves. Consider the context provided in Hendricks (2010):

“The increased prevalence of ASD coupled with unique social, communication, and behavioral characteristics translate into the need for services to help them achieve employment success” (p. 131).

“This careful match between the individual and the environment, when coupled with implementation of proper supports, can result in successful and ongoing employment.” (p. 132).

Indeed, supports and services work in conjunction with one another and inform each other in a nuanced way; however, the aforementioned quotes outline important differences. That is, services tend to be goal-oriented treatments provided by professionals based on the individual’s

presentation within established diagnostic criteria. Conversely, supports tend to be individualized and personalized tools that ensure continued success from servicing after it ceases. Nonetheless, both supports and services are programmatic interventions provided to the individual and their family to provide growth and optimize developmental outcomes.

In Alberta there are several funding agencies that allow families to obtain supports and services depending on the age and clinical presentation of the individual. Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) provides supports and services to children and families of children who are under the legal age of adulthood and have an eligible diagnosis (Government of Alberta, 2021a). Under the FSCD act, supports and services can be provided to the family to help them financially, psychosocially (e.g., counselling), and alleviate pressures and stress (e.g., respite; Government of Alberta, 2019). In addition, supports and services can be provided to the child directly, which include attaining developmental goals, addressing health-related concerns, and multidisciplinary specialized servicing (Government of Alberta, 2019). Next, the Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) program is designed for adults who have several difficulties that significantly impacts their ability to independently engage in daily living activities (Government of Alberta, 2021b). Lastly, the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) is a benefit to provide financial support to adults who have a condition that impacts their ability to earn a livable wage (Government of Alberta, 2021c).

There are several interventions that individuals living in Alberta can access through service providers operating either privately or through funding agencies, particularly FSCD. According to research conducted in Alberta, parents express positivity with family-centered care at a professional level, but experience adversity with navigating the acquisition of support and service at a systemic level (Hodgetts et al., 2013). Family-centered care refers to a “practice

philosophy in which parents and service providers work in partnership, and supports and services coincide with changing needs and priorities of the family” (Hodgetts et al., 2013, p. 138). To provide aide to autistic individuals and their families, Albertan service providers use various evidenced-based programs such as Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), the Program for the Enrichment and Education of Relational Skills (PEERS), and Pivotal Response Training (PRT). Indeed, there are several support and service approaches available to Albertan service providers and families of those on the autism spectrum of which an exhaustive list would be beyond the scope of this study.

Although an important part of raising an autistic child includes navigating available supports and services, it is important to also consider the psychosocial impacts of parenting autistic children. Upon learning about their child’s diagnosis, parents have reported experiencing intense emotions, apprehensiveness toward the future, and discouragement (Altieri & von Kluge, 2009). These parents described both increased stress and constraints in recreation, social relationships, and family dynamics due to raising an autistic child. Conversely, parents narrated the positive experiences of raising an autistic child, which included “positive learning experiences” (p. 148), “appreciate(ing) life more in general” (p. 148), enhanced family support systems, and “enhanced personal characteristics such as patience, compassion, and acceptance” (p. 148). The importance of self-care, various coping strategies, and interpersonal as well as professional support were themes that arose for parents rearing a child on the autism spectrum (Pepperell et al., 2016); however, the distinct challenges and positive circumstances are important to consider, especially in research considering refugees where there are additional challenges with war, resettlement, and seeking asylum.

Raising an Autistic Child from the Perspective of Arab Populations

Researchers have examined perceptions of Arab caregivers of autistic children to investigate the impacts of childrearing experiences in an understudied cultural/ethnic group. Studies investigating the overlap between diversity and psychopathology are important because minority populations have increased barriers to accessing services (Mandell et al., 2009). Through investigating Arab populations, researchers have described limited awareness (Masri et al., 2013) and various psychosocial and economic tensions (Dababnah & Parish, 2013) as additional stressors for participants when child-rearing their autistic child (Habayeb et al., 2020).

Through comparing Arab and American populations, Alkhateeb et al. (2019) identified financial strain, reduced wellbeing, reduced quality of life, increased religious coping, and experiences of disability-related stigma as common features across both populations. In terms of service acquisition, the two populations differed slightly wherein Arab parents were dissatisfied with the lack of resources and American parents were dissatisfied with the quality of services. This dissatisfaction is impacted by the lack of resources and professionals to diagnose autism in Arab countries, rendering lower rates of diagnosis (Taha & Hussein, 2014). Moreover, the notion of religious coping as a protective factor was echoed in Habayeb et al. (2020) wherein Arab families in the US note that family and community supports are helpful resources (Abu-Ras & Hosein, 2015). Raising an autistic child can be a stressful experience for Arab families in the presence of external stigma and maternal guilt/shame (Fido & Saad, 2013; Habayeb et al., 2020).

Furthermore, research in the Arab world has focused on prevalence, parental experiences, and the presentation of autistic children (Alallawi et al., 2020). Interestingly, Alallawi et al. (2020) reported on a study that found a lack of awareness and increased stress influenced maternal well-being (Zaki & Moawad, 2016), corroborating findings of poorer quality of life, psychological wellbeing, and environmental health for parents (Dardas & Ahmad, 2014). These

researchers indicated that raising an autistic child can be a stressful experience that contributes to parental quality of life regarding parent-child relationships, challenging behaviours, and social impairments (Davis & Carter, 2008). In their sample, Dardas and Ahmad posited that the lower socio-economic status of parents contributed to poor quality of life in the environmental health domain. Moreover, stress level, culture, and the overall living circumstances directly relates to parental quality of life (Dardas & Ahmad, 2014). This finding resembles a study where Qatari parents of autistic children reported lower levels of wellbeing (Kheir et al., 2012). Overall, it is important to consider parental quality of life and wellbeing because it can impact child development and wellbeing (Dardas & Ahmad, 2014).

Syrian Refugee Children and Autism

As evidenced by gaps in the literature pertaining to autism and Syrian refugees, Syrian refugee children on the autism spectrum are likely “to be forgotten” (Jabri, 2015, p. 676). This notion was echoed in Edmonds (2017) where children with conditions, such as autism, are typically overlooked during emergency planning (Lutzer et al., 2021). In fact, Jabri (2015) indicated that autistic children are of the “most vulnerable groups” (p. 676) affected by the Syrian crisis. Dababnah et al. (2019) concurred that children with special needs are of the most vulnerable groups during war and that their pre-existing condition puts them at higher risk for further complications. War can adversely impact autistic children who have social communication and sometimes cognitive impairments, leading to impeded processing and aggravated responses to the conditions of crisis (Jabri, 2015). That is, autistic children can experience clinical regression and/or manifest various internalizing and externalizing behaviours (Jabri, 2015). In fact, “prolonged exposure to extreme trauma, stress, and uncertainty” (Raslan et al., 2021, p. 3) has significant impacts on mental health outcomes for children and adolescents.

As cited in Raslan et al. (2021), toxic stress has been found to impact neurological functioning and disrupt typical brain development. This finding has implications for those on the autism spectrum as autism is a neurodevelopmental condition. Displaced autistic children seldomly receive modifications, accommodations, and educational placements suitable to satisfy their needs (Jabri, 2015). This gap in service increases the responsibility of parents to orient their child toward success amidst the excess of stressors.

Despite a lack of data, Jabri (2015) estimates that there are tens of thousands of autistic Syrian refugee children. Considering that there are many autistic Syrian refugee children is important as there are several barriers to Canadian service acquisition amongst Syrian refugee parents of children with developmental conditions including financial capacity, linguistic capacity, awareness of the health and educational systems, different perceptions of child development, and “fear of deportation” (Bhayana & Bhayana, 2018, p. 568). As a result, refugee children are more likely to be diagnosed later in development and not receive early intervention (Minhas et al., 2017). To address the needs of Syrian refugee children on the autism spectrum and their parents, the presence of professional services and interpersonal supports are important (Oner et al., 2020).

Syrian Refugee Parents and Autism

In addition to the adverse impacts on autistic children, it is important to understand the impacts of raising an autistic child during the Syrian crisis. In refugee camps, it becomes increasingly difficult for parents to provide the same level of care, stability, basic needs, and financial assistance to support their autistic child (Jabri, 2015). The lack of available resources may also contribute to the difficulty supporting autistic children. For example, in Turkey, there was a lack of education and intervention programming for Syrian refugee children on the autism

spectrum (Karadag et al., 2017). Moreover, the experiences of seeking asylum can adversely impact parental mental health, which influences their responsive caregiving (Minhas et al., 2017). These results resemble research that found increased complexities among Syrian refugee families raising autistic children, such as with navigating the health-care system, unfamiliarity with the environment, understanding the diagnosis, language barriers, cultural discrepancies, developing rapport with professionals, and treatment adherence (Moore et al., 2020).

Autism in Syria

While reviewing the available English literature, it was clear that there was a dearth of research investigating autism in Syria. One contributing factor is that most instruction in Syrian post-secondary institutions is in Arabic (Al Hessian et al., 2016). As articles published in languages other than English seldomly meet international recognition (Croot et al., 2011), it is likely that relevant autism research was published in Arabic journals. There are notable language constraints wherein articles in Arabic are less likely to be surveyed by international journals, which limited this researcher's insight toward current autism research within the Arab world. One study found that, in Syria, parental satisfaction of available services for autistic children were positive; however, these parents lacked knowledge of autism, recognition of appropriate services, and Arabic psychoeducational resources (Mounzer & Al Khateeb, 2009). This lack of knowledge is important in the context that Middle Eastern countries have underdeveloped psychoeducation and service availability for autism (Dababnah et al., 2019).

Screening and Diagnosis of Autism in the Arab World

The Arab world consists of 22 countries and an approximate population of 427 million in 2019 (The World Bank, n.d.). The lack of available English literature in screening and diagnosis of autism in the Arab world suggests that this area of research is understudied. There is an

underdiagnosis of autism in Arab nations, which is explained by the combination of parents underreporting symptoms and the scarcity of professionals that specialize in child psychopathology (Taha & Hussein, 2014). Moreover, funding and resource-related constraints contribute to mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions being understudied, underfunded, and misunderstood (Alnemary et al., 2017a).

Although the Arab world is sometimes referred to as a unitary entity, it is important to consider the vast heterogeneity between countries (Alallawi et al., 2020). The variance between countries could be due to the political, social, economic, ethnic, and/or religious fabric within the society (Alallawi et al., 2020; Alkhateeb et al., 2016). In addition, there are differences in the cultural, religious, and etiological beliefs of many Middle Eastern populations regarding children on the autism spectrum and/or other developmental conditions. For example, some may consider the child as a “sign of shame” (Dababnah & Parish, 2013, p. 1672), punishment from God (Crabtree, 2007), product of God’s will (Fox et al., 2017), result of evil eye, or due to black magic (Alqahtani, 2012). Recently, however, the increase of knowledge and awareness has shifted professional and societal attitudes and understandings of autism (Hassan, 2019b). Nonetheless, feelings of shame (Hassan, 2019b), denial of diagnoses (Dardas & Simmons, 2015), stigma, and knowledge gaps persist in Arab societies (Obeid et al., 2015).

In their review of Arabic informational websites, Alnemary et al. (2017b) suggested that these websites should not be used as a psychoeducational tool for autism. This recommendation emerged from a lack of peer-reviewed information, presence of recommendations for non-evidence-based interventions, and personal content rather than content from qualified professionals (Alnemary et al., 2017b). These findings illustrate that misinformation about autism may lead to harm and/or reinforce existing stigmas. However, autism is recognized in the

Arab world (Mostafa, 2011), which is important to consider because there is great diversity in culture, economy, and values within and across the Arab peoples and nations despite similar linguistic and religious foundations (Taha & Hussein, 2014). Therefore, although there is a lack of available literature on screening and diagnosis of autism in Syria, this section will explore the available literature related to diagnosis, prevalence, and the clinical tools used in Arab nations. Through investigating existing assessment tools, the present study can obtain context regarding autism service in nations within the same region as Syria. Given that Syria was a country that had a “well-developed post-secondary education system” (Al Hessian, 2016, p. 7), it is possible that psychological practice in other Arab countries may reflect practice in Syria.

Diagnostic Barriers in Arab Countries

Although scarce, research does show that there is consideration among practitioners to use the *DSM-5* in the diagnosis of autism in Egypt and Qatar (Khalaf, 2020). Nonetheless, there are several important barriers to *DSM-5* implementation, such as gaps in competency and training opportunities, and an insufficient number of trained professionals (Khalaf, 2020). Additionally, parents often underreport symptoms to avoid stigma, which threatens the validity of diagnosis with the *DSM-5* (Khalaf, 2020). It is important to consider that the *DSM-5* is considered to have culturally limited sensitivity, which impacts its international use (Eltyeb, 2017). In the Arab world, it is not uncommon to find delay in autism diagnoses because of lack of parent knowledge, identification, and assessment (Eltyeb, 2017). According to Eltyeb (2017), there is a lack of research exploring the use of Arabic versions of screening tools for autism and barriers to those who attempt to validate tools for Arab populations. Some of these barriers include parent underreporting, need for culturally sensitive tools, and accommodating weaker health care systems in some countries (Eltyeb, 2017).

Prevalence Rates in the Arab World

As illustrated in Alnemary et al., (2017a), prevalence research for autism in the Arab world is variable with the United Arab Emirates indicating a rate of 29 in 10,000 (Eapen et al., 2007) and Saudi Arabia documenting 59 in 10,000 children (Aljarallah et al., 2006). There has been an increase in estimates of autism in the US that can be attributed to increased public awareness, sibling studies, operationalization, and diagnostic changes (Smiley et al., 2018), which is important as similar trends have been noted within the Arab world. That is, in Oman, increased public awareness, access to services, and enhanced diagnostic practices contributed to an increase in prevalence rates from 1.4 in 10,000 (Al-Farsi et al., 2011) to 20.35 in 10,000 (Al-Mamri et al., 2019). Importantly, lower comparative prevalence rates in the Arab world are owed to differences in several factors, such as cultural convictions, symptom recognition, professional expertise, access to diagnostic access (Alallawi et al., 2020), lack of knowledge, scarce resources (Alnemary et al., 2017a), and stigma (Bhayana & Bhayana, 2018).

Diagnostic and Screening Tools in Arab Countries

Although limited, research exists on diagnosis and screening in Arab countries and there has been attempts by researchers to explore the use of internationally recognized tools (Eltyeb, 2017). For example, Eldin et al. (2008) explored the use and validation of the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT) in several Arab countries, including Syria, which was deemed effective. Recently, Aldosari et al. (2019) validated the use of an Arabic version of the Social Communication Questionnaire (SCQ) through a Saudi Arabian and Qatari sample. Next, Stewart and Lee (2017) reviewed the use of screening tools in several Middle Eastern nations, such as in Iran and Egypt. Certainly, gaps remain in the diagnostic practices of Arab countries (Qoronfleh et al., 2019). Despite apparent gaps, Qoronfleh et al. (2019) indicated that a common

practice among practitioners in the Arab world is to use the Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R) and Autism Diagnostic Observation Scale (ADOS) as diagnostic tools with clinical evaluations based on *DSM* criteria and symptom checklists. Although information regarding the presence or use of psychoeducational assessment is lacking, Hussein et al. (2011) used Arabic validated versions of the Gilliam Autism Rating Scale (GARS), Vineland Adaptive Behavioural Scale (VABS), and fifth edition of the Stanford Binet Intelligence Scales (SB5) to investigate the characteristics of autistic children in an Egyptian and Saudi Arabian sample.

Special Considerations for Syrian Refugee Families of Autistic Children

Thus far, a summary on research on the Syrian crisis, its impacts, refugee resettlement in Canada, and the implications of autism in resettled Syrian refugee families has been provided. Next, topics that are particularly important given certain clinical and global circumstances are discussed. That is, the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 on support and service provision is relevant to both this project's participant sample and timing of inquiry. In addition, when developing research and practice around minority populations, it is important to be culturally sensitive and responsive. Indeed, when working with diverse populations, such as Syrian refugee children, it is important to consider the impact that immigration has on autism identification, understanding, and navigation as well as the impact of COVID-19 on family functioning. Therefore, the following sections on immigration, COVID-19, and social justice aim to provide contextually relevant information.

Considering COVID-19 and Service Provision

The COVID-19 lockdown required immense adjustment among citizens across the globe. Along with this transition, parents were required to undertake additional responsibilities with caring for school-aged children full-time and serving their educational needs (Latzer et al.,

2021). COVID-19 introduced strict protocols to reduce virus spread, which led to significant changes in special education, specialized servicing, and support for parents of children with special needs (Latzer et al., 2021). These changes to routine under the pretenses of humanitarian crises require special attention for families with children that have special needs, such as autism. In their study of parents of autistic children, Latzer et al. found that COVID-19 restrictions generated either adversity and frustration, or adjustment and improvement. Parents were concerned with potential impacts of service gaps on their child's functioning and parental experiences of lockdown were influenced by their coping and ability to adjust. As the pandemic has introduced additional stressors to families across the globe, it is important to be mindful of how COVID-19 contributed to resettlement for Syrian refugee families of autistic children. Although this study did not specifically explore COVID-19 impacts on Syrian refugee families, COVID-19 has influenced service delivery, acquisition, and availability since its emergence.

Considering Cultural Competency and Social Justice

Enhancing cultural competency for diverse groups of people has been advocated by researchers (Papoudi et al., 2020), especially as it pertains to Arab populations (Alkhateeb et al., 2019). Within the discipline of school psychology, cultural competence refers to efficacious practice with diverse populations while being sensitive to their unique and nuanced backgrounds (Song et al., 2019). Within social justice are the concepts of equity and culturally responsive practice to advocate and build rapport with diverse children within a social justice orientation (Song et al., 2019). Indeed, Arabs' conception of mental health can thwart diagnostic and treatment acquisition (Dardas & Simmons, 2015), which is important to consider in professional practice. Parent perceptions of autism are influenced by culture and religion, which impact treatment acquisition (Mire et al., 2015) and attitudes toward clinicians (Shorey et al., 2019).

Specifically, research suggests that across several cultures there are similar religious beliefs among Muslim parents of autistic children, such as viewing their child as a blessing, fate, and/or a test (Bernier & McCrimmon, 2021). Importantly, however, there are differences across culture that are important to remain aware of and be responsive to (Bernier & McCrimmon, 2021; Shebib, 2020). Similarly, across cultures, individuals may perceive autism differently, which may be positive or negative (Dyches et al., 2004).

Considering the diversity of Arab populations, namely Syrian refugees, can enhance cultural knowledge, awareness, and skills to work with this diverse group culturally responsively within central tenants of social justice (cultural competency, advocacy, relationship building, and empowering and engaging; Song et al., 2019). In doing so, practitioners can enhance sensitivity toward Syrian refugees akin to the implication of findings in Habayeb et al. (2020). For many Syrian refugees, culture is an important part of their identity as evidenced by Sarikoudi and Apostolidou (2020) who highlighted how Syrian refugees in Greece were concerned about transferring their cultural and linguistic heritage toward their children. Moreover, considering culturally responsive practice is important because culture is a salient factor that impacts intervention, assessment, and diagnosis of autism (Hussein et al., 2011).

Chapter Summary

The Syrian crisis is seen as one of the largest scaled humanitarian crises (Karim & Islam, 2016) that has had a profound impact on the mental health of impacted persons (Hassan, 2019a). These influences extend to autistic children and their parents as the traumatic impacts of war can exacerbate aspects of diagnostic presentation (Jabri, 2015) and pose increased challenges to daily living (Dababnah et al., 2019). Indeed, there are gaps in research on autism in Arab nations (Alnemary et al., 2017a) and with Syrian refugees (Dababnah et al., 2019).

Raising a child on the autism spectrum can be stressful for parents and impact their quality of life (Dardas & Ahmad, 2014; Davis & Carter, 2008). Additional stressors during displacement and migration due to the Syrian crisis should be considered to understand the challenges with raising a child on the autism spectrum in unprecedented circumstances (Jabri, 2015). Moreover, the presence of professional and interpersonal supports can alleviate the exacerbated challenges that refugee parents of children with developmental conditions face (Oner et al., 2020). Understanding how supports/services are vital is important because barriers to resettlement (Agrawal, 2019), the austere conditions of refugee camps (Syam et al., 2019), and displacement (El-Khani et al., 2018) impacts access to supports for Syrian refugees.

Although researchers have investigated both the resettlement experiences and barriers to resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada (Agrawal, 2019; Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Oudshoorn et al., 2020; Perkins, 2018), we have yet to document the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children in Canada. Specifically, research documenting the acquisition of supports for Syrian refugee parents for their autistic children in Syria compared to Canada is a notable gap in the literature. This consideration is important because social supports (Drolet & Moorthi), socioeconomic stability (Oudshoorn et al., 2020), and adaptation to Canadian norms (Agrawal, 2019) are pivotal to Syrian refugee adjustment and contentedness. As Syrian refugees contribute to the diversity and multicultural Canadian society (Perkins, 2018), it is important to advocate for culturally responsive practice that is empirically supported.

Moreover, traumatic circumstances can impact parental and child wellbeing, which is important to consider within the context of a child's developmental trajectory and professional service provision (CMAS, 2015). Through addressing the needs of Syrian families of autistic children, it is important to be cognizant of the importance of culturally responsive practice

(Habayeb et al., 2020; Song et al., 2019). In Canada, Syrian refugees may avoid seeking services due to opposing perceptions of mental health, language barriers, and systemic barriers (Agrawal, 2019; Tuck et al., 2019). Therefore, investigating the lived experiences of support access for Syrian refugee parents of autistic children is informative toward enhancing understanding of diversity in Canada within a framework of responsive practice in alignment with guidelines outlined by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2020). Similarly, the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA, n.d) encourages practitioners to follow guidelines outlined by the American Psychological Association. Such guidelines include appreciating the considerable overlap between culture and psychology, striving to be culturally sensitive, and enhancing knowledge through research developments (American Psychological Association, 1990). In addition, according to a recent publication by CPA, Canadian practitioners in psychology have “an ethical and moral responsibility to engage in work that applies social justice and human rights frameworks” (Ritchie & Sinacore, 2020, p. 5), which is expressed in the Canadian Code of Ethics (CPA, 2017). Altogether, this research aims to inform diversity research, culturally responsive practice, and policies geared toward providing supports to a growing population in Canada’s multicultural society through a social justice lens.

Purpose of the Study & Research Question

The present study aimed to address a gap in the literature concerning the resettlement experiences and access to supports and services among Syrian refugee parents of autistic children. In addition, this study intended to understand the context related to the experiences of support/service access in Syria versus Alberta. As topics concerning Syrian refugees are understudied in the literature (Sirin & Aber, 2018), the present study aimed to investigate the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents. Through one-on-one semi-structured interviews, the

interpretive phenomenological approach to data collection provided a comprehensive picture of Syrian refugee parents' resettlement and obtaining supports for their autistic child(ren) cross-contextually. Support and services are managed provincially, with FSCD providing funding to eligible families of children with disabilities in Alberta (Government of Alberta, 2021a).

Therefore, this study investigated Syrian refugee families in Alberta to ensure sample homogeneity for data analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Through investigating the lived experiences of Syrian refugees regarding supports and services for their children during their pre- and post-migration, this study aims to enhance culturally responsive practice and service delivery for Syrian refugees. In addition, this study aims to promote autism-related knowledge in migrant populations through understanding their experiences and perspectives with supports and services for their children. In sum, this study aims to inform diversity research, responsive practice, service needs, service delivery, and an overall understanding regarding the experiences of Syrian refugee family that have children on the autism spectrum. This study addressed the following research question: How has the lived experience of resettling in Alberta and accessing supports/services been for Syrian refugee families with an autistic child?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Developing an effective research design entails consideration of the philosophical, theoretical, and methodological underpinnings of different paradigms. Broadly, the empirico-analytical paradigm is rooted within the scientific method, which infers causal or correlative results based on empirical data (Fossey et al., 2002). Alternatively, Fossey et al. detailed two qualitative inquiry paradigms: interpretive and critical designs. The distinction between these paradigms is delineated below:

“while interpretive approaches emphasize meanings inherent in human experience and action, regardless of their individual or collective origin, critical approaches emphasize the social and historical origins and contexts of meaning, regardless of the individual or collective forms of embodiment and expression they might take” (p. 720).

The present study employed an interpretive paradigm rooted within qualitative inquiry, which “describe(s) and explain(s) persons’ experiences, behaviours, interactions and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantification” (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 717). Selecting one qualitative approach over another is a methodical process in which researchers should consider various philosophical assumptions (e.g., ontology and epistemology), the research question (Creswell et al., 2007), and various models to inquiry (e.g., positivism, post-positivism, constructivism; Creswell et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Teherani et al., 2015). It is important to scrutinize one’s approach to qualitative inquiry since it “act(s) as a pivotal frame” (p. 669) by which a study is formulated, constructed, and executed (Teherani et al., 2015).

This chapter details the method of the study through developing an understanding of qualitative research design by describing qualitative research, common approaches to qualitative inquiry, and theoretical considerations, which includes a discussion of philosophical assumptions

and models to inquiry. Next the chapter will provide a description and rationale for Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the chosen qualitative approach. This chapter will then detail the procedure, method of data collection, and process of data analysis. The topic of evaluating qualitative research will be discussed to document the feasibility, fidelity, and authenticity of IPA as the chosen approach to qualitative inquiry. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a detailed exploration of considerations in cross-language research.

Research Design

As specified in Creswell and Poth (2018), a research design is a systematic process that encompasses and intertwines the research question, its data, analysis, and conclusions (Yin, 2009). That is, a research design includes all steps of the scientific process, which includes stating a research problem, constructing research question(s), establishing and executing the method, interpreting the results, and finalizing the written composition of a project (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Broadly, quantitative and qualitative research paradigms are two overarching design methods (Pathak et al., 2013). This study selected IPA as a qualitative research method to investigate the lived experience of supports for Syrian refugee parents of autistic children.

Comparing Qualitative and Quantitative Designs

Despite clear distinctions in how quantitative and qualitative methods work with data, both have important similarities. Each aim to describe a phenomenon and may use “variables, constructs, and hypotheses” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 108). In addition, both consider the researcher’s role and their level of interaction with reality when developing a study. Some qualitative methods, such as grounded theory, also aim to advance theory through using data in similar ways to quantitative research methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As evidenced by the

literature, there is considerable overlap between both methods that can blur any imposed divide between these research paradigms (Sukamolson, 2007).

Although it is important to draw from both quantitative and qualitative research to inform clinical practice (Fossey et al., 2002), the methods of inquiry have clear differences. Firstly, the purpose of qualitative research is to investigate a topic and its variables deeply, whereas quantitative research typically uses specific measures to isolate variables at certain time points (Yardley, 2000). Quantitative methods are often deductive and statistically informed approaches that are used by researchers to infer a relation between two concepts and/or variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These variables are considered to answer a research question and are measured and represented numerically (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sukamolson, 2007). Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicate that quantitative theories are investigated through identifying gaps in knowledge, testing theories, and attempting to explain a phenomenon through relation between variables. Indeed, quantitative research is complex and contains various approaches including, but not limited to, methods that investigate differences between variables, group differences, causality, and factor structure (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). In sum, quantitative research inherently strives for objectivity because it derives and represents its data statistically (Sukamolson, 2007).

In contrast, qualitative methods typically sample fewer participants to investigate experiences or specific situations (Yardley, 2000). This method utilizes inductive as well as deductive components within the methodological process to establish themes and derive meaning from data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Many, but not all (e.g., observational research), qualitative methods answer research question through data situated within what the participants say (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Yardley (2000), qualitative research is primarily

concerned with situations, experiences, culture, language, and other factors that can be observed in groups of people through what they voice. In addition, qualitative research may begin with theoretical propositions, but, ultimately, meaning and phenomenon is derived from the data as described by participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method of inquiry is more subjective and views reality as constructed by humans (Sukamolson, 2007).

Qualitative Research

Through engaging in qualitative inquiry, researchers can develop an understanding of human experience, perception, and other aspects of their social being (Fossey et al., 2002). According to Pathak et al. (2013), “Qualitative research focuses in understanding a research query as a humanistic or idealistic approach” (p. 192). Specifically, qualitative inquiry aims to “understand people’s beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour and interactions” without the use of numerical data (Pathak et al., 2013, p. 192). Qualitative research has gained traction and is considered a method that contributes to research from perspectives otherwise inaccessible by quantitative research (Pathak et al., 2013). Qualitative research approaches interact with scientific knowledge through different facets, which can bolster understanding of research topics through deepening and broadening knowledge (Fossey et al., 2002).

There are several characteristics that are key to understanding qualitative approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). First, qualitative data analysis and interpretation may include processes of either or both inductive and deductive reasoning. The process of inductive reasoning includes analyzing small units of information and recognizing patterns between them to categorize those unit into abstract themes. After the inductive process, researchers may deductively find evidence to support the themes that they have contrived. Secondly, qualitative researchers are responsible for gaining and interpreting their data from the perspective of

participants and not any personal pre-existing notions. Researchers do not rely on pre-developed instruments for interpretation but may use protocols for data collection. Thirdly, qualitative researchers may derive their interpretations through multiple sources of data that they have collected. Lastly, qualitative inquiry is a dynamic and fluid process that cannot be bounded by predictions because the researcher may have to adjust their design based on the information provided by participants.

Importantly, Fossey et al. (2002) noted that extensive engagement and reflexivity are key characteristics within the qualitative inquiry process. Reflexivity refers to the researcher's ability to be self-aware of one's background, beliefs, and any pre-existing notions that may influence data interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fossey et al., 2002). Reflexivity is important to consider so researchers can understand how they impact the unfolding of studies and the extent to which their presuppositions may be confounding or valuable. Next, extensive engagement refers to recognizing that information obtained from the study are embedded contextually within participants and their world (Fossey et al., 2002). Thus, to best understand the meaning of the information gained, researchers should engage with "participants in their social worlds" (p. 728).

There are three main underlying belief systems that guide research methods: positivism, post-positivism, and constructivism (Teherani et al., 2015). According to Teherani et al., positivist beliefs underlie most quantitative inquiry where researchers believe that there is one reality that can be directly measured and understood experimentally. In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative inquiry is typically based upon post-positivist or constructivist beliefs. Like positivism, post-positivism espouses that reality and truth exist; however, this paradigm suggests that truth and reality are immeasurable and filtered through perspectives that are subjected to individual and environmental differences. Constructivist beliefs posit that reality and knowledge

are created and influenced by the interactions between researcher, participant, and environment. This perspective suggests that there are multiple realities, as opposed to a single truth, and that reality is co-constructed with meaning that is subjectively derived (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is important to consider post-positivism and constructivism and how they underlie qualitative inquiry because these belief systems inform the research question and the chosen methodological approach (Teherani et al., 2015). As a result, ontology, epistemology, and axiology will be discussed in the context of the present research study to explore the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the present research.

Theoretical and Philosophical Considerations

Considering the theoretical underpinnings of qualitative inquiry is integral to identifying a suitable approach to address the research question(s) as well as the process of executing the qualitative study. Creswell et al. (2007) indicated that selecting a qualitative approach includes:

“philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), how they know what is known (epistemology), the inclusion of their values (axiology), the nature in which their research emerges (methodology), and their writing structures (rhetorical)” (p. 238).

An intact philosophical understanding is important because ontology and epistemology inform research paradigms that underlie science. Researchers are required to identify and state their theoretical and philosophical frameworks to ensure trustworthiness and preserve authenticity of the methodology (Tebes, 2005). Indeed, philosophical and theoretical perspectives are important for researchers to identify and conduct an appropriate research approach (Mayan, 2009).

Ontology

Ontology is “the nature of reality and the nature of the human being” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 183). Identifying what the researcher believes to be known within the social world and

what exists within it, is pivotal to selecting appropriate research methods to obtain and analyze data about unique topics or perspectives (Al-Saadi, 2014; Berryman, 2019). Ontological questions in research refer to whether reality is separate from or embedded within human reality, experience, and perspectives (Ormston et al., 2013). Idealism (relativism) and realism are two underlying ontological positions that guide research practice (Ormston et al., 2013). Within these broad frameworks, there are several specific ontological positions, such as subtle realism, depth realism, subtle idealism, and radical idealism (Ormston et al., 2013). Realism asserts that there is a single reality whereas idealism asserts that there are multiple realities that are co-constructed by social agents (Ormston et al., 2013). Indeed, it is clear how positivist, post-positivist, and constructivist beliefs guide different ontological approaches based on the conception of reality. If placed on a spectrum, there would be various approaches that vary in their level of idealism (multiple realities) and realism (single reality). For example, based on descriptions in the literature, naïve realism would be the most positivist, followed by structural realism, critical realism, bounded relativism (idealism), relativism (idealism), and nominalism as the most constructivist perspective (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Ormston et al., 2013). Certainly, there are several ontological perspectives that describe research and the researcher's worldview.

This researcher adheres to the post-positivist paradigm and acknowledges that a truth exists but is filtered through human perception. In line with this researcher's belief and corresponding with this study's research question, a post-positivist paradigm was selected to explore the lived experiences of Syrian refugees through their perspectives. More specifically, this researcher adheres to a critical realist ontological perspective, which was also the approach that aligned with the present research. According to Braun & Clarke (2013) critical realism underlies IPA research and is a "theoretical approach that assumes an ultimate reality but claims

that the way reality is experienced and interpreted is shaped by culture, language, and political interests” (p. 329). This perspective asserts that Syrian refugees’ reality is filtered through their subjective and socially informed perspective. The understanding of subjectivity corresponds with the notion that “reality consists of different levels” (Ormston et al., 2013, p. 6), which suggests that researchers capture a partial reality through participant experiences of phenomena. In fact, critical realism asserts that absolute truth cannot be ascertained since reality is filtered through the diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and worldviews of individuals (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

This researcher acknowledges that there are multiple realities for individuals, not because no external reality exists but because the absolute true reality cannot be ascertained. This interpretation aligns with one of the descriptions of multiple realities in Lee (2012) and is informed by post-positivism. That is, “although we live in the same world, there is not any set of categories into which the ‘raw stuff’ of the world falls naturally” (Lee, 2012, p. 406). Alternatively, Lee (2012) proposes a second interpretation of multiple realities that considers that human cognition constructs realities to be distinct from other realities. The present researcher holds that there are “multiple truths” (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013, p. 94) within reality based on how individuals unconsciously classify their understanding and experience of the phenomenon.

It is important to note that researchers have inherent subjectivity that can confound their intent to represent participant experiences authentically. As a result, researcher reflexivity should identify and aim to minimize any factors that can bias interpretation. Crucially, researchers have their own diverse cultural and social backgrounds that can influence how they interact with participants and, in turn, influence how they interpret participant experience. Since researchers gather participants’ created meanings and aim to “reconstruct these meanings into scientific

knowledge” (Uddin & Hamiduzzaman, 2011, p. 658), adopting a critical realism ontological perspective is warranted. In fact, in line with critical realism, it is crucial to acknowledge that participant experience is distinct, and yet still within an authentic reality. This understanding allows researchers to produce meaningful knowledge that elicits change.

Indeed, the existence, or lack thereof, of supports for Syrian refugees is a reality independent from human perception; however, their “subjective and socially-located knowledge” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 27) may impact access to those services. To this end participant experience shapes their perspective of supports, ability to acquire supports, and the implications those supports have for their family. As suggested in the literature (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2013), the overall ontological framework of critical realism neither denies an ultimate reality nor accepts that reality is fixed and true.

Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the philosophy of understanding how knowledge is created, how it originates, and how we know what we know (Steup & Neta, 2020). That is, epistemology considers “ways of knowing and learning about the world” (Ormston et al., 2013, p. 6), and concerns assumptions about “the very bases of knowledge - its nature and form, how it can be acquired and how communicated to other human beings” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 7). Importantly, epistemology explores what knowledge is and the extent to which knowledge is true and “possible to know” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 29), as well as “*how* meaningful knowledge can be generated” (p. 29). This understanding of epistemology relates to and is embedded within the philosophical advancements of Kant (1781/1999) who suggested that humans experience discernible realities that emerge as filtered realities (Emery & Anderman, 2020). In this sense, researchers are unable to access the absolute aspects of existence (noumena) but can derive an

understanding of human experience through their filtered consciousness (Emery & Anderman, 2020). That is, according to Kant, some knowledge is a priori, which is intrinsic to human reasoning and independent from all empirical experiences of the world such as space, time, and numbers (Rohlf, 2020; Russell, 2020). Therefore, the a priori facets of knowledge are preconceived and, ultimately, generate knowledge through predetermined filters (McCormick, n.d.; Rohlf, 2020). Kant's understanding of epistemology and ontology led to his description of the phenomenal (what we experience) and noumenal (what exists, but we cannot access) world (Rohlf, 2020).

There are several processes in which one could acquire knowledge about the social world: induction, deduction, retroduction, and abduction (Blaikie, 2007; Ormston et al., 2013). Induction builds knowledge through synthesizing smaller units of information whereas deduction uses preconceived information as evidence to support an already existing theory (Ormston et al., 2013). Retroduction attempts to discern patterns in data; abduction categorizes participant expressions into various contrived thematic nodes (Ormston et al., 2013). Like many qualitative designs, IPA is primarily an inductive approach to data analysis and interpretation, which allows ongoing re-examination and re-evaluation of knowledge generation based on emerging information. (Smith et al., 2009). Although hypotheses are not generated, researchers develop and design qualitative studies with pre-existing knowledge and, so, "there is no such thing as 'pure' induction or 'pure' deduction" (Ormston et al., 2013, p. 6). Therefore, this research project utilized inductive reasoning during analysis and interpretation while acknowledging the influence of deduction when developing the research, its question, applying the results to theory, and using supportive evidence. Since abduction and retroduction aim to construct theory or frameworks for understanding phenomena (Eastwood et al., 2014; Tavory & Timmermans,

2014), these processes were not utilized as the purpose of this study was to understand phenomena as opposed to construct a theory that accounts for it (Smith et al., 2009).

It is important to consider the extent to which the social agents (researcher and participant) interact with and influence the research process (Ormston et al., 2013). In this regard, knowledge that is viewed to be *objective* and *tangible* will require researchers to ascribe to observation and the scientific method (Al-Saadi, 2014), which corresponds with empiricism as a realist epistemological perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Empiricism has roots in the positivist paradigm, which ascertains truth through “observation and experimentation” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 330). Contrastively, *subjective* and *personal* knowledge requires interaction with participants (Al-Saadi, 2014) relating to constructionism as a relativist epistemological perspective (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Constructionist epistemologies assert that multiple ‘knowledges’ are co-constructed and socially produced in a world where that knowledge is dynamic and understood through various sociocultural facets (Braun & Clarke, 2013). According to Braun and Clarke, contextualism is an epistemology that extracts concepts from both empiricism and constructionism. Contextualism does not “assume a *single* reality, and sees knowledge as emerging from multiple contexts” (p. 31), which interacts with the researcher as a social agent and is “local, situated, and therefore always provisional” (p.31). This researcher adheres to and declares contextualism as his epistemological framework along with critical realism as his ontological position. Contextualism as the epistemological framework for the present study aligns with both critical realism and Kant’s explanation of knowledge acquisition. In fact, Braun and Clarke indicated that contextualism is an epistemology that aligns with the critical realism ontological framework. This researcher acknowledges that, with contextualism,

no method can access the ultimate truth (Kant's noumena), but knowledge is contextually dependent, which makes it true (Tebes, 2005).

As empiricism, contextualism, and constructionism are epistemological frameworks that explain how knowledge is generated, there are several epistemological applications of these frameworks for research. Consider that empiricism believes that knowledge generation is objective/tangible, constructionism views knowledge generation as subjective/personal, and contextualism asserts that knowledge generation is contextually dependent and has multiple truths (Al-Saadi, 2014; Braun & Clarke, 2013). The interpretive epistemological application is rooted within the notion that knowledge is acquired through investigating peoples' perspectives and experience, which is then interpreted by researchers (Ormston et al., 2013). This epistemological application aims to consider the experience of the participants and understand it (Ormston et al., 2013), which is in line with the purpose of the present study and this researcher's epistemological (contextualism) and ontological (critical realism) positions. That is, the goal of this study is to investigate the lived experiences of Syrian refugees with the understanding that "knowledge is produced by exploring and understanding the social world of the people being studied" (Al-Saadi, 2014, p. 7). In contrast to positivist epistemological positions, this project's interpretivist lens asserts that researchers must "explore and understand the social world through participants and their perspectives" (Ormston et al., 2013, p. 24). Consider the example illustrated in Scotland (2012) about how meaning is developed through interacting with the world: "We need to remind ourselves that it is human beings who have constructed it as a tree, given it the name, and attributed to it the association we make with trees" (Crotty, 1998, p. 43).

Axiology

Researchers conducting qualitative studies are encouraged to consider their axiological perspective to remain cognizant of their values, how they act, and the implications of their beliefs in research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In essence, axiology considers what the researcher holds in high esteem based on their worldview and living context, such as societal and cultural dimensions (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016; Hill, 1984). Indeed, as Hill indicated, values are at the forefront of how knowledge is produced and how research is undertaken. To that end, “research is value laden and includes the value systems of the inquirer, the theory, the paradigm used, and the social and cultural norms for either the inquirer or the respondents” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 416). Carter & Little (2007) described that “axiology relates to epistemology in two ways” (p. 1322). Firstly, epistemological perspectives consider values to elucidate the suitability of their research. Secondly, epistemological perspectives are encompassed by axiological frameworks because values orchestrate how the knowledge is generated, interpreted, and relayed. Therefore, in line with Creswell and Poth, this researcher acknowledges that there are inherent biases attached to the values underlying their scientific approach.

To remain reflexive and assert the authenticity of this project, this researcher will report his values and biases that relate to this research project. In congruence with guidelines set out by researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Berger, 2015) I will specify my social position, personal position, and political/professional ideological position. Firstly, I am a 25-year-old Canadian-born first-time father who is currently lower-middle income and was socialized in a low-income family for sizeable portion of my childhood. My Middle Eastern background from my maternal side is an important part of my identity. I was socialized with Middle Eastern values, beliefs, and customs that intersected with my Canadian values of where I was born and raised. My social position contributes to my greater emphasis on equity rather than equality. This emphasis on

equity and opportunity is due to the collectivist nature of Middle Eastern culture as well as my personal experiences with low-income living. Both my cultural and parental background has instilled strong family values. Although I will be interviewing parents, I recognize that there is variability in how individuals value family. Therefore, it is important for me to limit any assumptions of how participants value family. In addition, I value safety and belongingness, which interacts with this research because of the dangerous and difficult transitions that many Syrian refugees experienced because of the crisis. Importantly, however, due to my upbringing in a stable socio-political society that values multiculturalism, I have never experienced significant or constant threats to my safety and belongingness. As a result, I strive to avoid any bias that would superimpose my understanding of safety and belonging upon the participants. In addition, I strive to immerse myself in the data to appreciate the participant's perspectives and experiences with safety and belongingness.

As a new father, my parenting views are still in development. I value establishing routine, promoting independence, encouraging positive parent-child relationships, and ensuring a safe, enriching, and protecting environment. In addition, I value my role in educating and providing opportunity to my daughter. Despite these values and ideals, I acknowledge that, as a new father, I am unable to understand completely the complexities and nuances of childrearing at various points in a child's developmental trajectory. In addition, I acknowledge that parenting practices may differ as a function of context, environment, circumstance, and diversity. Therefore, I aim to be reflexive of my views on parenting during data collection and analysis to ensure that my values do not permeate the research. This reflexivity will allow for me to appreciate the parenting practices of the participants to ensure that I glean the information authentically and bolster the credibility of the present study.

As a student as well as an individual who has worked with autistic children for several years, my professional ideology is rooted within the scientist-practitioner model. As such, my knowledge of autism is informed by research, evidence-based practice, and professional experience. Specifically, I view autism as a heterogeneous neurodevelopmental condition with variety in severity and behavioural expression that occurs globally and requires individualized, personalized, and specialized support. I recognize that many of the parents who participate in the study will have a varying knowledge base of autism. In addition, their notions of autism may be informed by culture, socialized experiences, and/or societal perceptions. To ensure I am reflexive of my role as an autism researcher in-training, it is important for me to be reflexive of my understanding of autism to gain insight into the participant's views and knowledge of autism.

In terms of my political ideology, I neither subscribe to conservatism nor liberalism on the polar ends of the political spectrum. In fact, my political ideology aligns with center-left beliefs and values where my beliefs are based on policy rather than a specific political fabric. I am supportive of humanitarianism, diversity, and accepting of social policies aimed to serve those with need. Similarly, I value social justice, cultural responsiveness, and equity within my professional beliefs. Given these values, it is likely that I will approach this project with a bias toward co-constructing the results with a social justice lens. Remaining cognizant of these beliefs will ensure that I interpret the finding authentically and not superimpose my values onto the findings of this project.

Theoretical Considerations

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), theoretical perspectives are pivotal to guiding both researcher queries and the research process regarding marginalized groups. Creswell and Creswell specified several different theoretical perspectives that can guide the

methodological approach, inform researcher reflexivity, and influence the research findings. Since Syrian refugees are a population that has experienced discrimination (Oudshoorn et al., 2020), this project considered examining issues through an established theoretical lens. Some theories that were considered included critical theory and social justice theory. Critical theory looks at social issues, such as race and class, and aims to “empower human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 108). Social justice theory collaboratively investigates minority groups to investigate ways to change issues relating to power and social experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

After careful consideration, the primary researcher determined that not subscribing to a predetermined theoretical lens would be best suited for present research project. According to Ormston et al. (2013), identifying a theoretical lens imbues pre-conceived notions instead of drawing meaning from the themes that emerge from data analysis. For example, a critical theory lens will aim to interpret data through race and class (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which may bias the data content. Indeed, although there are arguments that theory is pivotal for guiding the method and observation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), claiming an explicit theoretical lens is less congruent with IPA:

“Still, one sees qualitative studies that contain no *explicit* theoretical orientation, such as in phenomenology, in which inquirers attempt to build the essence of experience from participants. In these studies, the inquirer constructs a rich, detailed description of the central phenomenon.” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 109).

Therefore, this project will draw from the theoretical underpinnings of IPA, which are phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography, which will be discussed in the IPA section of this chapter. Ensuring that these theoretical foundations are embedded in this project will control

for methodological confounds that challenge researchers that do not abide by a theory. This overall process will ensure the quality control outlined in Yardley (2000).

Evaluating Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is consistent with ontological and epistemological perspectives that assert that reality and knowledge lack measurable truth. Therefore, reliability, replicability, and other traditional criteria of quantitative rigor are not applicable to qualitative methods (Yardley, 2000). In the absence of traditional criteria, it is important to establish qualitative rigor to affirm the validity of qualitative work (Yardley, 2000). Certainly, researchers have expressed concern regarding qualitative inquiry rigor (Amin et al., 2020). Therefore, using Yardley's metrics of qualitative rigor (Yardley, 2000), the following sections will describe four characteristics of quality research, which the present study adopted. These criteria were embraced to establish evidence-based quality control and confirm the validity and credibility of the results. After discussing the four components of quality research, this section will discuss additional techniques from the literature that relate to and supplement Yardley (2000).

Sensitivity to Context

As proposed by Yardley (2000) qualitative projects have theoretical, social, and socio-cultural contexts that are important to ensure qualitative rigor. Indeed, it is essential to consider meritorious research that has used the qualitative method of interest to ensure validity in research. This is especially important for qualitative work where there are no standardized measures for data collection. Part of ensuring validity is taking a balanced approach to data analysis. That is, researchers should use their proficiency in understanding the theoretical foundations of a method to enrich data interpretation while remaining sensitive to and exploring findings that are less congruent with the researcher's current understanding. Next, Yardley's

description of the social context considers that “the relationship between the investigators and the participants can be crucial (Yardley, 2000, p. 220). To this end, it is important for researchers to be sensitive to the linguistic context, participant/researcher characteristics, and power imbalance (Yardley, 2000). Remaining sensitive of these factors entails researcher reflexivity, dialogic analysis, and eliciting feedback from the participants to reduce the power imbalance (Yardley, 2000). Lastly, given the diversity of both the participants and the researcher, it is important to contextualize the study through discussing linguistic, cultural, and historical variables. Considering this socio-cultural context also includes researcher reflexivity (Yardley, 2000), which will be described in a subsequent section (*Transparency and Coherence*).

Commitment and Rigour

The commitment and rigour criteria refer to techniques that are essential for data collection, analysis, and discussion to be valid and thorough (Yardley, 2000). Yardley stated that prolonged engagement is essential to show commitment and thoroughness in a study. According to Amin et al. (2020), prolonged engagement allows for researchers to gain breadth in a topic by gleaning information from multiple contexts interacting with the phenomenon. To ensure rigour, Yardley suggests that researchers engage in a sophisticated exploration of the topic or triangulation, which refers to a technique that analyzes the research question in various ways and through multiple lenses to bolster credibility (Amin et al., 2020). Indeed, a deep, thorough, and sophisticated interpretive approach is important for establishing authentic results. Certainly, “Authenticity is the extent to which researchers fairly and completely show a range of different realities and realistically convey participants’ lives” (Connelly, 2016, p. 436; Polit & Beck, 2014). Authenticity consists of fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (Amin et al., 2020). Fairness pertains to the process by

which researchers ensure that all perspectives and realities are considered during the research and interpretation procedure (Amin et al., 2020). Amin et al. described ontological authenticity as enhancing introspective understanding of relevant knowledge and the ways that knowledge is bolstered. Next, catalytic authenticity refers to how the study induces real world implications. Lastly, tactical authenticity concerns how the participants will take initiative in implementing the message, findings, or implications of the study (Amin et al., 2020).

Transparency and Coherence

Like commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence are also important to consider during data collection and analysis. To ensure transparency and coherence, researchers should ensure that the techniques and philosophical assumptions fit the research question and that they are writing to “construct a version of reality” (Yardley, 2000, p. 222). Addressing trustworthiness in qualitative research is important for transparency as well as an accountable research process (Amin et al., 2020; Elo et al., 2014). Trustworthiness is the extent to which quality is ensured through “confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used” (Connelly, 2016, p. 435). According to these researchers, trustworthiness is contrived from credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility is similar to internal validity and refers to the inherent truth and accuracy based on pre-established standards and procedures for the study (Connelly, 2016; Polit & Beck, 2014). Next, dependability refers to data stability akin to the function of reliability in quantitative research (Connelly, 2016; Polit & Beck, 2014). Like the concept of objectivity, confirmability ensures that findings “are consistent and could be repeated” (Connelly, 2016, p. 435; Polit & Beck, 2014). Finally, transferability focuses on how results extend to other contexts, which is like generalization, but does not imply that participant experiences are representative of the population (Connelly, 2016; Polit & Beck, 2014).

In addition, transparency can be achieved by thoroughly detailing the data process and constraints, including data excerpts, and reflexivity (Yardley, 2000). Reflexivity is the metacognitive awareness of the researcher's subjectivity through their beliefs, values, biases, background, and experiences (Collins & Stockton, 2018; Yardley, 2000). Indeed, the way that the researcher is socialized as well as how they view the world can impact the research process, interpretation of the findings, and their role interacting with the participant (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In line with the suggestions of Creswell and Creswell, I will disclose relevant past experiences and how it may influence my interpretations throughout the study.

Reflexive Disclosure. I was socialized with a diverse cultural and religious upbringing that has influenced my personal ontological and epistemological perspectives. I believe that there is an absolute truth in reality, but it is immeasurable and impacted by individual factors, consistent with critical realism. Akin to the epistemology of this study, I also view knowledge acquisition as coming from several contexts and influenced by the social agents.

My diverse background is important to consider in the context of this project where I interact with participants and interpret the data yielded from them. Given that Syria has a majority Muslim population (87%; CIA, 2021) and I am a Muslim, it is possible that some participants may be practicing Muslims. As religion is a strong contributor to identity (Gollnick & Chinn, 2013), Muslim participants may feel increased comfort in sharing their experiences with me. In addition, I am of Middle Eastern descent, which could bolster the rapport that I am able to establish with participants due to shared identity. Alternatively, parents could have more reservations due to perceptions that the Arab community is deeply intertwined, which may lead to a perception of reduced privacy. To obtain authentic data, it is important to emphasize the significance and process of confidentiality.

My understanding of Islam may inadvertently bias my interpretation of any experience that is communicated from a religious lens. Indeed, there are various degrees of faith and Islamic sects that I should remain cognizant of during the interpretive process. Despite ensuring that I minimize the impact of these biases, my Islamic and Middle Eastern background is valuable for interpretation. I have an established understanding of various religious, cultural, and societal nuances that will allow for me to empathize with participants and enrich the interpretation of the data. Specifically, I have a peripheral understanding of the sociocultural dynamics of Middle Eastern families and societies that can aid with accurate data interpretation. This peripheral understanding is due to that fact that most of my socialized experiences were in Canada. Therefore, I should remain sensitive to the extensive gaps in my knowledge regarding how Middle Eastern nations function, especially those experiencing turmoil.

In addition to my Lebanese background, I have Syrian friends and family. Specifically, my great-grandmother is Syrian and my great-grandfather fled Syria decades ago, resettling in Canada. Members of my extended family have either fell victim to the Syrian crisis or fled Syria as a refugee during the Syrian crisis. These experiences are important for myself, as a researcher, to be reflexive of as my indirect experiences may have a subjective influence during the interview and interpretation process. Specifically, it is possible that hearing about stories of asylum may induce recall of similar stories I have heard from family members, which may taint the interpretation process with emotion and reduced objectivity. Remaining cognizant of this will allow for me to ensure that I am objective toward the lived experiences of participants while using my pre-existing knowledge of the Middle East, Islam, Arab culture, and Arab social customs to enhance interpretation.

Impact and Importance

Yardley (2000) described that the utility, “theoretical worth” (p. 223), and socio-cultural impact of the study are important determinants of quality research. Research should be rich in implications, applications, and purpose for the phenomenon being studied. Certainly, “the link between QMs (qualitative methodologies) and clinical practice may become so close that the two can be combined” (Yardley, 2000, p. 24). Therefore, qualitative research should have function for inducing change for peoples, policies, and/or practice.

Literature-Informed Techniques for Quality Control

There are several techniques that can be used to ensure that qualitative research is transparent and trustworthy. These techniques include “prolonged engagement, persistent observation, referential adequacy, member checking, triangulation, negative case analysis, thick contextual description, external audit/audit trail, and reflexivity and transparency” (Amin et al., 2020, p. 2). In addition, peer debriefing is a technique that bolsters credibility (Amin et al., 2020). Although there are several different techniques, only those incorporated into the study design will be described in detail. The techniques not included in the study were referential adequacy, negative case analysis, peer debriefing, triangulation, and external audit. Not all strategies were opted for inclusion due to limited resources (e.g., lack of access to an external auditor or peer to triangulate), sample limitations for conducting a negative case analysis, and constraints regarding the feasibility to employ an exhaustive list of techniques. The definitions for the included techniques are explained below and their inclusion in the research process will be elucidated in the relevant sections throughout this chapter.

First, prolonged engagement is similar to extensive engagement as it highlights the importance of gaining contextual knowledge of a cultural group through spending time with participants and being aware of influence and any pre-existing biases (Amin et al., 2020). Next,

persistent observation aims to go into depth on topics most pertinent to what is being investigated based on the research question (Amin et al., 2020; Bush & Amechi, 2019). Member checking ensures credibility of the qualitative study by confirming the analysis and study interpretations with the participants (Amin et al., 2020), allowing the researcher to claim that “the work adequately presents own and multiple realities” (p. 3) and identify any changes or additions that should be made. Consulting with knowledgeable peers through working in teams reduces researcher bias through obtaining multiple perspectives (Squires et al., 2020). This researcher consulted with an independent bilingual research assistant to obtain another perspective on his analysis of Arabic phrases to inform the data. Thick contextual description is a technique that aids the reader in absorbing the results of the study through meticulously outlining details pertinent to illustrating the study, its context, and results (Amin et al., 2020). Finally, reflexivity encourages the “researcher to be attentive to their role in the construction of knowledge” as they conduct the research (Amin et al., 2020, p. 7).

Alternative Analytical Methods

There are several qualitative approaches to address various research questions and obtain essential data, such as grounded theory, ethnography, narrative research, case study, and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Padgett, 2014). Several of these methods contain aspects worthy of consideration for implementation of the project and, so, could have been selected. These methods were not chosen based the meaning-making purpose of the study, aims to “describe the essence of the experience” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 193), alignment of IPA with the research question, compatibility with this researcher’s ontological and epistemological position, and the congruence of theoretical tenets that underly this study with that of IPA (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Smith et al., 2009).

Chosen Research Design

The selected method, IPA, “is a qualitative approach that aims to provide detailed examinations of personal lived experience” (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 41). The purpose of IPA is to enrich an understanding of how individuals conceptualize their experiences and sociocultural contexts without being operationalized by pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Smith & Osborn, 2007). The objective of IPA aligns with the purpose of the present study, which is to investigate the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children and how they attach meaning to their experiences. The present study aimed to extract tenor from participant experiences as opposed to legitimizing a theory to explain participant experience. That is, IPA is “participant-oriented” (Alase, 2017, p. 9) such that the participants’ lived experiences and the meaning of those experiences are not only authentic to them but are pivotal to the results and findings. Importantly, IPA recognizes the inherent difficulty with expressing one’s experience and, hence, researchers assume a role in both adopting what the participant means and interpreting their psychological state based on what is said (Smith & Osborn, 2015). According to Smith et al. (2009), IPA as a theoretical framework is founded upon three philosophical areas: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography. Akin to Smith et al., this section will first describe each philosophical underpinning. Then this section will then outline key features of IPA before describing the research procedure.

Phenomenology

All phenomenological approaches aim to study human experience in terms of identified phenomena (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology considers a person’s perception of their experiences and maintains the notion that individual experiences are situated within environments that have various contributing factors (Smith et al., 2009). This notion of

phenomenology is important because “In IPA research, our attempts to understand other people’s relationship to the world are necessarily interpretative” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 24) based on how the participant attempts to attach meaning to their experiences. In essence, phenomenology aims to explore and understand lived experiences through the perspective of those who sustain phenomena (Smith et al., 2009). As will be detailed, Husserl and Heidegger are two foundational writers upon which phenomenology is based.

Husserl. To Husserl, phenomenology is a descriptive process that aimed to specify the experiences and perception of participants while bracketing, which is a process for researchers to separate their own pre-conceived notions from the study (Smith et al., 2009). This process requires researchers to be aware of their perceptions and interpretations so as to separate them from the experience in an authentic sense (Smith et al., 2009).

Husserl’s phenomenology views investigations of an experience of a phenomenon as a first-order knowledge system that precedes science as second-order knowledge (Smith et al., 2009). Certainly, based on these systems, Husserl viewed the study of experience as crucial to the way knowledge is created (Dowling, 2007). Husserl’s framework is centered around *intentionality*, which is a term to describe the intentional relation between a something tangible and the conscious process that creates an experience regarding that object (Smith et al., 2009). Intentionality consists of focusing attention on certain entities to describe experience and the reality of that experience (Smith et al., 2009). According to Husserl (1962), phenomenology is descriptive and reflects on phenomenon objectively, which echoes the standards of positivism. To engage in phenomenological study, researchers must be unbiased and investigate the essence of experience rigorously (Dowling, 2007). In fact, Husserl argued that “we should go back to the

things themselves” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 17) and study the essence of experience as opposed to our schemas of a particular phenomenon.

Heidegger. Heidegger’s work contrasted that of Husserl and set roots for hermeneutics (Smith et al., 2009). Through hermeneutics, Heidegger emphasized phenomenology as an interpretive rather than descriptive process (Dowling, 2007). Heidegger asserted that individuals are situated within environments and contexts that can influence their experience (Smith et al., 2009). The term *intersubjectivity* suggests that individuals have an ongoing interaction with the world and cannot separate their subjective relationship to an experience, and views experience through a subjective lens that is “always perspectival, always temporal, and always ‘in-relation-to’ something” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21). This notion of phenomenology emphasises interpretation because of the omnipresent relationships between individuals within the world, which influences IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, through the work of Heidegger, IPA considers that bracketing “can only be partially achieved” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28), which combines bracketing with reflexivity. According to this view of phenomenology, the interpretation of people’s lived experiences is crucial.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is a philosophical area of knowledge that regards the method of interpretation and has permeated the work of Heidegger as a phenomenological theorist (Smith et al., 2009). It is important to consider the crucial role hermeneutics plays in the philosophy of IPA because “phenomenology without hermeneutics can become shallow” (Todres & Wheeler, 2001, p. 6). Importantly, hermeneutics considers that certain characteristics can only be understood fully within their overarching context. The overarching context, in turn, can only be understood through compacting the meanings of individual parts, which is termed the hermeneutic circle

(Smith et al., 2009). Within the hermeneutic circle, there is an ongoing relation between a pre-existing understanding and a new understanding, which interacts through a reciprocal and iterative correspondence between the *whole* and its *parts*. As IPA is an interpretive approach, hermeneutics is a significant contribution to its theoretical framework. Thus, “IPA is concerned with examining how a phenomenon appears, and the analyst is implicated in facilitating and making sense of this appearance” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 31).

In contrast to Husserl, Heidegger viewed the understanding of phenomenon as “the situated meaning of a human in the world” (Lavery, 2003, p. 24), which is called ‘*dasein*’. Through this perspective, consciousness and worldly experience are not separate entities that can be bracketed (Lavery, 2003). Heidegger tied in phenomenology and hermeneutics through describing the nuanced relation between the perceptual nature of phenomenology and the analytical processes required to study the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009).

Gadamer. With roots set in Heidegger’s work, Gadamer progressed hermeneutic philosophy through his ideas that preconceptions as well as the reciprocal relationship between participant and researcher fuels understanding (Downing, 2007). According to Gadamer, interpretation is ongoing and it informs as well as is informed by understanding, which is a process of constructing meaning (Lavery, 2003). Gadamer viewed bracketing as something that is impossible as individuals are embedded in their pre-understandings and situations (Lavery, 2003). To enrich our understanding of a phenomenon, the process of interpretation is described as studying a text with a certain knowledge schema to acquire new knowledge from that text to build on that schema (Smith et al., 2009). That is, there is an ongoing dialogue between “what we bring to the text, and what the text brings to us” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29). As a result of the

hermeneutic thinkers, IPA considers investigating the appearance of a phenomenon and what that phenomenon means through the lens of an interpreter (Smith et al., 2009).

Idiography

Idiography is centered around detailed and intimate accounts regarding the experiences of phenomena (Smith et al., 2009). That is, idiography “is concerned with the particular” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 31) as opposed to deducing knowledge from a group level. According to Smith et al., idiography informs IPA through advocating for depth and rigor in the data analysis as well as understanding the perspectives of participants in terms of their expressed experiences of phenomena. This detail-oriented approach to analysis justifies the small sample size that is purposefully sampled for IPA studies and highlights the value of conducting an in-depth analysis of several cases. Analytic induction is the method of analysis wherein single cases are examined and an a priori hypothesis is continually revised on an iterative basis as new evidence is investigated (Smith et al., 2009). After in-depth exploration of a single case is completed and treated individually, the researcher continues to analyse subsequent cases the same way before attempting a cross-case analysis (Smith et al., 2009). The final product of analytic induction is to derive a theoretical explanation that best describes most of the cases (Smith et al., 2009).

Although idiography focuses on the ‘particular’, the ‘general’ encompasses the ‘particular’ and must be acquiesced with the ‘particular’ (Smith et al., 2009). This nuanced interaction suggests that, through a detailed and specific analysis of cases, researchers can apply this exploration to the general phenomena that concerns other people (Smith et al., 2009). Hence, “IPA adopts analytic procedures for moving from single cases to more general statements” (p. 34). This analytical process is maintained while ensuring that the essence of the single cases is

not lost in the process as it would be in nomothetic research, which is more concerned with constructing general explanations.

Characteristics of IPA

Chiefly, and in line with contextualism, IPA considers how an individual makes sense of their experiences in terms of certain phenomena. To this end, Smith et al. (2009) elucidate that understanding the lived experiences of participants is done through an exploratory lens and with research questions that pay tribute to the meaning of their experience and how it informs their view of the world. When conducting IPA, Smith et al. suggested several key features of developing the research question. These features include considering the process of participant's experience, aiming to understand their meaning of that experience, and considering detail in their experience. Therefore, IPA uses purposeful sampling to glean data from participants who have experienced the phenomenon under study. In contrast to other methods of inquiry, IPA considers a sample that "represent(s) a perspective, rather than a population" (p. 50). Participant homogeneity is of utmost importance as it allows for researchers to compare participant experiences to adequately synthesize research findings.

Conducting IPA Research

Collecting Data

To conceptualize and derive detailed accounts of participant experiences, Smith et al. (2009) advocate for data collection methods that allow for an in-depth elicitation of experience. One-on-one semi-structured interviews are an ideal method allowing researchers to interact with participants in an open platform for participants to reflect upon and describe their lived experiences. This method allows researchers to gain a first-hand account of personal experience

and tailor follow-up questions to deepen their understanding. Indeed, this method of data collection gives “participants a space to think, speak, and be heard” (p. 58).

Importantly, semi-structured interviews also enable rapport between the researcher and participant, which is pivotal for obtaining detailed and genuine responses from participants that are free from judgement. To this end, participants are encouraged to share their experiences through open-ended and exploratory questions that are embedded within the overall research focus. This process allows for the flexibility of asking non-prescribed follow-up prompts while also still ensuring that the conversation is purposeful in terms of the research question(s). To collect data authentically, adequate interviewing skills are required, which consists of maintaining curiosity, being genuinely interested, and attuning to the participant’s reality as opposed to superimposing the researcher’s perspective. As the participant is the expert of their experience, the semi-structured format is crucial for allowing the participant to take the lead in how the interview unfolds. The overall objective of the data collection stage is to establish a rapport that cultivates trust and allows the interviewee to provide a rich in-depth description.

Transcribing the collected data is typically a laborious process that requires a meticulous and detail-oriented mindset. Smith et al. (2009) indicate that, within IPA’s focus, transcription must be verbatim, but the emphasis is on the content of what participants say and not on the prosody of how they say it. These researchers offer autonomy to researchers to transcribe social aspects that are pertinent to what will be analysed while ensuring that the entirety of the semantic information is transcribed.

Analysis

IPA’s data analysis is rooted within “its analytic focus” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 80) and, thus, does not include a definitively prescribed process. Despite this flexibility, researchers

typically analyse their data in a bottom-up process that begins with a descriptive line-by-line account of each interview. The researcher then conceptualizes the data through identifying key themes, which results in an interpretive account of the data through considering patterns across the participants' experiences to convey overarching themes. As lived experience of participants is the focal point of the research, Smith et al. suggest that the researcher consider participants' thoughts as part of their interpretation. These researchers provide direction in engaging in the complex nature of IPA through proposing several steps, which are not unidirectional in nature.

Step 1: Reading and Rereading. According to Smith et al. (2009), IPA analysis is a journey that begins with an initial immersion into the data through transcribing and reading the transcript several times. This process allows the researcher to interact with the data in a way that emphasises the participant's description. Although researchers may note initial impressions to conceptualize the data at this stage, the focus is on contextualizing and understanding what the participant is saying. The researcher should take a descriptive approach to absorbing what the participant explicitly says and focus on the content of what they are saying. The process of re-reading the data allows the researcher to formulate a structure of how the participant's detailed accounts fit into the interview structure.

Step 2: Initial Noting. This stage is one of the most laborious steps in the process as it requires the researcher to enhance their familiarity with the content of the transcript and the way the participant thinks about and conveys their experience (Smith et al., 2009). This process requires a deep engagement with the text through descriptive and interpretive noting to ensure that the commentary derived is comprehensive.

Descriptive noting consists of commentary on what the participants say and explicitly mean (Smith et al., 2009). Descriptive noting is important to the overall analysis because the

researcher will identify key words and phrases uttered by the participant. This process defines the participant's thoughts and experiences through what they literally say. As semantic interpretation is a key aspect of IPA, Smith and colleagues (2009) suggest processes to decontextualize the data to interact with the words the participant uses and their meaning.

Interpretive noting refers to commentary about the how and why of what the participant says, which may consist of linguistic and conceptual commentary (Smith et al., 2009). The way that people present their thoughts and experiences has great implications for overall meaning. Smith et al. indicate that pronoun use, prosody, and laughter are amongst the linguistic aspects of language that a researcher can consider. The second component of interpretive noting is conceptual commentary. This aspect of commentary requires researchers to move beyond the text to consider the participant's overall meaning and understanding of their experience. Researchers might integrate their own thoughts, perceptions, and understandings into the text to develop abstract concepts and ideas. In addition, researchers should consider any potential factors that may have influenced the participant to express their experience a certain way. The interpretive noting stage is important to ensure that the transcript analysis does not remain descriptive. Through utilizing creativity, critical thinking, and abstract thinking, the researcher can make an interpretation that will undergo substantiation. Indeed, a high level of researcher interpretation is essential, but it must have been "inspired by, and arose from attending to the participant's words, rather than being imported from outside" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 90).

Step 3: Developing Emerging Themes. Thus far in the process, the researcher has expended ample time and effort in understanding the data descriptively and interpretively, and expanding that dataset through their commentary (Smith et al., 2009). In this stage, researchers must develop a thematic sense of the data while concurrently preserving the intricacy of the data

and its harmonization with the original transcript. Indeed, this process is an art as much as it is a science. During this process, the researcher reorganizes the participant's indications in relation to themes for the analysis. The themes must relate back to the participants' understanding while tying in the abstract conceptualization superimposed by the researcher. Oftentimes, the themes are not explicitly uttered by the participants, but represent and connect to the meaning of what is said. As the process of analysis continues, the researcher's thoughts, understanding, and perceptions become increasingly interwoven into the overall interpretation. During this process, it is important to represent the overall themes while preserving the idiosyncrasies of each individual's experience. Assuredly, "At each stage the analysis does indeed take you further away from the participant and includes more of you" (p. 91).

Step 4: Searching for Connections Across Emergent Themes. After identifying, constructing, and chronologically ordering themes, "charting or mapping" the interrelations between the themes is the next step (Smith et al., 2009). To bridge connections between themes and understand how they relate to one another, Smith et al. propose several strategies to identify certain patterns. Abstraction identifies connections across related emergent themes and attempts to represent the essence of these themes through an overarching construct. Subsumption places more emphasis on one emergent theme, which fully accounts for the other emergent themes it relates to. Polarization draws contrast between themes to understand similar and opposing thematic forces to understand participant experience in a nuanced way. Contextualization identifies "the contextual or narrative elements" (p. 97) through considering time, culture, and/or key events. Numeration emphasises the salience of an emergent theme through the frequency in which the emergent theme was supported throughout the interview. Lastly, function highlights the significance of interpretive value through defining how the themes are presented (e.g.,

positive or negative attributions) to elucidate meaning. These processes were used during data analysis to derive the thematic structure of participant's emergent themes. The process of developing connections across themes is a reflexive and ongoing process that is transformative.

Step 5: Moving to the Next Case. As one moves from between analysis of each case, it is important to bracket the interpretations and conceptualizations that emerged from the previous case (Smith et al., 2009). As described in previous sections, bracketing refers to a process where the researcher isolates the “taken for granted world, in order to concentrate on our perception of that world” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 17), but not abandon that ‘taken for granted world’. In essence, researchers must ensure that pre-existing knowledge, experiences, biases, and beliefs do not taint the authentic interpretation of the current case (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Importantly, researchers must emphasize the individuality of each case by preventing their preconceived notions of the previous case to taint the new case. Bracketing allows for authenticity in the themes that emerge from subsequent cases and allows for any uniqueness to be identified. This process becomes increasingly challenging as the researcher interacts with each case comprehensively. Nonetheless, it is crucial to analyse each case as a blank slate to ensure that the cases are interpreted without inherent bias from the researcher's previous biases.

Bracketing and Bridling. Bracketing is an important process to “mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project” (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 81). Researchers are encouraged to engage in bracketing “(removing) the researcher's personal experiences from the ‘lived experiences’ of the research participants” (Alase, 2017, p. 17). This process ensures that researchers are reflexive of any pre-existing biases so they may eliminate them from data collection and analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Although bracketing is advised by some, others

argue that bracketing contradicts the underlying philosophy of phenomenological research (LeVasseur, 2003).

Instead, bridling is a process wherein researchers acknowledge that they are unable to suspend their biases and preconceived notions because these notions always have some degree of influence (Ellet, 2011). Through bridling one's experience, bias, and pre-conceived notions, the researcher acknowledges their existence while attempting to control the influence as opposed to removing it (Dahlberg, 2006). Bridling ensures that the researcher does not reach conclusions prematurely or "make definite what is indefinite" (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 16). As described by Dahlgren (2006), bridling is a metaphor to explain how

"a researcher, similar to the way an equestrian uses the bridle to guide the horse by tightening and slackening the reins, examines how his or her assumptions and pre-understandings guide the research by tightening and slackening the development of his or her intentional relationship with the world or the research subject" (Janak, 2018, p. 91).

Therefore, while ensuring rigor in line with Yardley (2000), this researcher strove to bridle his biases, experiences, and pre-conceived notions to ensure authenticity, credibility, and transparency of the research findings. In doing so, this researcher immersed himself in the data, maintained a reflexive journal, and ensured that he did not superimpose his ideas onto the data. Instead, he allowed the meanings of the participants' lived experiences to surface without pressure or haste (Dahlgren, 2006). In accordance with guidelines in the literature, this researcher carefully examined and reflected upon the interaction between his experience with that of the phenomenon under study to remain aware of the meanings that emerged (Janak, 2018). In other words, he was meta-cognitive and reflexive throughout data collection and analysis.

In addition to my reflexive disclosure in a previous section, I bridle my experiences as a Middle Eastern Muslim father who was socialized in Canada and maintains the importance of cultural responsiveness and appreciating diversity. While investigating participant lived experiences with support and services, I bridle my understanding of what supports are available to families of autistic children to ensure that my notion of what quality service consists of does not muddle my interpretation of services that participants may or may not have found helpful or available. Overall, my analysis of participant data consisted of continued deliberation on why I interpreted what I interpreted, if my interpretations reflect what the participant said, and how I might interpret the same passage with a different perspective. To do this, I conducted a minimum of four readings of the transcript while noting conceptual, interpretive, and descriptive thoughts. In addition, I took frequent breaks during and between readings to ensure I bridled any temptation to rush the analysis and draw conclusions prematurely.

According to Dahlgren (2006), bridling cannot be understood as a “methodological technique” (p.16). Instead, bridling requires researchers to reflect and attend to the phenomenon under study more meticulously (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019). There are several strategies in the literature to guide bracketing, which were applied to this study to maintain transparency of how I was reflexive and controlled any pre-existing biases. Although these strategies are detailed in the context of bracketing, they were adapted such that I bridled (controlled) instead of bracketed (removed) my preconceived knowledge and experiences. First, I wrote memos, which refers to processes where the researcher documents their observations, thoughts, impressions, presuppositions, and feelings throughout data collection and data analysis (Tufford & Newman, 2010). This strategy allows for researchers to have more extensive engagement with the data without trying to isolate their preconceived notion during analysis, which may suppress

interpretation (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Next, I engaged in reflexive journaling to document my biases, assumptions, and beliefs from the conception of the project to reduce the likelihood of those biases permeating data analysis (Chan et al., 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Although reflexive journaling typically takes place throughout the whole research process, the primary researcher was unaware of reflexive journaling until after data collection. Therefore, I also adopted a process of being continuously reflexive by re-evaluating the transcriptions each time I became aware of any implicit biases (Fischer, 2009).

Additionally, to ensure that biases are reduced prior to obtaining data, the interview protocol was designed with open-ended questions. The interviewer was cognizant that leading questions may taint participant responses, so extra provision was given to ensure the researcher phrased questions neutrally. Prior to each interview, researcher reflexivity was exercised to ensure that probes would be guided by the research protocol, but not determined by it or any preconceived notion. Lastly, Amin et al. (2020) suggested that member checking is a method to confirm with participants that the data is reflective of what they shared, which was implemented.

Step 6: Looking for Patterns Across Cases. Once each case has been scrutinized, analysed, interpreted, and conceptualized, the researcher must move toward gaining a deeper theoretical understanding through mapping similarities across cases (Smith et al., 2009). This process consists of analysing how clustered themes relate to one another between cases while simultaneously preserving the distinctiveness of each case. Through identifying patterns across cases and developing overarching superordinate conceptual themes, this creative interpretive process allows the researcher to create an enriched narrative of the research results.

Writing

Despite there not being a prescribed method to report the results of the study, Smith et al. (2009) advised researchers to “move straight from analysis to writing the analysis or results section because this keeps the momentum going” (p. 108). To give justice to the interpretive process, the results section must be comprehensive and a narrative to provide the reader with the contextual information relevant to the analysis. To ensure that the reader acquires an understanding of the participants’ lived experiences and how the research conceptualized the data, the write-up must be systematic with embedded quotes to support the developed themes. The results section included an illustration of the themes with verbatim quotes to display the results and allow for an effective elaboration clearly and coherently.

Strengths and Limitations of IPA

Strengths

A strength of IPA is its idiographic nature as it allows for an in-depth examination into topics of lived experience that are nuanced without being constrained by existing theory (Smith & Osborn, 2015). In addition, IPA is suitable for investigating “topics which are complex, ambiguous, and emotionally laden” (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 41). Inherent to the purpose of IPA, an obvious strength is that it allows researchers to contribute subjective experience as data to advance scientific inquiry into topics (Noon, 2018). Additionally, according to Noon, IPA allows individuals to express and give voice to their experience, and represent it through an established method.

Although there are critiques regarding the lack of standardization in IPA, Noon (2018) argues that IPA is accessible and flexible to allow researchers to construct a method that represents the phenomenon under study. Importantly, IPA does provide detailed guidance on developing a method and executed data analysis (e.g., Smith et al., 2009), which is important to

establish boundaries around the flexibility. In line with this flexibility, IPA is described to be “data driven, rather than theory-driven” (Noon, 2018, p. 80) because it allows researchers to explore a phenomenon as it unfolds based on valuable unanticipated responses. Lastly, Noon (2018) suggested that IPA is a formidable method to conduct research in education.

Limitations

One criticism of IPA is a lack of emphasis on language as a crucial and informative factor in data analysis (Tuffour, 2017). Others refute this criticism citing that language and the semantic content of the data is an important part of analysis (Tuffour, 2017). Noon (2018) suggested that IPA restricts inclusion of participants with a limited command of English because the data would be less sparse and detailed. Indeed, Smith et al. (2009) suggests that researchers engage in analysis with a linguistic lens. However, other research (e.g., Croot et al., 2011) indicates that IPA studies can be credibly conducted with interpretation or translation of participant indications. Despite the contention around this limitation, it was important to remain cognizant of the fact that this study utilized an external interpreter. Indeed, there is a possibility of losing valuable linguistic information through interpretation. Nonetheless, an interpreter was used to allow for an in-depth interview to be conducted with a population whose experiences would otherwise be missed. A more in-depth and thorough discussion regarding the implications of language and interpretation as it pertains to this study is discussed in a separate section to follow. In addition to this interpreted data, the primary researcher has a working understanding of Arabic that allowed him to supplement his English interpretation with Arabic data and content. All researcher interpretations based on the Arabic text underwent consultation with a knowledgeable peer proficient in Arabic and the Middle Eastern sociocultural atmosphere.

Next, there are concerns regarding the extent to which IPA can glean meaning from the phenomenon under examination authentically or if the experiences are permeated by opinions (Tuffour, 2017). This concern, in addition to IPA's lack of standardization, could limit the ability to establish a quality IPA study. Indeed, when conducting an IPA study, it is important to ensure quality control (Yardley, 2000), employ techniques that ensure rigor (Amin et al., 2020), and approach data analysis through a systematic step-by-step process (Smith et al., 2009).

Research Procedure

Sample Size, Sampling, and Recruitment

In alignment with guidelines in Smith et al. (2009), recruitment was purposeful and occurred through community referrals and participant referrals (snowballing). Purposeful sampling was used to elicit information pertinent to the research question because "it is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 223). Several community-based organizations/individuals in Calgary, Edmonton, and Lethbridge that provide support to Syrian refugee families were contacted and provided referral materials, such as brochures, information packages, and flyers, to support recruitment efforts. This study did not sample from rural or less urban centres to ensure homogeneity of the data given that rural areas have insufficient autism services and marked reduced support availability (Young et al., 2019), which could confound the results of this study. Community referrals included: (1) religious leaders who could help advertise after a congregation or through their digital platforms; (2) representatives from several volunteer organizations such as the Calgary Immigrant Support Society (CISS) and Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS); and (3) registered psychologists in the community. Individuals interested in participation or gathering more information were provided the researcher's email to initiate contact.

Upon contacting the researcher, participants were then screened via an email to confirm the eligibility or exclusionary criteria. To be eligible for the study participants had to: (a) have lived in Syria prior to the Syrian crisis; (b) have fled Syria because of the Syrian crisis within the last 10 years; (c) be a parent of an autistic child who was under 18 at the time of arrival; and (d) engage in an interview in English or Arabic. The criterion that children had to be under 18 at the time of arrival is to ensure a homogenous sample in line with Smith et al., (2009); as services for individuals on the autism spectrum vary between youth and adulthood, it was important to control for this potential confounding factor.

An interpreter was hired through a community organization for participants who opted to engage in the interview in Arabic. The same interpreter was used for each Arabic-speaking participant to ensure that the style of interpretation, interpreter's knowledge, and quality of the interpretation were constant variables. Interpretation services were offered since the researcher's Arabic proficiency would not have allowed for an effective comprehensive interview. Therefore, it was crucial to ensure that participants could reflect on their experiences and communicate themselves completely without constraint from the researcher's (lack of) second-language proficiency. In addition, restricting the eligibility criteria to include only English-speaking participants would reduce the likelihood of recruitment for an already limited sample.

Participants who met the eligibility criteria were provided the consent form, interview protocol, and a description of next steps. Participants who were ineligible for the study were thanked and informed that they would not be continuing further in the study. Four interviews were conducted; one was determined to be ineligible during data collection due to their migration from Syria prior to the onset of the crisis. The inclusion of three participants aligns with

suggestions that a sample of three to six participants ensures in-depth exploration and analysis of each participant's responses (Smith et al., 2009).

Participants who were eligible for the study underwent a consent process to inform them of the purpose of the study, what the process entailed, confidentiality, and the use of the information they provide. Special attention was given to ensure participants were aware of the interview being recorded to ensure accuracy of the analysed data. The data collection process consisted of semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant via Zoom, which boasts security measures that ensured the privacy of participant data. The choice to opt for interviews over Zoom was due to COVID-19 restrictions as well as the geographical limitations of a potential sample across Alberta. Semi-structured interviewing was considered the most appropriate data collection method as it allows for in-depth, comprehensive, and rich accounts of participant experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009). Prior to initiating the interview, the researcher spent time building rapport with each participant to ensure that they felt comfortable with providing relevant and accurate data (Smith et al., 2009). The interviewer employed effective interviewing skills such as active listening and open-ended questions, which were pivotal to ensuring non-biased responses (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). As per guidelines in Creswell and Creswell (2018), interviews consisted of overarching open-ended questions to provide the participant with the opportunity to provide their perspective and experiences freely within the bounds of the research question. It is important for participants to “speak freely and reflectively, and to develop their ideas and express their concerns at some length” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 58). Interviews consisted of an introduction, content questions, probes, and closing remarks to emulate described qualitative interview protocols (e.g., Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Management

The interview was transcribed verbatim by an independent transcriptionist for English and a separate transcriptionist for Arabic. The English transcription and the respective recording were analyzed by the primary researcher. The Arabic transcripts were included to ensure credibility and transparency of the data but did not undergo the six stages of analysis due to the researcher's language proficiency, the choice to use an interpreter for data collection, and the choice to report the findings in English. In addition, analyzing the Arabic transcripts would decrease the clarity of results as the translator would bring with them their own set of pre-existing knowledge. However, the researcher's scope of Arabic competency allowed for key Arabic words and phrases to be included, which added contextual value and gave power to the participants' voices. As Arabic is a descriptive language, popular phrases, important words, and metaphors provide rich interpretive value. During the interview process, freehand notes were taken to note the researcher's first impressions, assumptions, and keep track of the information provided throughout the interview.

Interviews were recorded and the audio files were stored securely in an encrypted folder on a password-protected personal computer. Hard copies of the transcripts were produced for data analysis purposes in alignment with guidelines set out by Smith et al. (2009). These hard copies were stored in a locked filing cabinet when not in use. In addition, any data collection and analysis files were stored in encrypted folders on the same computer. Transcripts were transcribed by independent research assistants who acknowledged, agreed to, and signed a confidentiality form. The transcription accuracy was verified by the researcher who rigorously listened to the interviews twice along with the accompanying transcription before attempting analysis. The audio files and transcripts were transported via an encrypted password-protected USB. The researcher ensured that any existing copies were removed from the research assistants'

computers upon completion of their role. All data will be retained for a period of seven years at which point it will be destroyed.

Participant data was detached from the participants' identity prior to data analysis and assigned a pseudonym chosen by participants. Participant data was then organized and analysed with NVivo12, which is a statistical and qualitative data analysis software. Interpretations drawn from the data underwent member checking, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and thick contextual analysis to establish scientific rigor through trustworthiness and authenticity (Amin et al. 2020). Arabic interpretations underwent consultation. Furthermore, to ensure rigor in the present study, the researcher adopted the four elements of meritorious qualitative research (Yardley, 2000). According to Smith et al. (2009), data analysis is "an iterative and inductive cycle" (p. 80) that entails inductive reasoning for interpretations and considering context for interpretations. Following this process, the researcher analysed data from "the part to the whole" (p. 102) before undertaking a deeper analysis that considers a micro-analysis of key quotes.

Member Checking. Following the completion of the data analysis, participants ($n = 3$) were emailed to engage in member-checking and given two weeks to respond. To be sensitive to language considerations and their education levels, each participant was provided with the option to engage in member-checking over Zoom or review a written document with research themes with definitions as well relevant key quotes from the transcript. The option to receive written or in-person feedback is supported by the literature (e.g., Amin et al., 2020). Two participants responded with their preference to meet over Zoom; one participant did not respond and, so, their data and the associated interpretations are reflective of their experience.

The member-checking process consisted of showing the participants the themes with Arabic translation, the description of themes, and relevant key quotes. This process was

conducted with an interpreter who was a liaison between researcher explanations and participant feedback. At the beginning of each member-checking session, participants were informed of their option to have the quotes read aloud or if they would like to read them themselves. This consideration ensured that the researcher was sensitive to each participant's educational level (Arabic or English literacy) while not making assumptions that could be potentially offensive. Each English quote was accompanied by the participant's corresponding Arabic indication. Participants were also shown a separate document with a list of all indications by the external interpreter during the interview that required confirmation. These quotes were chosen if they deviated from the essence of the participants' original utterance in terms of missed or added detail, even at the slightest. Importantly, as will be discussed in a following section (Issues in Language and Interpretation), interpreter quotes were not confirmed with participants as the interpreter is considered a social agent and to do so would be in line with positivism (Croot et al., 2011). Instead, the researcher aimed to confirm participant meaning through interpreter indications that were derived based on context more the direct participant quotes. Participants were provided with a translation of the interpreter's quote alongside the context from which the interpreter derived the explanation. Participants were then asked to confirm or disconfirm that their intent aligned with the meaning from the interpreter. Only one participant disconfirmed a single quote, which is outlined in the results and adjusted in the analysis. This process also confirmed the credibility of the live interpretation process during the interview.

Apart from the single misinterpreted quote, the information gleaned from member-checking was included throughout the discussion. Indeed, the purpose of member-checking is to return the data and interpretations to the participant to ensure that the thematic structure represents both the participant and researcher as social agents (Amin et al., 2020). In contrast to

processes outlined in the literature (Mays & Pope, 2000), elicited feedback was not incorporated into the study's results. In line with the underlying philosophy of IPA, the researcher is considered a social agent in knowledge construction (Smith et al., 2009), which can be undermined by member-checking if used to revise the interpreted results. In fact, the epistemological framework underlying IPA emphasises subjectivity and the importance of researcher interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). Indeed, in IPA "the principal concern of member checking is that interpretation can be altered based on the context in which it is viewed" (McGaha & D'Urso, 2019, p. 586). That is, participants could view the results in a different context than they were initially interviewed in, which can influence their agreement or disagreement (McGaha & D'Urso, 2019). As such, member-checking feedback was incorporated into the discussion and not the study results. This adaptation allowed the researcher to ensure congruency with IPA's philosophy and his epistemological and ontological beliefs while validating the researcher's interpretations and verifying that the interpretations reflected the participants' meanings, which was important given that this project was a cross-language study.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to beginning data collection, ethics was approved by the University of Calgary's Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board to ensure that this project complied with standards set out by Tri-council. Ensuring rigorous ethical standards is important when investigating vulnerable populations and sensitive topics within psychology. In addition, given the researcher's status as a psychologist-in-training, he also ensured that he adhered to the Canadian Code of Ethics outlined by the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA, 2017).

Due to sensitive and potentially distressing nature of the interview, participants were provided with the informed consent document and interview protocol in both English and Arabic

upon confirmation of eligibility. The researcher encouraged participants to review the documents ahead of their scheduled interview to ensure they were aware of their role in the project and the topics they would discuss. The researcher outlined informed consent in plain language with the help of the interpreter at the beginning of each interview. During this time, the researcher strove to be transparent and honest with the purpose of the study. When necessary, the researcher clarified the purpose of the study to participants who inquired about the implications of their participation in support and service availability (e.g., “will my participation allow me to gain more supports and services from various autism organizations in the community?”). Informed consent consisted of the purpose of the study, role of the research, requirement of the participant, time-commitment, potential risk/benefits of participation, confidentiality, data management, and the option to withdraw from the study. Expressed consent was verbalized by each participant before proceeding with the interview.

Additional ethical standards were considered due to the sensitive nature of this study and the niche population from which it sampled. The interview protocol was provided in advance to allow participants to be aware of what would be discussed, which aimed to offset the potential for distress. Participants were told that they could decline to answer any question prompt that made them feel uncomfortable. In addition, participants were provided a list of free community resources that they could access if they felt distressed because of the study, which included the Calgary Distress Centre, Crisis Text Line, and Autism Calgary Association.

Indeed, when conducting research, it is important to consider and honor confidentiality and privacy. In alignment with guidelines set out by the literature data was anonymized to ensure confidentiality because qualitative research utilized key quotes and findings from a relatively small sample from niche populations. As such, only the participant’s chosen pseudonym was

used to communicate findings and provide present findings for member-checking. In addition, as discussed in the previous section, member-checking was completed to establish credibility in the present study by confirming the results of the data and researcher interpretations with participants to ensure that the researcher effectively bridled his biases.

Issues in Language and Interpretation

There are methodological issues with translation/interpretation in cross-language research that researchers should be transparent about to ensure rigor (Wong & Poon, 2010). Adhering to this perspective, the present study utilized a professional interpreter with Arabic-speaking participants to collect original interview data in English. The interviews were audio-recorded, which preserved the original Arabic responses from the participants. The audio was transcribed in both English and Arabic to ensure transparency and rigor in expounding the results and data analysis. Each of the following sections will present a methodological issue regarding use of an interpreter and how the primary researcher addressed those potential limitations to preserve integrity and credibility of the study.

Using Interpreters in Qualitative Research

Given that hermeneutics underlies IPA methodology, and hermeneutics means interpretation, including an interpreter introduces an added layer of complexity to the study. To ensure that data analysis was conducted properly and the results reported appropriately, the researcher debriefed with several experienced academics to determine the best way to navigate language considerations in qualitative research. The following suggestions were provided: (1) include an independent bilingual research assistant who can confirm the accuracy of the interpretation; (2) include a translated Arabic transcription to ensure rigor; (3) explicitly detail the data collection process and rationales; and (4) ensure that the interpretation captures the

essence of the participants' experience because IPA is primarily concerned with meaning. These suggestions were considered and, where appropriate, applied to the present study.

Interpreters are not Mechanistic

It is important to remain cognizant that the pre-existing knowledge, experience, and social understanding of interpreters impacts their translation of an interview (Wong & Poon, 2010). In addition, Temple and Young (2004) assert that language is crucial in “describing our social world (p. 164), and Wong and Poon (2010) suggest that “translation is neither mechanistic nor neutral” (p.153). Relatedly, given that the epistemology of contextualism suggests that knowledge is co-constructed within multiple contexts, interpreters are embedded within knowledge production (Temple & Young, 2004). This role adds an additional complexity to the interpretation process because the analysed transcripts were first filtered through another interpretive lens, namely the professional interpreter.

To ensure rigor and transparency in this methodological approach, a secondary bilingual independent research assistant transcribed the Arabic text. The Arabic text was transcribed, but the accuracy of the interpretation was not confirmed by the secondary translator because of the epistemological stance of the present study. Akin to the explanation in Croot et al. (2011), the present study approached knowledge production through contextualism, which maintains that interpreters take an active role in constructing knowledge. To confirm the interpreter's translation with a secondary translator would be to subscribe to positivist paradigm and an empirical epistemological approach. That is, positivism affirms that there is a singular truth that can be accessed, measured, and confirmed (Croot et al., 2011). Instead of attempting to confirm that one interpretation version is completely veracious, the interview process consisted of

ongoing reflecting, paraphrasing, and summarizing participant experiences to obtain feedback from the participant that their experience is being captured accurately.

In lieu of confirming translation veracity, Croot et al., (2011) suggested that researchers should consult with bilingual individuals involved with the interview to confirm that the transcript represents interview events. Although the primary researcher is not bilingual, he has a working knowledge of Arabic that allowed him to engage in this process to some extent during the interview. In addition to the language competency of the researcher and presentation of English results, the Arabic transcript was also not analysed because doing so would decrease the clarity of results as the translator would bring their own set of pre-existing knowledge with them; however, key Arabic words, phrases, and metaphors that within the competency of the researcher were considered for inclusion. The researcher consulted with a bilingual independent research assistant to review each transcript to confirm that each transcript represents events accurately. This research assistant agreed with all the events detailed across all three interviews and indicated that the interpreter comprehensively captured the participants' experiences; however, the research assistant flagged a few indications for the researcher to confirm with participants during member-checking. These quotes were not considered to be misrepresentations of the participants' meaning and experience. Instead, the research assistant indicated that the interpreter either missed minor details or added details based on the context of what was said as opposed to direct participant indications. Overall, the interpretation was considered comprehensive and representative of the interview events. Indeed, consultation with an independent research assistant ensured that the cross-language project was completed in teams, which reduced any bias of either the researcher or interpreter (Squires et al., 2020).

Using Interpreters in IPA

In line with the recommendation set out by Squires (2009), the present study employed a professional certified interpreter to minimize errors in interpretation and bolster the credibility of the study. Additionally, this study considered that a Middle Eastern female interpreter would be the most identity-congruent individual to this participant group, which supports the assertion that interpreter qualification is based on proximity to the topic or participants (Croot et al., 2011). Importantly, this interpreter was hired through a community organization who boasts the certification, quality training, and monitoring of their professional interpreters.

In opposition to attempts in the literature (e.g., Squires, 2009), there is debate regarding the process of applying evaluative criteria to cross-language qualitative research (Croot et al., 2011). In fact, strict evaluative criteria would conflict with the “philosophy of many QMs” (qualitative methodologies; Yardley, 2000, p. 219) where IPA, in particular, “is not a prescriptive methodology” (Noon, 2018, p. 81). Nonetheless, Squires (2009) suggested that using an interpreter is not compatible with IPA because of the strong emphasis of language in interpretation. Squires suggested that an interpreter/translator would disrupt data analysis wherein the meaning of the phenomenon would be lost in translation, which is a view that is contentious with other researchers (e.g., Croot et al., 2011). For example, Croot et al. asserted that, within phenomenological methods, researchers essentially translate participant experiences. Certainly, “it is only possible to get as close to describing a phenomenon as language will allow” (Croot et al., 2011, p. 1009) and not “all words evoke the same meaning for everyone” (p. 1009). This view was echoed in Chiumento et al. (2018) where interpreters were used in a phenomenological method. In this study, meaning, as opposed to language, was used to analyse themes. The present study also considers that language is complex and dynamic, where researchers are tasked with interpreting meaning from informants. Therefore, use of an

interpreter in IPA research does not produce methodological flaws if cross-language guidelines are considered and adopted to ensure rigor. Importantly, the process of interpretation in the present study does not undermine its epistemological and ontological orientation. In sum, this researcher asserts that cross-language research is feasible for use in phenomenology, which is a view expressed by researchers (e.g., Chiumento et al., 2018; Croot et al., 2011).

Language and Power

There is a well-established hegemony of English boasting significance and influence over other languages in research (Temple & Young, 2004) as well as in communication and global affairs (Guo & Beckett, 2007). This dominance is typically illustrated through the recognition of published English literature and relative obscurity of research in other languages (Wong & Poon, 2010). Certainly, interpretation from other languages is crucial for continued knowledge production as international recognition hinges on findings published in English (Croot et al., 2011; Wong & Poon, 2010). The unequal power dynamic of English in research requires researchers to reflect on the use of translation and/or interpretation in their study (Croot et al., 2011). Researchers who do not provide justification for English as a method of analysis tend to fortify the notion of the English hegemony (Croot et al., 2011).

The primary researcher acknowledges the hegemony of the English language described in the literature. To ensure that this hegemony is not reinforced in the present study, I present a justification of English as the chosen language for data collection and analysis. This justification will follow guidelines in the literature (Squires, 2009; Croot et al., 2011). First, the primary researcher has limited competency in Arabic. Specifically, he has a basic conversational working knowledge of the Levantine Arabic dialect, which would not be suitable for describing complex terms, processing large amount of information, and generally conducting an interview that has

scholarly implications. His receptive Arabic language skills are particularly stronger than his expressive skills, which would pose a threat to conducting interviews with continuous prompting and open-ended questions. Second, English was chosen as it was the shared language of both the interpreter and researcher (Squires, 2009). Next, English was chosen as the findings would be presented in an English-speaking university to an English-speaking thesis committee and, hopefully, be submitted to an English peer-reviewed journal (Squires, 2009). Fourth, as the purpose of the study was to explore resettlement in Canada, English was chosen because it is one of the official languages and the most widely spoken language in Canada. Lastly, English was chosen to ensure the findings and implications of this study can inform policy, practice, and are accessible by various community organizations in Canada.

The process of translation and interpretation has the potential to “further marginalize minority voice” (Cormier, 2018, p. 333). To ignore these power imbalances would also further marginalize the minority language as well (Cormier, 2018). Therefore, in line with guidelines in the research, this project took cautionary steps to minimize and mitigate power imbalances through sharing the power with the participant. First, during the interview, participants were provided with the agency to address either the interpreter or the researcher in the language of their choice (Croot et al., 2011). Those who engaged in member-checking reviewed several of the interpreter’s quotes to confirm the meaning accuracy to share the power (Cormier, 2018). Next, the inclusion of select Arabic quotes and nuanced words were included to ensure that the minority language was visible in the English study (Cormier, 2018). In addition, a table of select participant quotes with their direct translations were included while placing the Arabic first to place the minority language in the position of power (Cormier, 2018). Certainly, “when participants’ original words are presented alongside the translations, it honours ‘their voices and

their experiences”” (Cormier, 2018, p. 338). Therefore, a sample of quotes will be chosen from each participant and included in Appendix A.

Indeed, cross-cultural research allows individuals with language barriers to contribute to and benefit policy and practice that impact them (Squires et al., 2020). This project aimed to give voice to Syrian refugee parents of children on the autism spectrum to express their resettlement experiences despite language barriers.

The Interpretation Process

Initially, a working knowledge of English was an inclusionary criterion for this study; however, the inclusionary criteria was expanded to include both Arabic and/or English-speaking participants. This change was made because: (1) the project investigated an incredibly niche population; (2) participants should choose which language to best voice their experiences; and (3) excluding based on language may inadvertently exclude participants because of other factors (e.g., socio-economic status, education level, date of arrival to Canada).

After securing a professional interpreter from a community organization, the interpreter was consulted with important terms, concepts, and phrases consistent with the study (e.g., perspectives, resettlement, autism). This pre-emptive step was taken to ensure that the interpreter could confirm their understanding prior to engaging in the first interview. The interpreter’s Middle Eastern identity was in proximity to the participants, which added to the authenticity of her role as an interpreter (Croot et al., 2011). Her female identity was considered as literature suggests that being considerate of any gender-specific cultural preferences enhanced participant comfortability (Attum et al., 2021). Indeed, considering the comfort of the family is a culturally responsive practice for those who have religious or cultural communication preferences, such as Muslim parents of autistic children (Bernier & McCrimmon, 2021). Although religion was not

an area of investigation in the present study, Syria is a Muslim majority country (CIA, 2021) and, so, steps were taken to ensure that all participants felt comfortable to share their experiences. This process was also described in Aldiabat et al. (2021) where interviewers and interviewees were the same gender to acknowledge Arabic cultural beliefs and practices.

During the interviewing process, the primary researcher understood some of what the participant was describing, which allowed him to understand some of the contextually embedded phrases. Arabic has many complex phrases, metaphors, and culturally bound words that reflects context and the speaker's knowledge. For example, the word for autism in many Arabic dialects translates to "he who prefers to be alone", which illustrates the societal understanding of autism. The basic understanding of the researcher in conjunction with the proficiency of the interpreter allowed the researcher to capture the meaning of participant experience adequately. These rich contextual phrases were the Arabic words that were analysed and included by the researcher.

After the Arabic transcript was transcribed, feedback was sought from an independent bilingual research assistant to review the Arabic transcription and dialogue, and consult its representation of the events of the interview. This process allowed the researcher to confirm the intended meanings while ensuring that the wording of the interpreter accounts for "subtle meaning differences" (van Nes et al., 2010, p. 315). Importantly, this process did not attempt to confirm the accuracy of the transcript as contextualism asserts that the interpreter is part of the co-construction of knowledge. Instead, this measure was taken to ensure that all semantic information was accounted for, which is an important part of IPA (Smith et al., 2009). This process allows for researchers to bolster rigor and credibility while engaging in quality control compatible with post-positivist epistemological orientations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined qualitative inquiry, ontological, epistemological, axiological, and theoretical considerations, rigor in qualitative research, relevant researcher disclosures, the IPA methodology, and the present study's procedure. The discussion of IPA entailed its philosophical underpinnings, the process of conducting IPA, strengths and criticisms of IPA, and language as it pertains to methodological issues. This section also justified choosing IPA over alternative methods, and declared issues encountered in conducting this study and the rationale for them. Also, there was a discussion regarding philosophy as it is crucial to IPA as the chosen method. The next chapter presents the relevant participant characteristics and describes the results through documenting participant specific clustered emergent themes before detailing the shared superordinate conceptual themes across all three participants.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children regarding their Albertan resettlement experience. This study explored parental experiences with accessing supports and services in Syria, Alberta, and while displaced. As evidenced by existing literature, little research has explored the experiences of resettled families that have a child with a neurodevelopmental condition. As a result, this project aimed to fill this gap by interviewing participants who have experienced support and service acquisition for their children in both Alberta, Canada and/or in Syria.

In line with IPA, the interpretation of data is rooted within the participant's voice through direct quotes. Indeed, IPA is highly interpretive and considers how the researcher's background permeates the data (Smith et al., 2009). The nature of IPA's interpretive analysis is based on what participants say, how they say it, and when they say it, which affords both inductive and deductive analytic approaches (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, presenting the results includes constructing a narrative based on key quotes to ensure interpretation is rooted in what participants say (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Smith et al., 2009). Oftentimes, individual quotes are part of broader utterances that elicit multiple meanings. Therefore, some quotes will be used in multiple themes to convey different ideas; where appropriate, readers will be informed when a quote is used across themes to elucidate its relevance to each.

This chapter will first outline demographic information pertaining to the three mothers who participated in the study, such as their age at the time of arrival, their child(ren)'s age(s) at time of arrival, where their child(ren) was/were diagnosed, their area of resettlement in Canada, their displacement, level of English competency, and the support and services acquired in Syria, during displacement, and in Alberta. In accordance with IPA protocol (Smith et al., 2009), each

interview will be analysed to identify emergent themes relating to their experience. After analysing each interview independently, the interviews will then be examined together to compare interrelations. Connections across and within participant data are elucidated to develop an overarching understanding of the lived experience of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children in Alberta (Smith et al., 2009).

Analytic Considerations

The following sections will outline key terms, definitions, and aspects of IPA analysis. Prior to introducing these topics, it is important to consider the researcher's use of Arabic throughout the results section. The analysis will include key Arabic phrases to contextualize the results through the voice of the participants. Although English was selected as the language of analysis as described in the previous chapter, the researcher opted to incorporate Arabic into the analysis to enrich the data and provide power to the participant's voice (Cormier, 2018). It is important to remain cognizant that Google Translate can be an effective tool for translating some phrases/words; however, Arabic contains many dialects and various figurative phrases (e.g., idioms and metaphors) that are not translated well by Google Translate because it uses Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). MSA, which has roots in Classical Arabic, is the official language across the Arab world and is used in education, politics, and other formal settings (Abu Kwaik et al., 2018). Across the Arab world there are varying dialects, which "differ widely among each other and depend on the geographic location and the socioeconomic conditions of the speakers" (Abu Kwaik et al., 2018, p. 1). The participants in the present study spoke Levantine Arabic, a dialect that consists of speakers from the Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian, and Palestinian regions (Abu Kwaik et al., 2018). Many MSA tools are not equipped to effectively translate various Arabic dialects (Salloum & Habash, 2013). In fact, Salloum and Habash cite that "over one third

of Levantine verbs cannot be analyzed using an MSA morphological analyzer” (p. 349).

Therefore, the translations associated with the Arabic text in this study entails a Levantine Arabic translation and not a translation using a MSA tool, such as Google Translate.

Essential Qualities of IPA Data

As IPA transcription is concerned with capturing meaning as opposed to linguistic phenomena, detailing prosodic features are not required (Smith et al., 2009). As a result, direct quotes from the participants were refined for inclusion by eliminating verbal repetition, stuttering, pauses, and other prosodic information that were not pertinent to the overall meaning. The use of round brackets ‘()’ in the direct quotes account for information that was altered in the raw transcript (e.g., removing identifying information). Use of square brackets ‘[]’ in the direct quotes were added to provide pertinent contextual information that otherwise did not exist in the raw transcript (e.g., clarifying use of third-person language). Direct quotes are cited with the nearest audio time stamp (hour:minute:second).

The inclusion of participant quotations was in line with writing guidelines outlined by Smith et al. (2009). That is, Smith et al. urged researchers to be more selective of the inclusion of quotations as their sample size gets larger. Indeed, it is important to ensure that all claims are supported by evidence (transcript extracts); however, the use of too many or too few quotations can inadvertently impact the study. For example, an excess of quotes suggests “that the analyst themselves does not trust their own analysis” (p. 115) while sparsity can raise concerns with the interpretation accuracy. This view relates to other researchers, such as Morrow (2005):

“An overemphasis on the researcher’s interpretations at the cost of participant quotes will leave the reader in doubt as to just where the interpretations came from; an excess of quotes will cause the reader to become lost in the morass of stories.” (p. 256).

As this study aimed to ensure rigor in line with criteria outlined in the literature (e.g., Amin et al., 2020; Yardley, 2000), the present researcher carefully selected quotes for inclusion in the current document (as suggested by Smith et al., 2009) to ensure that this analysis was both transparent and credible. In addition, based on the reviewed literature and for the sake of parsimony and brevity, this study will not include an exhaustive list of all participant quotations for each theme. Some selected quotes noted in the participants' shared themes section will not be presented in the respective participant's individual theme(s) and vice versa; however, the present researcher aimed to include an exposure of said quotations in each context where necessary and appropriate. In addition to parsimony and brevity, these choices are based on the analysis and resulting thematic structure. In fact, Smith et al. indicated that IPA analysis and establishing themes is a method to reduce the necessity of including an exhaustive list of transcript extracts.

Researchers are encouraged to immerse themselves in the data since participants are experts in their unique experiences (Smith et al., 2009). However, researchers also interpret the complex lived experiences through a psychological lens as informed by theory to "illuminate the understanding of research problems" (Alase, 2017; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 11). Therefore, analysis begins with a descriptive, structural, and chronological understanding that results in a deep interpretation that amplifies participant experiences through imbuing the researcher as an active social agent in knowledge generation (Alase, 2017; Smith et al., 2009).

Emergent Themes

Emergent themes are foundational to data analysis in IPA and consist of phrases that represent the essence of each participant's communicated experiences (Smith & Osborne, 2007). Emergent themes are patterns of ideas derived from the participant's description of their experiences and are coded to create conceptual categories that reflect those experiences (Smith et

al., 2009; Williams, 2008). Therefore, in IPA, researchers identify emergent themes based on participant indications as interpreted by the researcher. The process of developing emergent themes consists of considering the participant's direct quotes, interview context, as well as the researcher's noting throughout the multiple readings (Smith & Osborn, 2007). This process consists of coding the emergent themes to identify their significance and appearance in the interview (Williams, 2008). Emergent themes allow the researcher to articulate the phenomena concisely in a theoretical, detailed, and complex way while including psychological constructs (Smith et al., 2009). This process allows the researcher to identify connections throughout the transcript through the hermeneutic circle, which consists of the parts and the whole being interpreted relative to one another (Smith et al., 2009).

Clustering Emergent Themes into Superordinate Status

After developing emergent themes based on the interview and descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual notes, researchers are tasked with clustering emergent themes by identifying connections across them (Smith et al., 2009). This clustering, or mapping, of emergent themes results in a thematic structure of clustered emergent themes that is rigorously informed by the interview data to account for the participants' experience (Smith et al., 2009). The strategies described in the previous chapter (abstraction, subsumption, polarization, contextualization, numeration, and function) were used to derive the participants' clustered themes as part of analysis. As advised by Smith et al., the present researcher aimed to utilize several strategies concurrently to enhance the interpretive value and "push the analysis to a higher level" (p. 98).

Higher Order Superordinate Conceptual Themes

Through this inductive cycle of establishing a thematic structure, the final step of data analysis is to develop superordinate conceptual themes that account for similarities across

participants (Smith et al., 2009). This process consists of mapping and drawing connections between participant-specific clustered emergent themes to develop an overarching thematic sense of the data (Smith et al., 2009). Importantly, this point of the analysis highlights similarities across participants while acknowledging the unique experiences of some participants (Smith et al., 2009). The result is an inductive process of analysis and a deductive sense of how the higher order conceptual themes account for specific experiences as illustrated by direct quotes.

Participant Summaries

Participants were mothers of Syrian autistic children who resettled in either Edmonton or Calgary between 2017 and 2019. Participants provided unique experiences with accessing supports and services in Syria, during their displacement, and in Alberta, Canada. These participants offered their insight into perceptions of autism and the extent to which perception influenced support availability for their children. These participants were either sponsored privately or via local organizations with a range of settlement services for both the family and autistic child. Specific background information for each participant is offered prior to the descriptions of their clustered emergent themes so readers may remain cognizant of relevant details as they peruse the mapped themes for each participant.

Analyses

Participant 1: Jenny

Jenny expressed interest in the study after learning about it through CCIS. At the time of arrival to Alberta, Jenny was a married 40-year-old mother of two autistic Syrian-born sons (aged 6 and 13 at the time of arrival). Jenny and her family lived in Aleppo prior to leaving Syria. Jenny speaks Arabic and Armenian fluently and, since her arrival, has developed a basic working knowledge of English to help her complete daily tasks. Despite living in Arab countries

for most of their life, Jenny's children did not have a good command of Arabic and primarily communicated with the family in Armenian. Jenny's eldest son was diagnosed as autistic in Syria and received some services before the onset of the Syrian crisis. This son attended a private Armenian school for children with special needs, which parents assumed financial responsibility for. Their son attended this school for one year until the school was destroyed in the war.

Jenny's youngest son was also born in Syria. In 2014, when the youngest son was 5 months old, Jenny and her family sought refuge in Lebanon where Jenny had some family; Jenny's youngest son was diagnosed as autistic at the age of either 3 or 4 while in Lebanon. Jenny and her family completed the necessary paperwork to resettle in Canada and were sponsored by CCIS, arriving in Calgary, Alberta in October 2019. In addition to services offered by CCIS, Jenny noted that she received support and service through her children's school, the Child Development Centre, FSCD, and the Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic (MRHC).

Jenny completed her interview in February 2021; the session lasted 115 minutes, inclusive of consent and the interview content. The interview with Jenny was 89 minutes; 11 clustered emergent themes were identified. As Jenny participated in the interview primarily Arabic, the inclusion of direct quotes are from the interpreter, which explains some altered phrasing (e.g., mixing between third-person and first-person language).

Clustered Emergent Themes. Many of Jenny's themes related to satisfaction with her resettlement in Canada and the adversity of being a parent of autistic children. Jenny described the nature of family in Syria and Lebanon, lacking social support in Canada, and her indifference to the culture in practice. Overall, Jenny expressed gratitude for being in Canada and appreciation for the available supports and services.

Jenny was invited to and engaged in member-checking in June 2021. The member-checking process was collaborative and consisted of sharing all her included quotes within each theme. Due to language considerations and participant preference, this process took place over Zoom with an interpreter. Jenny was invited to modify or add any additional information, and to confirm, disconfirm, and/or clarify any information and thematic structure. Jenny was also provided the option to review her transcript. Apart from one clarification that stemmed from a linguistic misinterpretation, all disagreements or clarifications are described in the discussion. Apart from three clarifications, Jenny agreed with the thematic structure and felt her experiences were accurately captured, and that the interpreter reflected her perspectives correctly.

Experiencing Negativity. Jenny described some adverse experiences she and her family faced in Syria and Lebanon due to their children’s diagnoses. The function and contextualization techniques were used to derive this clustered theme. This clustered theme refers to the discrimination, negative perceptions, lack of supports and services, and isolation that Jenny and her family experienced in Syria and Lebanon. Specifically, Jenny expressed:

“... it was all good for the kids. They [children] did not have a good time back home. The little one is overactive. She [Jenny] cannot control him, but like they [children] stayed at home most of the time and she wouldn’t be able to take them outside, so, actually when she looks at them here, they look happier” (00:45:42).

The notion of staying home to stay out of the public eye was noted at several times throughout the interview, “I didn’t want to go out at all. I wouldn’t take them to anywhere because they were not welcomed in the society” (00:54:04). This experience of sequestering was due to the negative experiences that Jenny and her family faced with perceptions of autism in Syria and Lebanon. In fact, Jenny explicitly indicated that her children had negative societal experiences, “They[‘re]

dealt with in a very negative way. They're not accepted in the society" (00:53:22). Jenny expressed that their experiences with autism in Syria and Lebanon were characterized by discrimination, autism not being understood, their needs not being met, and complete onus on the parents to initiate services. Here the quote "they look happier" (00:45:56) refers to the children's contentment with being away from the discrimination that they experienced in Syria and Lebanon. This quote has multiple meanings and will also be used in a different context in a subsequent clustered them (Positives that Outweigh the Negatives). Jenny expressed that she did not receive support or service from the government in Syria and Lebanon both before and during the Syrian crisis. In fact, "At the parent's own expense, they had to pay a doctor to do all the tests and the result came with autism" (00:49:59). In addition, the parents were financially responsible for sending their eldest son to a school tailored to his needs, "this school, it was private [and] they had to pay for it so actually it was not a free service they would get" (01:05:38). The lack of governmental support was similar to her experiences within the community where "they [extended family] were not actively participating in supporting the family or the kids" (01:06:05).

Jenny drew comparisons between her experiences with autism in Syria and Lebanon: "Back in Syria, in Aleppo, some of the family members feel bad for her, they love the kids and everything. She [Jenny] said, the way the community or society at large, how they deal with different kids, with autistic kids, it was not a very positive interaction... In Lebanon, as talking about the society in general, it was the same thing. Different kids are not very well perceived. They are perceived with negativity." (01:10:56).

Jenny's description of being a parent of autistic children in Syria and Lebanon was overtly negative. Her children faced discrimination where they would be excluded and "not accepted in

the society” (00:53:30). In addition, during their displacement, Jenny’s husband experienced discrimination because he was from Syria, “He [husband] was dealt with in a bad way himself. In an unfair unjust manner because he’s Syrian. So, we used to receive half of what the Lebanese would make” (00:57:05). Indeed, the discriminating society toward both autism and Syrians influenced the negative experiences of Jenny and her family.

Everyday Barriers to Everyday Living. Through a process of abstraction, this clustered theme consists of adjustment difficulties that Jenny and her family experienced with their everyday resettlement. Specifically, Jenny experienced hardship with completing everyday tasks as well as fatigue and pressures during her resettlement. In addition, Jenny experienced hardships with the constraints that COVID-19 placed on support and service acquisition. Given that Jenny and her family resettled in Calgary only a few months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of her resettlement experience was amidst recurrent lockdowns, which generated service disruption. Although COVID-19 introduced delays to service acquisition, Jenny indicated that the process of obtaining supports for her children was initiated promptly upon her arrival. Jenny attributed much of her service and support acquisition barriers to COVID-19, “everything was going smoothly until COVID happened and things stopped” (00:36:49). Additional adjustment barriers included language, cold weather, commuting, and reduced family support. Given that Jenny’s family in Alberta does not have a car with which to commute, the weather is an additional barrier for them, “We have to go and get groceries in the snow. So, it’s tough. It’s tough” (00:27:47). Further, Jenny spoke to the difficulties related to commuting for accessing supports and services:

“The professionals themselves, she [Jenny] faced no problems with them. Everything went smoothly. However, commuting back and forth to their appointment. Going to the designated office, this what was hard for them. They kept looking for people to take

them, especially when they had to take the kids. So, they had to look for people who would drive them back and forth and, sometimes, would be late. However, with the professionals themselves they were fine. They did attend to the service, and everything was fine. It just- the part of commuting.” (00:34:44).

Apart from briefly expressing a handful of difficulties with resettling in Canada, Jenny noted that “everything else is positive” (01:38:23). It was clear that she was attempting to overcome some of the adjustment difficulties and focus on positive aspects of her resettlement. Specifically, Jenny indicated, “She (Jenny) can manage with small conversations and conducting her regular business. She is in command of little bit of English that she can manage” (01:33:26).

As Jenny resettled in Canada, she experienced a continued impact of compiling and existing problems due having to resettle and adjust to an unfamiliar society. Indeed, the experience of novelty and reduced family ties have posed barriers to Jenny’s resettlement in Canada, “we left family behind, we left our life behind. So, actually, we are struggling between those” (00:27:09). However, in response to if there were changes in her family dynamics, Jenny indicated, “I’m tired there [Middle East] and I’m tired here [Canada]” (01:39:38). Relatedly, Jenny noted “Everything for the family, it is upon her [Jenny]. It is her responsibility. So, it’s a lot to take” (01:40:01). Certainly, as a mother of two autistic children, the pressures of navigating and providing for her children were barriers to her everyday living cross-contextually.

Positives that Outweigh the Negatives. Although there were several challenges with adjustment noted, Jenny was overwhelmingly satisfied with her resettlement in terms of the availability of supports and services. This clustered theme was obtained through subsumption and consists of the positive aspects of support and services, their needs being met in Alberta, and overall satisfaction with the available services. These positives were described to overshadow the

everyday barriers to resettlement that Jenny expressed. When describing her experiences with obtaining services and interacting with professionals Jenny noted that she “faced no problems with them and everything went smoothly” (00:34:48). It was clear that a highlight of the resettlement was the supports and services for her children:

“So first thing is the benefits. The benefits she is receiving. The programs, like the ones that she mentioned, taking the kids and engaging them in activities and the third thing is the school. Those three things, she really appreciates” (00:44:00).

Jenny also expressed a sense of sufficiency in the supports and services that were offered to her. Specifically, when asked about if there were additional supports and services that would best suit her family’s needs, Jenny expressed that she “cannot think of anything she would ask for more” (01:20:23). Importantly, Jenny indicated, “There is no perfect place that is one hundred percent carefree. No problems. There are problems, but here the positives are far far more than the negative aspect” (01:36:07). Again, considering the presence of difficulties, Jenny emphasised the positive aspects of her resettlement services, “the weather, the language barrier and not having a car. Everything else is positives, especially having doctors.” (01:38:17). Chiefly, the supports and services available to her children were a pivotal feature of her resettlement experience. Indeed, Jenny expressed satisfaction with the services that were offered to her family, especially since a general practitioner, school for her children, and other supports and services were not readily available to her family in Syria and Lebanon. This satisfaction permeated her perception of her children in Canada, “they look happier” (00:45:56) when compared to their life in Syria and Lebanon, which was characterized by lacking services and societal prejudice. Jenny perceives her children to be happier in Canada due to their needs being addressed. As indicated in a previous section (Experiencing Negativity) the quote “they look

happier” (00:45:56) had several meanings that fit into more than one clustered emergent theme. Previously, this quote referred to the contentment that the children have in Canada due to experiencing less discrimination. This quote also refers to Jenny’s perception of her children’s contentment. Namely, her children are happier because their needs are being met in Canada, which is a positive that outweighs the barriers to resettlement that the family experienced.

Loss and Unfamiliarity. This clustered theme refers to the barriers to adjustment that were due to the unfamiliarity of Canada and loss of Jenny’s previous familiar life in Syria and Lebanon, which was derived through the process of abstraction. As expressed throughout the interview, there were several aspects that contributed to this loss and unfamiliarity, such as war, displacement, and the journey from Syria to Canada. Jenny experienced loss regarding her sense of ‘home’ and resettlement into Canada, which was a novel society that was unknown to her.

Although she noted inherent positive aspects of being resettled in Canada, Jenny expressed a tension between being happy they migrated and certain difficulties with resettling:

“we left family behind, we left our life behind. So, actually we are struggling between those- we are happy when we see the kids they have you know a life and they go to school. However, we miss home and family” (00:27:09).

This sense of loss refers to less familiarity with Canada and losing aspects of their previous life, which was contrasted with the gains in support they obtained for their children. As mentioned previously (see *Everyday Barriers to Everyday Living*), the quote “we left family behind” (00:27:09) was a resettlement barrier. This quote also refers to family support as a familiarity that was lost during resettlement and so fits within the current theme. Her family’s journey throughout war and displacement were characterized as a constantly changing reality. In Syria, her eldest son obtained some service through a private school, which was no longer a possibility

after the onset of the war. In fact, Jenny indicated that “when the war started, it went downhill” (1:01:16) referring to the availability of supports and services as well as the “very dangerous life of war” (1:01:38). In Lebanon there were different difficulties:

“although safe, no war there, they [Jenny and her family] had to face a different kind of reality and difficulty, which is being away from the support system in the community, on their own financially. Although the husband worked, it was not enough” (1:01:46).

While in transit from country to country, Jenny spoke to some of the difficulties travelling with her children. Due to the chaotic nature of war and abrupt transitions with journeying, her children received medication to “relax and calm down in the duration of the trip” (1:46:27). The displacement process was unfamiliar for Jenny and the transition posed difficulties for her children. Importantly, autistic children often struggle with unfamiliarity and abrupt transitions, which may have contributed to these difficulties with displacement. Indeed, the unfamiliar circumstances pertaining to displacement and resettlement are difficult for families who have children on the autism spectrum.

The Importance of the Family Self. Jenny described a strong sense of family identity. The importance of family supports factored into various difficulties with resettlement in Canada as well as her previous comforts with life in the Middle East. This theme was derived through the process of subsumption and describes the difficulties with resettling into a society that lacked the family support network that Jenny and her family were accustomed to in Lebanon and Syria.

During member-checking, Jenny indicated that the quote “For us it was nice to know that we have a family. And there are families and so forth” (01:06:17) was misinterpreted by the interpreter. Since this quote deviated from the meaning that Jenny was trying to convey, it was revised in the results unlike any other clarifications provided. The quote suggested that the

presence of family in Syria and Lebanon was a comfort, and its absence was a barrier to resettlement in Canada. In contrast, Jenny indicated that she still has family in Canada that she can rely on and, so, a sense of not being supported by family in Canada was not endorsed. That is, the notion of family being around as a comfort extended to her experiences in Canada albeit to a lesser extent in terms of the amount of family ties.

Jenny expressed, “We don’t have any family except for one family [member] which is my husband’s uncle” (00:27:40) and “For us it was nice to know that we have a family and there are families and so forth” (01:06:17). Indeed, the notion of family and its relation to the self is important for Jenny because the presence of family members in Canada was a support for them during their resettlement. Family presence is an important part of Jenny’s identity regardless of their proximity or level of active support:

“She never received that [active family support] in Syria nor in Lebanon, [in] Lebanon her mom is sick, her siblings are living far away in Beirut and they would come and visit, but nobody’s helping. Everybody’s so much occupied in his own business.” (1:06:37).

Indeed, family is a big part of what Jenny operationalized her ‘life’ and ‘home’ to consist of, “we left family behind, we left our life behind... we miss home and family” (00:27:09). Certainly, there was a sense of loss when resettling far from her family; however, the presence of extended family members in Canada helped with Jenny’s adjustment. Mentioning family within the context of ‘home’ and ‘life’ signifies the family as an important aspect of her overall being.

The importance of family support for Jenny and her family was described via statements such as, “except for one family” (00:27:42), referring to fewer ties in their family network in Canada, “we miss home and family” (00:27:20), and “[in Aleppo] they [Jenny and family] were very much familiar with the neighbourhood and the family [so] they had a little bit of support

there [with that]” (01:01:06). Although Jenny indicated a lack of active support for her children from family in Syria and Lebanon, the extended family was described to be a safety net:

“for the family in Aleppo and then in Lebanon, they are around but nobody does anything for us. It’s just nice to know that they are there but actually they were not actively participating in supporting the family or the kids, no” (01:05:51).

In addition, the presence of family was a comfort for the family despite a lack of active supports, “They would come and visit, and we would go visit, but not the support you are asking about the sense of giving support with the kids, no.” (01:06:25).

Gratitude. Emergent themes from Jenny’s interview related to difficulty and satisfaction with the process of resettlement. Gratitude, as a clustered theme, refers to Jenny’s notion of being grateful and appreciative of her resettlement, which was derived through abstraction. Jenny experienced gratitude with her overall resettlement experience as well as with the supports and services that were available to her children. This gratitude was illustrated through a powerful account of Jenny and her husband’s apprehension with raising autistic children in Syria and Lebanon. Jenny attributed her circumstance to fate and expressed that resettlement was a need for the family and especially the children:

“She said [Jenny] maybe God listen to us and to our need because she and her husband kept thinking what’s gonna happen to them [sons] when they grow older. [When] mom and dad pass, those kids gonna be left in the streets. Nobody’s gonna take care of them. So, she said, maybe God listen to us and maybe that’s why we are here in Canada.” (00:53:33).

In Canada, Jenny is appreciative that her children can go to school, of the service availability, and that Canada has alleviated some of the hardships she experienced as a parent of autistic

children in Syria and Lebanon. In addition, the availability of support and service in Canada gave Jenny comfort and peace of mind:

“God forbid anything would happen to mom and dad, here [Canada] she [Jenny] knows the kids are safe. They will be taken care of, so this is a big difference. They can see doctors, they can be examined, they can be checked- so she’s very happy that this is the situation” (00:57:49).

After the interviewer reflected on Jenny’s overall resettlement experience, Jenny responded with saying, “Yes, 100 percent. It was a very good step coming and moving to Canada. Good decision” (01:15:56). The phrase used for ‘100 percent’ in Arabic (مئة بالمائة) connotes a sense of complete, total, or absolute satisfaction in this context. Therefore, Jenny’s use of this Arabic phrase suggests that she has complete satisfaction with her decision to move to Canada, which contributes to her appreciation of how Canada has served her family’s needs. Although she has experienced barriers and hardships with resettlement, Jenny is grateful that there are supports and services available to her children.

Priorities. Although Jenny expressed gratitude and appreciation for her resettlement in Canada; her children’s wellbeing was the primary reason for resettling in Canada. Indeed, the children were a priority to Jenny and her husband. Through polarization, this clustered theme refers to Jenny’s children as priorities to Albertan support and service providers whereas the parents were described to be relatively less of a priority.

In terms of the children being a priority to the parents, Jenny indicated, “we moved here for the kids” (00:27:01) and “we are happy when we see the kids, they have a life, and they go to school” (00:27:15). The parent’s sense of the children being a priority was shared by Albertan service providers wherein her children received extensive supports and services, but the parents

did not. In fact, when discussing gaps in supports and services in Alberta, Jenny referenced concerns with the services provided to the parents as opposed to the children. For example, Jenny indicated that scheduling and/or completing her own medical appointments were lengthy in contrast to her children's appointments being completed promptly,

"The appointment part is related to the adults, to Mom and Dad. She's [Jenny] been suffering a lot from strenuous pain in her back and her neck and they call and try to make an appointment and they give her [an appointment] after two weeks or so. For the kids, the kids have been addressed right away if things happen." (01:46:52).

Based on the discrepancy in service provided to the children versus the parents, there was a sense of feeling left behind and not being prioritized, "So, no service as far as the whole family, but for the kids they started with the paperwork and then they started receiving the benefits" (00:32:00).

'I have Humanity to Share with'. This clustered theme refers to Jenny's view of culture and its implication in support and service provision for her children, which was gleaned through the process of subsumption. When asked about the interplay between supports, services, and culture, Jenny took a strong stance toward an indifference to culture. In her view, she "doesn't think that culture makes a difference much with the autistic kids" (01:22:32). Jenny expressed that she does not have a pensiveness with culture, which resonates with her perception that her children lack an understanding of cultural nuance. Jenny noted, "I have humanity to share with. Not a culture" (01:26:49). Jenny does not believe that culture plays a huge role in the outcomes and goals that she has for her children in terms of obtained support and services, "So, the change might affect them a little bit but doesn't matter because the way they comprehend culture or all of that- she [Jenny] cannot see it there [in her children]" (Jenny, 01:22:50). Similarly, Jenny believes that culture will not play a big role in service and support impacts for other autistic

Syrian refugee children. Jenny's notion of culture likely consists of ethnicity. Her notion of culture was interpreted through several statements she made throughout the interview. Jenny drew a contrast between Arab and Canadian culture, "they [children] cannot comprehend an English culture, Western culture, versus Arabic culture" (01:23:26). In addition, to Jenny, culture was a form of identity, "She's not very strict. 'Oh okay, I'm focused on the Arabic identity or the Arabic culture'. No." (01:26:38). Indeed, culture is a complex and multifaceted term and through Jenny's quotes it is not completely clear what aspects of culture she was referring to when she expressed indifference.

During member-checking, Jenny was asked about her understanding of culture and the aspects it consists of. Jenny had a hard time expressing her view of culture and echoed what she expressed during the interview, "So she [Jenny] thinks culture is humanity so it doesn't matter which country you are [from], you are still a human being" (00:04:07). Based on her indications, Jenny likely views culture as ethnic, racial, and/or national differences between people; however, being human overshadows cultural difference to Jenny.

Welcomed and Unwelcomed. Through polarization, this clustered theme depicts Jenny's comparison of her children being accepted in Canada versus unaccepted in Syria and Lebanon due to their autism diagnosis. Jenny's experience with autism in Canada, Lebanon, and Syria led to a contrast between feeling welcomed and unwelcomed. Specifically, in Syria and Lebanon, her children were "not accepted in the society" (00:53:30) and "not welcomed in the society" (00:54:10). Speaking to her experience as a parent of autistic children in Syria and Lebanon, "The society in general, they [autistic children] are not welcomed. For the family, the close family, it is okay with the family. Some members of the family were welcoming of the kids,

some were not.” (01:11:20). This account was contrasted with her experience in Canada, which she described to be of humane treatment:

“...they [service providers] are welcoming you. Doesn’t matter that you have to pay money for that [supports and services], or the way you look, or [where] you came from- the way they [service providers] are dealing with us in a very humane manner. This is making us from inside very happy.” (01:15:11).

Feelings of welcomeness contribute to the gratitude and appreciation that Jenny feels with her resettlement. In fact, Jenny’s description of treatment toward her family was described to be humanitarian, “She [Jenny] appreciates the service in Canada. What they received as a family, as a humanitarian relationship” (01:15:00).

‘God Listened to Us’. This clustered emergent theme was obtained through subsumption and refers to Jenny’s notion that her resettlement in Canada was due to God’s will. Jenny attributed her circumstance to God in recognition that, without God’s will, they would not have resettled in Canada, “maybe God listen to us and maybe that’s why we are here in Canada” (00:53:52). To Jenny, Canada has had comforting impacts on her family, which she associated with fate from God:

“She [Jenny] said maybe God listen to us and to our need because she and her husband kept thinking what’s gonna happen to them [sons] when they grow older. [When] mom and dad pass. Those kids gonna be left in the streets. Nobody’s gonna take care of them.” (00:53:33).

Jenny referred to God in the interview with three separate functions. When describing some of the struggles with her experience in Canada, Jenny uttered the Arabic word for “thank God”

(الحمد لله). This word has a powerful meaning in Arabic where it invokes the notion that God controls fate and, despite adversity, it is a blessing that the current circumstance is not worse:

“he’s [Jenny’s husband] going to the doctors so, this again added to little bit of the frustration with everything. But she’s saying (الحمد لله) thank God he’s working a little bit. The health issue of the husband is one of the things that added to some of the difficulties they are facing.” (00:42:04).

This reliance on God can be a source of comfort for family and serve as a cognitive appraisal to change their perspective of hardships experienced. That is, deferring their circumstance to God can influence whether the situation is perceived to be a blessing or punishment from God. In addition, Jenny’s indication of God listening to her implies that she had first asked God to resettle in a nation that better served their needs. Indeed, supplication is a method that individuals may use to communicate their needs to God. Therefore, resettlement in Canada is seen as a blessing from God due to some of the alleviated hardships and associated comforts.

Defining Support and Service. This theme was derived through the function technique to elucidate how Jenny perceives the meaning of supports and services as well as how these definitions are positioned in relation to her experience with supports and services. It became clear that the terms ‘support’ and ‘service’ and their availability were perceived differently by Jenny. She contrasted her experiences with supports and services in Canada and Syria/Lebanon using absolute terms: “they [Jenny and her family] didn’t receive anything in the Middle East versus, everything is given to them in Canada” (01:14:26). This relative distinction between government-funded services in Canada versus Syria/Lebanon was salient.

Often when discussing the supports and services that her children received in Syria and Lebanon, Jenny indicated that they did not receive anything. After further prompting and

tactfully addressing some contradictions, Jenny expressed "... this school, it was private. They [parents] had to pay for it, so, actually it was not a free service they would get" (01:05:38).

Jenny's indication that she did not receive support in Syria and Lebanon was because, for her, support is supposed to alleviate difficulty and benefit the child. For Jenny, services corresponded with available aide for her children, but for those services to be helpful they needed to be something that was given or freely provided as opposed to privately acquired. In other words, there were gaps in accessibility:

"in the beginning, she [Jenny] said she received no support whatsoever and then [in] the next set of questions she said he went to school- the Armenian school for special needs kids and [received] a little bit of community support. She elaborated on that. She said, this school was private, they had to pay for it, so, actually it was not a free service they would get." (01:05:18).

Certainly, the private pay-per-service model was an added financial difficulty that allowed her son to obtain service but did support the family. For Jenny, service availability in Syria is low and the supports and services that were available had financial implications:

"She [Jenny] received none. This is the kind of service or help she got from the government and anything in Syria for the older child. At the parents own expense, they had to pay a doctor to do all the tests and the result came with autism" (00:48:48).

Jenny received a psychoeducational 'service' from professionals; however, this was not viewed as a 'service' because it had financial burdens associated with it. The interviewer reflected on these indications by echoing that Jenny did not receive many supports and the services were privately acquired. Jenny responded with confirming the interviewer's interpretation while indicating that she was not *given* any service:

Interviewer: “Okay. So, I’m hearing that in Syria with the older boy [there] wasn’t a lot of support and then you had pay out of pocket for services. Then coming to Lebanon, for the younger boy, there was also a lack of services as well.” (00:49:48).

Jenny and the interpreter speak in Arabic.

Interpreter: “... So she [Jenny] said, we were there [in Aleppo] and it is correct that nobody gave us any service.” (00:50:33).

Jenny described the service provision in Canada to be humanitarian, which reinforces the notion that the pay-per-service model was a gap for many families:

“She [Jenny] appreciates the service in Canada. What they received as a family, as a humanitarian relationship. They [service providers] are welcoming you. Doesn’t matter that you have to pay money for that [supports and services]” (01:15:00).

Summary. Eleven clustered emergent themes were identified through the interview with Jenny: (1); Experiencing Negativity; (2) Everyday Barriers to Everyday Living; (3) Positives that Outweigh the Negatives; (4) Loss and Unfamiliarity; (5) the Importance of the Family Self; (6) Gratitude; (7) Priorities; (8) ‘I have Humanity to Share with’; (9) Welcomed and Unwelcomed; (10) ‘God Listened to Us’; and (11) Defining Support and Service. Through these themes, pre-migration adversities, resettlement barriers, perspectives of support and service accessibility, aspects of the participant’s identity, and contentedness in Canada were discussed. These emergent themes provide a thematic structure of Jenny’s pre- and post-migration experiences with autism support and service access as a Syrian refugee mother of two autistic children.

Participant 2: Hannah

Hannah expressed interest in the study after learning about it through a representative at CCIS. Hannah resettled in Calgary, Alberta in October 2019 at the age of 46 with her partner and

autistic son, who was 17 at the time of arrival. Hannah and her family were privately sponsored through a family member and received settlement support through CCIS. Hannah's two daughters resettled 6 months in advance of the rest of the family, which was an added support that aided the family's adjustment. Hannah had a limited working knowledge of English with some receptive language capabilities. Throughout the interview, Hannah indicated that the anticipated English learning support through the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association was not available to her due to COVID-19 restrictions. Her two daughters had a relatively good working knowledge of English, which supported the family with paperwork, acquiring support, and other resettlement affairs.

Hannah's son was born in Syria and was diagnosed as autistic there at the age of four. The family lived in Jaramana, which is a town slightly south of Damascus. In Syria, her son received private schooling support as well as private in-home professional language support, both of which were funded by the family. The family left Syria in 2015 but did not speak to their displacement. In Canada, Hannah and her family received resettlement services through CCIS that, along with an assigned counsellor, acted as a liaison for acquiring services for her son and the entire family. This counsellor introduced Hannah to MRHC where they connected with a social worker to help with the application processes for the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) and Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) programs to support her son. Hannah's son also received in-home services and was enrolled in a mainstream school with special education programming. Hannah also found that attending church was helpful for integrating into Canadian society.

Hannah participated in the interview in March 2021 with support from her eldest daughter who was also present for the entire interview. Hannah was described as shy, so her

daughter acted as a support in helping Hannah convey her experience to the interpreter and interviewer. Given her daughter's extensive engagement with Hannah's resettlement experience, as well as her "shy" nature, the role of Hannah's daughter as a support person was a culturally responsive consideration. During this interview, there were times where the interpreter had technological difficulties. The interviewer and participants continued with the interview in Arabic and these brief instances were translated for analysis purposes. The total Zoom meeting was 120 minutes, which consisted of informed consent and the interview content. The interview lasted 101 minutes and 11 clustered emergent themes were identified.

Clustered Emergent Themes. Hannah expressed contentment with the services that she, her family, and her son received in Canada. She spoke to several barriers to resettlement, including meeting her son's needs, language barriers, and a lacking social network. She also described her experience with navigating the system in Canada, perceptions of autism in Syria, the role of culture in supports/services, the impacts of war, and pivotal role her daughters played in the family's adjustment to Canada. Despite the language barrier, Hannah expressed appreciation for her resettlement in Canada and satisfaction for the supports and services her son receives. Most of this interview was conducted in Arabic; however, the daughter's competency in English allowed for her to convey some of Hannah's experiences in English.

Hannah did not respond to member-checking and her lack of response was determined to be a declination to the invitation. All of Hannah's themes and researcher interpretations are considered a correct and accurate representations of the data.

Barriers and an Adapting Lifestyle. Through abstraction, this clustered theme accounts for the barriers that Hannah and her family faced in Canada as well as their journey to adapt to life in Canada. Hannah and her daughter outlined that novelty, loss, COVID-19, and further

support and service needs for her son were all hardships to resettlement and adapting their lifestyle. According to Hannah and her daughter, their initial resettlement was challenging due to the novelty of Canada and settling into their new home. As mentioned, “everything was new (Arabic word for “for example”) credit card, those sort of stuff. We weren’t used to it.” (00:23:17). In addition, “the difficulty they [Hannah and her family] faced [was] for the routine and the different lifestyle they faced with coming to Canada” (00:24:20). Indeed, Hannah and her family endured a steep learning curve at the beginning of their resettlement to Canada. They also found that obtaining accommodation was a barrier in that “renting a place was really hard for some reason. To find a place to rent, no one really let us” (00:22:42). Hannah also noticed some initial difficulty in her son’s resettlement experiences. Specifically, Hannah indicated that “it was difficult a little bit when he [son] came missing out on his friends, however, he really adjusted quickly” (00:40:55). All of these barriers were temporary as “it took a year. It was very difficult in the first year. The whole system.” (00:23:30). In this way, Hannah and her family were able to adapt their lifestyle as they overcame these initial barriers to resettlement.

Throughout the interview, it was clear that the language barrier was the most ubiquitous and persisting resettlement barrier, which will be detailed more in a separate theme. However, Hannah expressed that COVID-19 exacerbated the language difficulties. Not only did COVID-19 mitigate English language learning due to school closures, but it also impacted Hannah’s ability to develop a social network, which was very difficult for her and her partner as they attempted to adjust to a new lifestyle in Canada:

“staying home and not going to school to acquire the language, not only is the obstacle from getting the language, it’s also prevented the mom and dad from knowing new

people. Usually, people get to know people in those schools. So, they're a little bit alone in the situation because of [the] COVID situation" (00:48:37).

The English learning centers can be a crucial support for many newcomers to reduce communication barriers and establish a social network. For Hannah, "once she came to Canada, she was willing and ready to go to school to learn the language. But apparently COVID closed everything" (00:49:07).

Hannah described various barriers with service provision in Alberta, which, if addressed, would help with their adapting lifestyle. Hannah indicated that medical appointments were challenging to make and the delay in time before meeting with a neurologist and medical services was difficult: "they're [professionals] good and everything, everybody in his work. However, it takes a long time to take an appointment" (1:27:28). Hannah also indicated that her son does not currently receive vocational training, which is a barrier to adapting to Canada because this type of service would "help him to feel himself that he's a valuable person" (01:31:03). Salient hardships included the language barrier not being addressed for parents and the traumatic impacts of war on Syrian children, which will be described in their respective clustered emergent themes. Addressing these support and service barriers would further enhance Hannah and her family's adapting lifestyle in Canada.

Acclimatizing as a Child. This theme outlines the factors that supported Hannah's son in his adjustment to Canada, which was derived through abstraction. Despite there being clear barriers to resettlement, Hannah described that adjusting to Canada has been relatively easy for her autistic son. In fact, she indicated that "surprisingly, he adapted quickly" (00:40:12). Hannah explained that his quick adaption to Canada was because of "his relationship with the sisters. He loves his sisters so much. He trusts them so much" (00:40:20). The fact that his sisters arrived in

Canada six months in advance of the rest of the family supported the ease of his resettlement. In addition, it was clear that his sisters were able to use their working knowledge of English to advocate and secure the necessary supports for him, “the sisters had the command of the English language, so they were able to follow up with the appointments and everything and all the affairs” (00:40:26). In addition to the familiarity of established family ties, the educational system in Canada is suited to Hannah’s son’s needs, which contributed this ease of adjustment:

“the educational system in general is different here than it is in Syria. Even for normal kids, not just for kids who have autism. So, he will for sure find a difference. As a child, he quickly acclimates, especially when he sees that here [Canada] is 100% better than over there [Syria].” (01:37:18).

In addition to factors contributing to his adjustment to Canada, Hannah’s son was also described to enjoy Canada. As a result of the benefits he has received, Hannah indicated that “he loved everything that is in Canada now. He loves everything” (00:41:06). Indeed, his experiences with appropriate services and supports personalized to his needs has contributed to this overall sense of enjoyment, “he [Hannah’s son] loved the way and the techniques used to teach him” (01:35:51). In addition, Hannah’s son was described to be content with Canada through the following example:

“... a simple thing like going to the store. The supermarket. You find him rushing into holding the cart being so much involved in the experience and being present of the moment and he looks like he does enjoy it. Enjoy the moment of shopping and using the credit card. All of these things, it shows that he’s having fun, he’s happy.” (00:42:55).

Services at Home Versus Here. Through polarization, Hannah and her daughter drew comparisons between the supports and services for her son in Canada and Syria in terms of the

type and quality of support available. In addition, they indicated that Canada was more optimal than Syria in terms of the supports, services, and education available to Hannah's son. It is important to be cognizant of the fact that, although many Syrian refugees resettle in Canada, for some, Syria is ultimately their home. This statement was true for Hannah and her family where she referred to Syria as 'back home' throughout the interview when comparing Syria to Canada. Indeed, the length of time, type of experiences, and relative adjustment to Canada may be factors that influence the notion of feeling at home. There were numerous times where Hannah and her daughter referred to Syria as 'back home', such as:

“because of what he been through and what he saw back home” (01:54:59);

“this culture is better for him than back home” (01:41:42);

“it's totally different than back home” (01:39:44);

“he used to attend a center back home” (00:39:56).

Hannah and her daughter compared service availability in Syria and Canada. This contrast led to a polarization between service experience in Syria and “a change to the better” (01:47:28) in terms of servicing in Canada. In Syria, Hannah's son attended a private center for youth with special needs where he had several friends, which was a challenge to leave behind when fleeing Syria. His placement at this center was privately financed by the family due to relative gaps in publicly funded services. In this private center, Hannah indicated that “no special care are given to those kids with autism” (01:06:22), indicating a lack of available specialized care to her child. It was clear that service quality was a concern in Syria where parents, such as Hannah, choose to enroll their children in private centers: “there are some government centers, but they are far away from where they [family] lived, and they are not as good as the private one” (01:17:28). Even in private centers there were concerns about care for autistic children:

“...It’s private but the thing is, they are not specialized with autism. It’s for all kind of special need... So, they won’t improve, like, work with him for his case. No, they only, like for example, do activity. Crafting, drawing- just to keep them busy” (01:18:27).

To help improve her son’s language, Hannah “assigned a teacher for him [son] to come at home to help him [son] how to enunciate or talk with language” (01:15:48), which was also a private service that they paid for. Based on their experience with service provision in both countries, Hannah and her daughter drew comparisons between service provision and availability, which was not a topic prompted by the interviewer. Hannah indicated that services in Syria did not “teach him things like here in Canada” (01:21:22).

In reference to the services that her son receives in Canada, Hannah indicated that there was a “change to the better” (01:47:28) and that “those services [in Canada] contributed to this betterment of life” (01:48:11). In response to a question about if there have been any services unhelpful in Canada, Hannah non-verbally gestured ‘no’. Contrastively, Hannah indicated that the lack of specialized service in Syria was unhelpful for the family. In fact, Hannah and her daughter described the suitability of the educational system in Canada using the same term as Jenny (100 percent; مية بالمية), which has a slightly different connotation due to the context in which it was used; however, the underlying meaning is the same and denotes a strong emphasis on the ‘totality’ or ‘completeness’ of what is referenced. Hannah used the term comparatively to describe something to be completely better than something else. Specifically, the following quote is a direct translation to allow for context surrounding the use of said phrase: “As a child, he quickly acclimates. Especially, when he sees that here [Canada] it is 100 percent better than over there [Syria]. It is really better here than it is over there, the school system” (01:37:24).

Several times throughout the interview, the educational and service structure available to youth in Canada were described to be better than that which was available to them in Syria. In addition, Hannah described that the services have led to a change to her son's lifestyle where "It is more organized now. There is time for his meals, there's time for school, there's time for activities." (01:47:12). Indeed, war and displacement can significantly disrupt daily living for individuals, including those with special needs. Through Hannah's indications, her son's resettlement experience included a sense of stability that allowed him to benefit from the supports offered to him. This stability further illustrates how the supports and services offered to son in Canada have been more beneficial than the services he previously received in Syria.

Service Satisfaction. Independent of direct comparisons between supports and services available in Syria and Canada, Hannah also outlined her satisfaction with services provided to her, her family, and her son in Canada. Obtaining this clustered emergent theme was done through abstraction. Hannah expressed satisfaction with the services provided to her and her family upon their resettlement. Some of these services allowed for a remediation of loss, which was important for Hannah. Specifically, Hannah described her happiness with getting credit from the settlement organizations to buy new kitchenware, which was especially exciting because "in Syria she [Hannah] lost all her stuff...That's why she was really happy to get new ones" (00:46:13). Hannah was also satisfied with the quality and variety of services her son receives; Hannah uttered the Arabic word for "thank God" (الحمد لله) in reference to her thankfulness for her son's situation and the education that he is receiving in Canada. Hannah was particularly content with the teachers in his school, "they [teachers] were so nice and he [son] picked up the English language really quickly" (01:27:13). Overall, Hannah noted that the services provided to her, her family, and her son in Canada were beneficial and she was satisfied with them.

Navigating the System. Although a barrier to resettlement, ‘Navigating the System’ is a separate clustered emergent theme due to the polarization between the difficulties and supports with becoming accustomed to systemic processes in Canada. This theme refers difficulties and support with processes, such as filling out paperwork, establishing banking, finding accommodation, and accessing supports and services. Due to the novelty of the processes involved with resettling in Canada, Hannah and her family experienced difficulty with adapting to a Canadian lifestyle. Specifically, Hannah indicated, “It was very difficult in the first year. The whole system. It was using the credit cards, the affairs, the language, the renting a place.” (00:23:32). Hannah found that when it came to applying for services for her son, “the nature of the process itself” (01:25:22) was overwhelming.

Although difficult, Hannah noted that organizations and professionals supported them in navigating the system. Specifically, Hannah and her family were able to access services from CCIS to satisfy their basic living needs. In addition, organizations like CCIS and MRHC offered support with navigating processes to acquire services for her son:

“CCIS assigned a counsellor for them [Hannah and her family] and that counsellor took them to the Mosaic clinic... for the whole family. To get medical care for the whole family. When they went to the Mosaic clinic, they had another special counsellor who picked up the situation of (son) and she started the things [process] there.” (00:32:52).

Indeed, professionals were pivotal to Hannah being able to acquire supports for her son. Especially when it came to application processes for PDD and AISH, professionals supported completion of the application and directing the family of what steps to take. In addition, the settlement agencies helped families navigate the process of accessing English learning supports:

“Hannah’s Daughter: No they [settlement agencies] will refer you [to the language learning centers].

Interpreter: Okay.

Hannah’s daughter: Yeah.

Interpreter: Okay. I just-

Hannah’s daughter: Do you have a- you [have to] give them a call so you can do the test [and] get the benchmark but we wasn’t able to do so.” (00:50:18).

Language as a Persisting Challenge. The most prominent challenge to resettlement for Hannah has been the language barrier. In fact, language has been an ongoing barrier that permeated various aspects of her resettlement. The relative absence of language resources impacted her overall resettlement experience as well as support and service access for Hannah and her family. Although language was a salient barrier, the results of Hannah’s interview shows that language is only a part of her resettlement experience since other barriers also contributed to her experience with support and service access. This clustered emergent theme was derived through subsumption and refers to language as a challenge that is ongoing and impacts being able to function in many aspects of their resettlement. Language impacted Hannah’s ability to complete paperwork for her son independently, establish social relationships, and satisfy her basic needs. For Hannah, “The most challenging part, (interviewer’s name), is the language barrier when she came here, and that challenge still exists” (00:47:59). The language barrier mitigated her ability to communicate with others and undergo processes to settle down and acquire support and services. Indeed, the language barrier contributed to difficulties with the application processes for PDD and AISH as well as undergoing the process for employing supports and services for her son. Moreover, the language barrier reduced the ability for Hannah

to complete language-heavy tasks, “When there’s language, someone needs to go with you. My daughter used to go with me” (01:01:09). To acquire language skills, Hannah would have preferred to attend a formal center to learn English. Hannah noted that the language barrier is exacerbated for those that lack a pre-established base for English because many of the English language centers require a minimum benchmark to attend classes and workshops, which Hannah does not have.

Family Anchors of Support. This clustered theme was developed through the process of abstraction. During their resettlement in Canada, Hannah, her partner, and her son found it immensely helpful that Hannah’s daughters resettled in advance of the family and had a working knowledge of the English language. For example, Hannah indicated “When there’s language, someone needs to go with you. My daughter used to go with me. My daughter used to make a special time [and] we would go on her days off. My daughter used to help me” (01:01:09). In addition, “surprisingly he adapted quickly. Surprisingly- and mom explained the reason for that, is his relationship with the sisters. He loves his sisters so much. He trusts them so much.” (00:40:12). This support was described to be pivotal to their resettlement experience and ability adapt to life in Canada. In fact, Hannah’s daughters were crucial to their resettlement and adjustment in Canada. Due to both daughters’ command of English, Hannah and her family received help with the processes for support and service acquisition, “They [daughters] filled out the [application] papers because their command of the English language” (Hannah, 01:25:58). Certainly, having immediate family members in the same household who speak the majority language is helpful for resettlement in a novel country: “For another family’s situation that don’t have anyone who speaks English, it won’t be easy at all because these things [processes] need keeping up with them. You have to call and ask and keeping up is very difficult.” (00:51:09).

Hannah indicated that her daughters were supports for her in working through the language barrier and in the overall resettlement process, including support acquisition for her son.

Being Autistic While in Crisis. Through abstraction, this theme elucidates the lingering impacts of the Syrian crisis on an autistic child, the complexities of being autistic while in crisis, and how service providers should consider that the crisis influences the presentation of autism for Syrian refugee children; Hannah's son is autistic and a victim of war and conflict.

Hannah and her daughter shared a powerful account of how the Syrian crisis impacted Hannah's son. She also shared areas of need for servicing autistic Syrian children who have also experienced adversities related to war. To Hannah, autism was an added complexity for her child in his experience with the Syrian crisis, "what (son) went through as a typical child and add to it an autistic child, what he went through from the warfare that happened in Syria. That he did really witness real war with real fear." (01:52:24). Syrian children on the autism spectrum not only experience symptoms related to autism, but also the residual effects of war and conflict:

"The Syrian kids, and especially the autistic. They really experienced real fear and scare from the war. They [Hannah and her family] are hoping that this has been taken care of and when they're [professionals] dealing with autistic kids, they are not only autistic.

Add to it, the atrocities and what they went through in the war. That they [professionals] have a technique for them to make them, you know, overcome that. The post-traumatic experience that they went through." (01:53:06).

The Syrian crisis has been an added difficulty for Hannah's son "because he cannot express his fear. He is not able to do so. He cannot say like 'I am scared'." (01:57:44). For Hannah and her family, an area of continued need is for professionals to work tactfully with autistic Syrian refugee children. To Hannah, it is important that professionals work on the fears, inner emotions,

and overall complexities associated with being an autistic Syrian refugee child. Specifically, professionals should “understand and work on his inner fears and inner worries” (01:56:40). In addition, Hannah “wishes that they [professionals] would give him skills, how to overcome his fear” (01:57:03). According to Hannah, professionals are already targeting the impacts of the war for her son in the support and service that they offer. However, this is an area of continued need as it is an ongoing and substantial experience for autistic Syrian refugee children.

Being Autistic in Syria. This clustered emergent theme was developed through the function and contextualization techniques. In terms of function, this theme refers to the negative experiences with being autistic in Syria due to the societal perceptions and stigma toward special needs. In addition, this theme contextualizes what it means to be autistic in Syria by creating a narrative regarding the experiences of Hannah as a parent of an autistic child, the negative perceptions of autism, and parental understandings of what autism is. Autistic children and their families in Syria have negative experiences with societal perceptions, including discrimination.

In response to the perceptions of autism in Syria, a significant Arabic word emerged in Hannah’s description. The Arabic word (تنمر) translates to “bullied” or “bullying” and referred to how Hannah’s son was treated in Syria. The experience of being autistic in Syria was described to be negative, “So, it’s [a] kind of feeling [of] not being accepted” (01:07:51). From lack of specialized care to unacceptance and negative treatment from others, Hannah expressed that the way her son was treated made her upset, “They laugh at him. That makes me feel really sad” (01:10:01). When asked about the ways Hannah’s son was not accepted and ways in which he was bullied, Hannah said, “They look at him a weird look and with pity” (01:08:55) and “A weird look. I feel like they are looking at him in a not normal way. Kids that don’t understand him run away from him. They laugh at him” (Hannah, 01:09:42). In addition to these looks of

disapproval from peers and society, Hannah expressed instances of relational bullying, "... they would whisper around him, they would look at him and talk and laugh, and he would see that. So, the way they dealt with him [inaudible], mocking him, making fun of him." (01:13:02).

It is also important to be aware of parental and societal understandings of autism as a diagnostic entity. In response to a question about Hannah's son sharing the same social inclinations as the rest of the family, Hannah expressed that her son enjoys being around people and is very social. In addition to this response Hannah communicated that:

"...it's very very strange that they diagnosed him, when he was four years old, with autis(m). This was diagnosed back in Syria. He didn't show that he, you know, likes to be isolated or away from people" (00:59:15).

These comments provided insight toward societal and/or parental perceptions of autism, which rendered a follow-up query. Notably, the word used to refer to autism in Arabic (متوحد) translates to 'he who prefers to be alone', which sheds light on how society views the presentation of autism. Importantly, this Arabic word (متوحد) is colloquial and does not reflect what, if any, different terms are used in professional and academic settings. When asked about her understanding of autism, Hannah indicated:

"Her [Hannah's] idea about autism is that the child is mostly alone by himself. He plays by himself. He grows by himself. Sometimes he's not overactive, he gets irritated quickly and he can hurt others. She said, thank God (son) is not that kind. He's a little bit, he can be irritated a little bit - not much. But this is my understanding of autism. Being alone. The child being alone, wrapped in himself. There are places that he can be irritable and overactive, he can hurt others." (01:45:07).

Imperceptible Culture. Abstraction was used to develop this clustered emergent theme, which accounts for Hannah’s recognition of culture being important, but not part of her son’s schematic of what beneficial supports and services entails. In response to questions on the topic of culture, Hannah and her daughter provided insight that culture might be a salient factor for other children, but not for Hannah’s son. This conviction is based on observation that culture “...did not constitute an obstacle in picking up anything that has been taught to him” (01:35:42). In addition, the family have a notion that Hannah’s son does not have “... a full perception of what culture is, what is a culture, what he was in and what’s he’s [in] now.” (01:38:59). Since Hannah’s son was described to not have the awareness of cultural differences, the challenges in adjusting to a novel culture or recommendations around being culturally sensitive were not endorsed. In fact, Hannah indicated, “... for culture, it’s like, seeing this culture is better for him than back home” (01:41:39). Interestingly, culture and education were likened to one another during the interview; when Hannah indicated that the Canadian culture is better for her son than the Syrian culture, she referenced the type of services he received and the treatment he gets as an autistic individual. In Hannah’s view, culture was not an influential factor for her son.

The Deprived Social Being. Through subsumption, this theme details Hannah’s inherent social nature and how it was impacted by factors relating to her resettlement in Canada. For Hannah, developing social relationships and establishing a social network is important. Resettling in Canada during COVID-19 has mitigated the ability to develop friendship with others, which is a challenge because Hannah and her partner are a “very social couple” (00:56:45) that like to have gatherings with friends. Although they attended church and began to meet new people, the lack of established friendships led to feelings of loneliness:

“(interviewer) when they [Hannah and family] came here, they started to go to church. They had the interest to join the [English learning] school. They attended sometime for the church, they got to know people. Once they got to know people a little bit, COVID happened. When this happened, this affects the lifestyle of the family. They’re lonely.” (00:53:59) ... “Because of COVID, they were deprived from the opportunity of making friends and knowing and meeting new people and this is leading, for mom and dad, to be bored at home” (00:54:58).

Certainly, Hannah has a distinct social personality that, with the complexities of COVID-19, have reduced her ability to adjust to and resettle within the social atmosphere that they need. Being social is part of her lifestyle and the lack of opportunity to cultivate the social self is an ongoing challenge for Hannah and her partner during their resettlement experience.

Summary. The 11 clustered emergent themes identified through Hannah’s interview were: (1) Barriers and an Adapting Lifestyle; (2) Acclimatizing as a Child; (3) Services at Home Versus Here; (4) Service Satisfaction; (5) Navigating the System; (6) Language as a Persisting Barrier; (7) Family Anchors of Support; (8) Being Autistic While in Crisis; (9) Being Autistic in Syria; (10) Imperceptible Culture; and (11) the Deprived Social Being. In relation to Hannah’s experiences with support and service access for her son, she described various barriers and areas of satisfaction with her resettlement as well as hardships during her pre-migration.

Participant 3: Sam

Sam and her husband expressed interest in the study after learning about it through a psychologist operating in private practice. Sam arrived in Edmonton, Alberta in 2017 at the age of 42 with her husband and three children. Sam’s son was born and attended first and second grade in Syria; he was 13 or 14 at the time of arrival in Canada. The family lived in Daraa, which

is a smaller town in the south of Syria. Sam and her family fled Syria in 2012, after the onset of the Syrian crisis, and were briefly displaced in Egypt for a week before spending five years in Jordan. In Jordan, Sam took her son to clinicians where he received an autism diagnosis.

Although her son was not diagnosed in Syria, Sam indicated that she observed atypicalities that she wanted support and service for, but which were unavailable to her. From Jordan, Sam and her family were offered refugee status in Canada and sponsored by an immigration and settlement service organization called Catholic Social Services (CSS) in Edmonton. At the time of the interview, Sam had a relatively well-established working knowledge of English and engaged in much of the interview in English at her own preference. The presence of the interpreter was crucial to clarify any instances of miscommunication and detail some of the more complex terms and ideas in Arabic (e.g., perception, adjustment, resettlement). In addition, the presence of the interpreter allowed Sam to communicate her thoughts and experiences in either language comprehensively. Thus, the interview took place in both Arabic and English. Sam's husband participated for a portion of the interview, which allowed for insight into the resettlement experiences for a father of an autistic child in Canada.

Sam's son currently attends a mainstream school with special education programming where he learns educational and daily living skills. Sam indicated that, apart from this schooling, her son does not receive any other specialized services, supports, or programming. Upon their arrival to Canada, Sam's son saw a doctor who wrote a report for Sam to send to the government to receive financial benefits. Sam's son did not receive specialized care or programming in either Syria or Jordan. Sam indicated that her son did not have the ability to keep up with regular programming and did not fit in with the special needs centers where the children were described to have more complex and severe needs. At the age of 10, Sam's son attended a daycare for a

year, which was designed for children 4 and 5 years old to learn Arabic. Due to the educational barriers in Jordan, Sam's son did not consistently attend formal schooling. In Canada, the family received settlement services from CSS and financial support from the government. Sam attended English learning classes, and her son saw doctors and attended special education schooling.

Sam and her husband participated in the interview in April 2021. The session was 116 minutes, with the interview lasting 100 minutes; 11 clustered emergent themes were identified.

Clustered Emergent Themes. For Sam, the strongest predictor of adjustment to Canada was facility with English. Sam described several factors that eased or hindered her adjustment, and the overall resettlement experience for her and her family. Some additional themes that emerged were the pervasive stigma toward autism, combatting stigma, the negative impacts of war, the importance of culture, and comparisons in experiences with service availability between countries. Overall, Sam indicated that she and her family were happy in Canada and were satisfied with the supports received.

Sam was invited to and engaged in member-checking in June 2021. The member-checking process consisted of collaboratively sharing all included quotes within each theme, emergent themes, and clustered them. Due to language consideration and participant preference, this process took place over Zoom with an interpreter. Akin to the interview, Sam partook in the member-checking process in both English and Arabic. Sam was invited to modify or add any additional information, and to confirm, disconfirm, and clarify any information, themes, or structure. Sam was also provided the option to review her transcript. In addition, the researcher provided Sam with selected quotes to ensure congruence between the interpreter's reflections and the Sam's meaning. These quotes were chosen if they were determined to miss detail, add detail, or were perceived to deviate from the participants original utterance. There were some

important clarifications that Sam provided, which will be described in the discussion chapter. Sam confirmed that all presented quotes are representative of her experience. Overall, Sam agreed with the thematic structure, felt her experiences were accurately captured, and the interpreter correctly reflected her perspectives.

Factors that Ease or Strain Resettlement. This clustered emergent theme was obtained through both polarization and abstraction and refers to factors that promoted or hindered resettlement to Canada. Throughout the interview, Sam spoke to several experiences related to resettlement and adjustment in Canada for herself, her husband, and her son. Certainly, there were distinct factors that contributed to the relative ease or strain of different family members resettling in Canada. Sam frequently juxtaposed how English contributed to ease as well as difficulty. As there were several factors that either helped and/or mitigated adjusting to Canada, the relative ease or difficulty with adjustment were polarized into this overarching clustered theme. There were several factors (supports and services that help, immersing into the language, and motivation to resettle) that served as a support for resettlement. Conversely, COVID-19 as a service disruptor, the pervasiveness of language, factors posing difficulties for her son, and factors posing difficulties for Sam's husband were all barriers to resettlement.

Sam indicated that her overall resettlement experience was good due to the availability of supports and services to help her family adjust, "Yeah, it was a very good- my experience for Canada. It was very good, because they give us many supports many, like many service[s] for refugees, for Syrian refugees" (00:16:51). In addition, Sam indicated, "when I came to Canada, there is many support[s] for my son and there is many doctors [to] see him and [who] wrote many reports about his case" (00:18:34). The availability of supports for her son to alleviate financial hardships, from organizations to navigate the system, and services to learn English

were all areas that assisted the family's resettlement. In addition, Sam indicated that developing a social network also eased her resettlement. Sam said, "I have many classmates from different countries. They helped me to accept another friends from different culture" (00:27:45). Not only did creating these friendships make her more accepting of diversity, but it also allowed her to seek support when needed and practice her English skills. Indeed, having opportunity to practice English in natural settings was something that supported Sam's transition to Canada. In fact, Sam volunteered as a translator for other students, which allowed her to "improve my language skills" (00:41:47). Sam realized that proficiency in English would enhance her ability to interact with professionals, complete everyday tasks, and function independently:

"... the first time when we can't speak English, we can't speak and ask the doctor, go to the doctor, talk to him, ask him about my son, ask him to write reports about his case.

Like this. So, everything you get in Canada is given for the language." (00:39:09).

Unlike her son and husband, Sam indicated that her resettlement experience was relatively easy. She had a clear motivation for moving to Canada and worked toward enhancing her English competency to immerse herself into the society. Sam expressed that one of her priorities was to "learn and to benefit from the country and to pick up the language" (01:12:37) out of recognition that "the way to do this [become independent] was the language" (01:14:02).

Although there were numerous supports and services that helped Sam and her family's adjustment to Canada, she spoke to several areas of resettlement that were difficult, namely the initial novelty of Canada, its society, culture, and language. As this novelty can be daunting and overwhelming, the family found that a settlement counsellor was especially helpful in navigating the process of finding accommodation, completing paperwork, and providing translation services during language heavy tasks. Sam said:

“Usually, the first thing for everything is very difficult, So, it’s very difficult to move up from country to another country, another culture, another- different for everything” (00:25:43).

“when they [Sam and family] first came here, they had a counselor, a settlement counselor from CSS. And that person she [Sam] said- she really helped the family.” (01:26:02).

“The first time we came, it's very difficult for us to know everything. So, we need someone to help us” (00:22:31).

Although this initial novelty was a barrier to resettlement, Sam indicated that “when we learn English, it is easier more than the first [time]” (00:38:17) suggesting that learning English helps alleviate some of the difficulties with moving to a new country. Uniquely, Sam’s resettlement experience coincided, in part, with COVID-19, which led to a perceived discrepancy in support provision for her son. Due to COVID-19, there were limited activities for Sam’s son as he transitioned to a new school, which led him to not like that school, “But this school, they don’t have any activities because, Coronavirus. So, he doesn’t like this school” (01:15:11). In addition to these resettlement barriers, there were some unique factors contributing to Sam’s son and husband’s challenges with adjusting to Canada.

Firstly, Sam’s son experienced more difficulty than his siblings with learning and understanding English. This difficulty was due to his autism diagnosis, which contributed to a unique learning profile. As indicated by Sam, her son struggled to keep pace with his peers in Jordan, “He [son] couldn’t really catch up with the, quote unquote, normal kids and normal curriculum” (00:49:03). Therefore, his resettlement experience is characterized by ongoing difficulty with learning English and adjusting to the Canadian culture.

Next, Sam's husband had trouble adjusting to Canada "When he [husband] came to Canada, he said, I will go back to Syria. Because he can't speak English and he can't accept another culture" (00:26:45). In fact, Sam's husband indicated that he could not adjust to Canada and has no choice in the matter, which created a tension between needing and wanting to adjust to Canada. Sam's husband expressed his tension with resettling to Canada through a popular Arabic phrase (غس من عنك), which translates to 'whether you like it or not'. In Arabic, this phrase denotes a strong emotional association of something unpleasant happening against one's will despite their sentiment. In fact, Sam's husband indicated that the family left Syria due to circumstances of war, "Yeah, he [husband] said that because we have war in Syria, we can't live [there] for a long time" (Sam, 00:32:23). Clearly, his preference for living in Syria contributed to his tension with adjusting to Canada. Sam's husband also said a metaphor in Arabic (نحن منعتبر سوريا الأم لنا و كندا تعتبر مثل الأخت أو الأخ أو العم يعني إلهي حضنا; 00:32:10) that translates to 'Syria is like my mother and Canada is like my sister or brother', which suggests that, ultimately, Syria is his home, and he is closer to, more attached, and affectionate to Syria than Canada. In addition to these sentiments, Sam's husband has experienced barriers to resettlement due to not being able to learn the language, not being able to find employment, and financial barriers to opening his own business, which impacted the overall family functioning:

"he tried to find the store to open, like, butcher halal meat, but he can't because the rental is very expensive. The bills also is very expensive, so he can't open like a new job or a new store for him. He tried to find but he can't. This was the harder thing for him: to speak English and to find a job." (00:34:46).

Being Self-sufficient. Through abstraction, this clustered theme refers to the importance of being self-sufficient in Sam's resettlement and adjustment to Canada. Throughout her

resettlement experience in Canada, Sam worked towards independence. Sam indicated that she “weened herself off of the counsellor” (01:26:40) and that she wanted to learn relevant skills so “we can help ourselves by our self” (00:23:51). The primary factor enhancing this independence was Sam’s increasing English language competency. Sam’s motivation to be self-sufficient stemmed from not wanting to be viewed as a Syrian refugee who is dependent on the system to sort her affairs:

“I worked hard for myself to – I don’t – I didn’t want to depend on anyone. I didn’t want to need anyone, to copy anyone. I didn’t want to be an [inaudible] Arab refugees who is coming in, and when she needs to do something, she asks for help” (1:13:35).

During the interview, Sam mentioned an incident where she observed a refugee family being declined translation support from a settlement counsellor. This, in addition to other refugee families discussing their negative experiences, may have further motivated Sam to be independent. She expressed that “they [other refugee families] would complain that their needs were not met” (01:26:58). Indeed, the increased motivation in establishing independence has contributed to Sam’s satisfaction with her overall resettlement experience:

“We don’t have any problem, especially when we learn English. My children [are] very, very happy. They learn English and they can speak perfect. They don’t need someone to help them. They can go and come without any help. So, we are very excited.” (01:48:51).

Support and Service Satisfaction. Sam expressed satisfaction with the supports and services offered to her and her family in Canada, which was themed via abstraction. This theme relates to the availability of support and services in Canada as something that leads to fulfillment among Syrian refugees, which entails settlement services for the whole family. Sam’s satisfaction was evident through descriptions of quality of care, the pivotal role of school, how

her child is viewed, and other general statements. Fundamentally, Sam was satisfied with her son's educational growth and described Canada as "a beautiful country and a country that accommodated me and my son" (01:11:15). In fact, the availability of enriching supports for her son has led to the entire family being satisfied, "the care that (son) is getting is adding to the family's happiness. If it is the parents or the siblings, they're very happy with him" (01:47:54). Indeed, school has been pivotal in her son's learning growth; he attends a special education classroom to learn daily living skills and English. The fact that Sam's son can attend a school to supports his needs is a benefit to him and the family. Sam expressed, "...being able to get the education at school and picking up all those skills makes the whole family happy" (01:47:27).

Thus far, supports and services have referred to direct action that alleviated some sort of hardship or provided benefit to families in this study. However, Sam also described a passive support that that was crucial to her resettlement. Sam appreciated the way her son was treated by Canadian professionals and society. Part of what made the process of working with a Canadian professional helpful was their acceptance of her son's diagnosis, which is reflected by this exchange between the interviewer and the participant:

"Interviewer: Okay, and how did you find- and I think I asked you this before, but I just wanted to doublecheck: How did you find the process of working with a Canadian professional?"

Sam: Very helpful.

Interviewer: Okay.

Sam: Very helpful. They can accept my children. They can talk to him. Explain to him. Speak to him and if he can't understand something, they can explain, they can use body language to explain for him. So, they help him very much to learn." (01:17:13).

In addition:

“Sam: But in Canada, we don’t find like this. They respect this kind of children. We don’t find.

Interviewer: You talked a little about how in Syria, kids with autism are not- They’re made fun of more and they’re not respected as much. But in Canada, you feel as though there’s more respect for-

Sam: Yeah, exactly, and special teachers for him. They can teach him a little bit of information. They can start with the baby steps to learn English and filler words and to learn some sentences. Yeah, but in Syria or Jordan, no. Like, make it- as she said, make him fun [make fun of him]. No, no one can accept him.

Interviewer: Okay-

Sam: [It was] very difficult for me to see my children in this case.” (00:44:17).

Similarly, “for the schools or for the society, they can accept him. Talk to him as a natural person. Here is different.” (01:28:37). This acceptance contributed to her satisfaction with Canadian supports and services because, in her experience, societal stigma toward her son has been something that upset her, impeded supports, and led to a sense of her responsibility in creating a safe environment for her son.

Lastly, Sam was satisfied with the support and service she received from professionals that worked with her and her son. She was appreciative of their quality of care and how they directly addressed her son as opposed to speaking as though he was not present. Sam also admired the fact that professionals attempted to use different techniques, such as gestures and pictures, to overcome the communication barrier with her son. In fact, Sam said, “Sometimes the teacher use body language or uses some pictures or something photos to explain for the student.

They use this way to make them understand more.” (01:39:31). Sam felt as though “the school was good, the teachers were good, the doctors were good, the professionals [were good]” (01:20:26), which illustrated that she did not experience barriers with Canadian professionals and their quality of care.

Recognizing Service Gaps. Although there was overall satisfaction with the supports and services that Sam’s son receives, Sam also spoke to the services they were not receiving as well as various areas of need. These areas of need were themed as service gaps through subsumption to account for Sam’s perception of the areas of need and lack of specialized support for her son. Sam indicated that “until now, I don’t have a specific service” (00:21:26). After probing this further, it became clear that Sam’s son does not receive specialized programs, in-home service, or organizational support. Apart from attending school and receiving financial supports for her son’s condition, Sam’s son has not attended or received any specialized services. Sam indicated that she was not aware of any existing programs. While Sam is satisfied with the current supports her son is provided and the quality of care, she indicated that there is a lack of specialized programming for her son and she “wishes to see more of [the] specialized programs” (01:21:02). Akin to this area of need:

“Mom would love to see some specialized programs where he can pick up more skills, more skills that would enable (son) to have a profession, to work. To be like, you know, an active member of the society. She would love to have those programs.” (01:20:25).

In addition, Sam indicated that “if there is some program that can help my son, it will be good for him” (00:40:30). Indeed, there are areas of need for Sam and her family in terms of her autistic son. As Sam’s son reaches the age of adulthood and educational support ceases, there can be an uncertainty with what comes next in terms of supports and services. Although Sam is

aware that she needs to register with AISH, she said, “So, we have to register him at AISH - I think to get funding or financial for him. Like report about his case for the government. Proof. I need proof from the doctor.” (01:29:51). This comment suggests that, although Sam is aware of the general process, there is reduced clarity in what specific steps that process entails.

In retrospect, Sam also suggested some areas of need that would have been helpful for her son as an autistic Syrian refugee child who has witnessed war in resettling in Canada:

“... for those kids would have an average teacher or professional who can communicate between the professionals and the kids. It might, at least at the beginning, it might ease up a little bit of that anxious barrier of the kids, between the kids and the professionals, and the new society. So, coming from a war background, fleeing from war, coming to a new culture, and new society, new country. It adds up. Having a language barrier, it adds up. So, if she [a professional] would come and receive those kids, she [a professional] has to address those issues.” (01:37:38).

Sam suggested the importance of remaining sensitive to the fact autistic children have witnessed war, resettled in an unfamiliar place, and that interpretive assistance are initial supports that would ease barriers to the resettlement process. Certainly, this is an area of need that is important to consider for autistic children who have fled war and settled within an unfamiliar environment, particularly for those with a more pronounced presentation regarding the need for consistency or sameness as a feature of their autism.

Slipping Through the Cracks. This clustered theme was derived through subsumption and refers to Sam’s son not fitting in any of the support and service systems in Jordan and Syria. Due to his presentation, he was unable to keep pace with mainstream educational systems and his

needs were not in line with centers that supported children with more complex needs. Therefore, Sam's son did not receive supports or services and slipped through the cracks.

Most emergent themes pertained to Sam's experiences with supports and services in Canada, which were characterized by support satisfaction and service gaps. In Syria and Jordan, most of her experiences consisted of the absence of supports and services as well as not fitting in with any of the existing systems. In Syria, Sam's son attended first and second grade in a public school that did not contain any specialized programs. When she moved to Jordan, her son neither fit in with the mainstream educational programming nor the centers designed for children with more severe complex needs:

"... He [son] couldn't really catch up with the, you know, quote unquote, normal kids and normal curriculum. And mom was advised to take him to the specialized special needs school, where the kids are really, really severe case. (son) is not that severe. So, the reality [is that he] did not fit in any of the systems" (00:49:03).

Not being able to fit into this dichotomy led Sam to keep her son at home from school, "In the regular school, he [son] cannot catch up with the normal kind of curriculum students. So, he ended up not [going to school]- she [Sam] kept him at home." (00:49:45). Indeed, children who do not attend school may be at higher risk for exacerbated educational gaps and missing out on developing key skills. Sam struggled with identifying a suitable placement for her son's learning needs during their displacement:

"I registered him at the daycare to learn Arabic, some more like this. So, he attended for one year at the day care. So, he was 10 years [old], [at] the same time, the other children [were] four years, five years" (00:51:13).

During their experience in Syria and Jordan, Sam experienced a lack of support and service for her son, which inhibited his ability to obtain educational enrichment suitable to his needs. Indeed, it is difficult for children who require targeted interventions to benefit from the available education when they do not fit in with any of the existing systems and require specialized support and service to assist with learning.

Comparing and Contrasting. Throughout the interview, and independent from the interviewer's probes, Sam directly contrasted support/service availability in Canada and Syria/Jordan as well as the differences in perceptions between these two contexts. Sam described her experience with increased service availability in Canada and a lack of adequate care for her son in Syria and Jordan. Therefore, the function and polarization techniques helped illuminate how Sam presented the positive and negative aspects of support and service availability between Jordan, Syria, and Canada. Most notably, Sam indicated that the primary distinction between Syria/Jordan and Canada are the supports that are available for her son. Specifically, Sam said:

“There is no- Syria or Jordan, there is less support for my son. As well, there is no support. But, in Canada, there is a different case. So, for the schools, or for the society, they can accept him, talk to him as a natural person, here it is different.” (01:28:24).

In Canada, Sam's son has received several supports and an educational environment that is more suited to his needs, whereas she did not receive that same level of care in Syria or Jordan. In fact, she reported that the lack of support and services were a barrier for her son's education and improvement: “if I had lived forever in Jordan and Syria, he wouldn't have got this kind of education” (01:11:35). This lack of assistance contrasted her sentiment with the education provided to her son in Canada where he has learned many daily living and communication skills.

While describing the stigma that she and her son experienced in Jordan and Syria due to his autism diagnosis, Sam said, “But in Canada, we don't find like this. They respect this kind of children.” (00:44:17). The discrepancy between treatment of autistic children between Canada and Syria/Jordan led to Sam’s conviction that Canada had a more positive environment in terms of societal perceptions. As will be discussed, the negative perceptions and stigma toward children with special needs that Sam and her family experienced were distressing.

Stigmatizing Autism. This clustered theme refers to the ways that autism was perceived and discriminated against in Syria and Jordan through the function and abstraction techniques. Function was used because the stigma toward autism was a negative experience for Sam and her family. Importantly, the concept of stigma refers to an “amalgamation of three related problems: a lack of knowledge (ignorance), negative attitudes (prejudice), and excluding or avoiding behaviours (discrimination)” (Rose et al., 2007, p. 7). In essence, autism, as well as other developmental conditions, are not accepted in the Syrian or Jordanian society. Sam said, “in Syria, the people can’t accept this kind of person all the time” (00:42:40). Similarly, she said “Yeah, but in Syria or Jordan no. Like make it- as she said, make him fun [make fun of him]. No, no one can accept him” (00:45:07). The use of the word ‘no one can’ suggests that the stigma is deeply rooted within the society, which contributes to the lack of acceptance toward children with special needs. The societal stigma is so engrained that, when Sam and her family resettled in Canada, they experienced similar stigma among migrated individuals from the same cultural background, which leaked into their Canadian resettlement experience. Indeed, the stigmatization toward children with special needs and their families are persistent and pervasive:

“As Arabs (interviewer), they bring with them what people think and look and behave towards those kids. They bring [it] with them” (01:04:42) ... “But again, those Arabs,

they are bringing their stereotype. They carry it with them. These people have it in Egypt and Syria and Jordan and this is how people look at people- children with autism, special needs” (01:05:36).

As discussed, the term for autism in Arabic (متوحد) connotes some societal perceptions embedded within the term, which is also true for lay terms for children with other developmental conditions. In the context of stigma toward children with special needs, Sam spoke to an interaction she had with her friend:

“She [Sam] has a friend who has- her daughter has Down Syndrome. And she gave her an advice. Don't you ever, ever let anyone disrespect your daughter. Don't you ever, ever let anyone make fun of her. She has a special case; she has to be protected. She has to be dealt with, she has the right to be dealt with in respects [respectfully].” (1:00:34).

Initially, Sam could not remember the label people used for children with Down Syndrome, which highlights the lack of prescriptive terms to refer to children with various conditions. Certainly, many of the terms have negative connotative features as reflected by various societal perceptions. The Arabic term that Sam used to refer to children with Down Syndrome (منغول) is a highly stigmatizing, highly racialized, and highly discriminatory term. Like the label used for autism, the use of the term for Down Syndrome is not uncommon within the society and, likely, overshadows a more professional or appropriate term. The use of these colloquial terms is due to the descriptive nature of the Arabic language wherein many words tend to have societal, historical, or perceptual roots; this Arabic word for Down Syndrome refers to the societal negative perception of their physical features as well as, to a lesser extent, their cognitive capacities. There were other key words used to refer to autistic children specifically, which Sam was able to shed light on. These terms also have negative attributions to them. Two terms that

were used (مجنون and وخورخ) translate to ‘crazy’ (e.g., 00:58:05). These derogatory words are used to stigmatize individuals with atypical or externalizing behaviors as unstable people who are to be avoided.

In addition to these stigmatizing labels, children in Syria and Jordan experience discrimination through being taunted, physically bullied, and socially shunned. To describe the demeaning language used toward her son, Sam used an Arabic word (مسخرة), which translates to ‘mock’ or ‘make fun of’ (00:43:30), though the Arabic word has stronger emotional connotations implying ridicule and ostracism. Sam’s son was dehumanized due to his diagnosis:

“Yeah, they don't take him seriously (interviewer). They make fun of him. They are, you know, the people with autism and Down Syndrome. Those people are not taken seriously. This society doesn't look at them in any kind of respect or as people. Just, you know, just making fun of them so they don't take them seriously.” (00:43:53).

In Syria and Jordan, Sam’s son experienced bullying among peers wherein “the kids would make fun of him” (00:50:03) and “they command him to go and come and not treat him with respect” (00:50:07). The derogatory terms and treatment toward children with special needs is widely normalized in Syria and Jordan, “... this [treatment] is with our culture and our people” (00:59:50). Undeniably, this treatment toward children with special needs has a negative impact on parents. For Sam, witnessing her child’s stigma was difficult, “[It was] very difficult for me to see my children in this case.” (00:44:17).

The negative societal perceptions toward children with special needs, including autism, contributes to the presence of minimal supports and services. Throughout the interview, Sam spoke to the lack of supports and services available to her son in Syria and Jordan. Indeed, there are less supports and services that are generally available in Syria and Jordan. However, for Sam

and her son, it was evident that his needs were not met in Syria and Jordan due to a lack of available supports or services for this family. While discussing the interplay between societal perceptions and support availability, Sam expressed, “So, (interviewer), in Jordan, the society did not help her [Sam]... You know, they failed her. They didn't give the services because the society does not acknowledge those kids with needs- those children in need.” (00:55:04).

Although this excerpt directly speaks to Sam’s experience in Jordan, she later indicated that she had similar overtly negative experiences in Syria. The perception toward autistic children tends to be normalized within the society, which is damaging to the family and child.

A Guardian Advocate. Through abstraction, this clustered theme refers to Sam protecting and defending her son from prevailing stigma as well as advocating on his behalf and tailoring the environment to suit his needs. Relating to Sam’s dislike toward the stigma she experienced in Syria and Jordan, Sam described her experience as being on guard, a protector, and a defender for her son. As a result, Sam resisted stigma, aspired for normal treatment, and protected her son. In response to the negative treatment that her son experienced, Sam took on the responsibility of standing up for him, establishing boundaries, and creating a safe space for him. Sam “made sure that nobody would mock him, make fun of him, disrespect him” (00:55:56). Sam served as a protector for her son, “So, she [Sam] did the job herself. She did the effort herself, to protect him from the society, from the family, from everyone” (00:56:21). Her effort to combat stigma was especially tiring for Sam because she had to constantly be on guard and “observant all the time” (00:59:37) to ensure her son was not overtly stigmatized against. Through a personal anecdote, it was clear that Sam protected, cherished, and prioritized her son and that Sam is his “means to life” (01:08:41):

“...this son is a special son to her. And he is unlike his siblings who go out, meet their friends. They have an outing. They can go out. (son) can't. So, wherever she goes he's with her. They go for visiting families, families come over. (son), she would never ever leave him alone. And she would never ever treat him in a lesser way to make him miserable being isolated at home, not meeting people, not seeing anyone. So, she said if that guy is very upset and annoyed by the presence of our son with us, so let him not invite us and he doesn't have to come and visit us.” (01:07:39).

This anecdote referred to an incident where a friend reported that some individuals were talking about how Sam and her son were always together and that was not normal. Assuredly, Sam felt that part of her role as a parent of an autistic child was protecting her son throughout their displacement and resettlement.

Relatedly, Sam resisted stigma toward her son's diagnosis. In addition to defending her son, Sam experienced an interplay between resisting and disregarding stigma. On the one hand, Sam blatantly rejected stigma toward her son; on the other hand, she did not allow others' views to impact her decisions. Sam said, “As for the Arabs who were bringing their own stereotypes, I don't care. But if any of those comments come to my attention, I don't keep quiet” (01:11:41).

For Sam, part of resisting stigma was to lead by example regarding treatment of her son:

“... it is you who decide if they [those who stigmatize] can continue doing this or not. If they find [that] you have a child with special needs and you deal with him in disrespect and making fun of him, you're not giving him the respect that he deserves- what he's worth- they will do this with him. So, it depends on you, what you decide that how you'll be. And of course, if you ask the people to straighten up with your child, they will listen to you, and they'll start dealing with him as you do with him.” (01:04:54).

Sam prioritized and appreciated treatment toward her child within the bounds of what she perceived to be 'normal'. That is, she advocated for people to treat her son with dignity, respect, and as though he was a typical child. Throughout the interview, it was clear that Sam experienced a fear of regression by her son being in an environment that was 'not normal'. For example, Sam indicated that she did not want to take her son to the centers for children with more complex needs in Jordan because he would become more severe akin to those peers:

“Mom was advised to take him [son] to the specialized special needs school where the kids are really, really severe case[s]... Mom said she wouldn't take him there because if she would take them there, he would pick up [the] severity of not being normal, which is very, very severe cases. And in the regular school, he cannot catch up with the normal curriculum students. So, he ended up not [going to school]- she kept him at home (00:49:11).

In addition, Sam indicated that if her son was not treated normally then it would be a self-fulfilling prophecy wherein her son would be more atypical:

“... if this is the environment that he will be brought up in that everybody's disrespecting him, this is what he'll become. So now the result everybody is dealing with (son) as if he is completely normal” (00:56:05).

Sam prioritized care and opportunity for her child “She [Sam] is taking care of him [son] socially so he will not deteriorate, he will not get worse than the already existing condition that he has” (01:08:43). These fears of regression outline Sam's potential understanding and knowledge of autism. Overall, she has expended great energy and effort toward combatting stigma and ensuring a safe environment for her son.

Happy. Sam and her family's experience resettling Canada was described to elicit happiness, which emerged as a clustered theme through abstraction. Sam described a strengthening family bond and indicated that "to come to Canada, it was my dream" (01:49:17). For Sam, resettling in Canada was a milestone, which was evident through her quickly indicating the full date of arrival to Canada when asked. In addition, Sam stated that both her and her family are happy to be resettled in Canada. Using the Arabic word for 'thank God' (الحمد لله), Sam felt that her resettlement in Canada was a blessing for her family:

"It's very nice for me and for my family. We are very happy in Canada, we don't have any problem, especially when we learn English. My children [are] very, very happy... we are very excited. We are very happy. This is like, to come to Canada, it was my dream. And thank God, that God would give me this dream (in Arabic, says 'thank God': 'Alhamdulillah' الحمد لله)" (01:48:45).

When asked to describe their family dynamics, Sam indicated that their resettlement in Canada contributed to an increased closeness among the family due to several factors. Although the family dynamics was noted to be akin to their pre-migration experience, this increased closeness was noted to be a positive aspect of their family functioning in Canada. First, Sam indicated that the lack of family in Canada had led to them having to rely on one another to a greater extent:

"However, now they're [Sam and family] closer to each other because they have no [extended] family, they only have each other. So, what you will see now, it is like the family is getting closer. The kids, mom, and dad are closer to each other, which is a positive change." (01:45:32).

Relatedly, Sam and her family felt closer to one another and happier through Sam's son gaining new skills, receiving a suitable education, and the increased quality of care, "So, this is adding to

the point of being close. They're happier as a family because (son) is picking up all those skills and the language and [he is] learning. So, this is good for the family” (01:48:03).

War-related Adversities. This theme was derived through the contextualization and function techniques to expound the negative impacts of the Syrian crisis on Sam’s family and the types of services needed to respond sensitively to the impacts of the war on Sam’s son. There were several residual traumatic effects that acted as compiling hardships as well as implications of the war on her son’s behavioural presentation. When describing ways in which professionals can optimize their supports and services to Syrian refugee children, Sam spoke to various considerations for children who experience war and displacement. Broadly, Sam described the importance of being sensitive to the impacts of war, the compiling hardships of war, and trauma associated with this type of conflict. Chiefly, Sam highlighted the importance of considering that autistic Syrian refugee children are coming from backgrounds of war and displacement that impact their behavioural expression. As Sam and her family resettled in Canada, the impacts of the war, displacement, and novelty of the society, culture, and language all contributed to hardships to which professionals should be sensitive. Indeed, many autistic children experience impairments in social communication that, as indicated by Sam, may contribute to the difficulties associated with how they experience, internalize, and manage the conflict:

“The children are coming from a background that is the fleeing from war. They've witnessed war. So those kids should be dealt with in having this in mind. They are acting up in a different way, because they cannot express what they saw. They cannot express the anxiety. They're very anxious and they have an anxiety inside. So, you find the autistic child showing that anxiety, he feels everything that surrounds him, except he

cannot express. So, he shows and demonstrates that anxiety in acting up and being nervous. And you can feel them, that they're not themselves.” (01:36:16).

As suggested by Sam, the impacts of the war and autism-related behaviours may interact and exacerbate one another for autistic children. There are high levels of trauma associated with the war. Syrian refugees resettling in Canada may have experienced various traumatizing events and “horrible things and situations of war” (01:42:24) that could impact their person in several ways.

For Sam and her family:

“She [Sam] said as, us as normal people, we were affected and traumatized for the longest time. When we moved to Jordan, whenever a regular airplane going in the sky, we would go and hide in- she, herself, would go and hide in a room of the house, getting her children with her, being scared that they would get hurt. Whenever they see a policeman, a police car, they would get an anxiety and they're terrified.” (01:42:26).

In the context of Sam’s indication regarding the exacerbated effects of war on autistic children, “us as normal people” (01:42:27) illustrates a contrast between how variably autistic and allistic people may experience the residual impacts of war. In essence, the impacts of war on autistic children with reduced communication abilities are substantial if those who have the necessary self-advocacy abilities experienced deep traumas. Indeed, there are considerable residual traumatic effects of war. Sam indicated that she, her family, and her son’s trauma reduced with time, which was further promoted by their sensations of safety when arriving in Canada.

The Cultural Identity. This clustered emergent theme refers to the Sam’s perception of culture being a salient factor for support and service provision, culture as a part of one’s identity, and importance of taking culture into consideration. This theme was derived via subsumption.

Although Sam has not faced any difficulties with the acknowledgement of her family's culture in Canada, she recognized the importance of culture to her and her family. When describing whether culture should be taken into consideration, Sam used the Arabic word for 'for sure' (أكيد) several times. Although this word (أكيد) directly translates to 'for sure', it emphasises that something should definitely or absolutely be regarded, "So, she [Sam] said, for sure, for sure, she would love to see taking into consideration, dealing with the children from Syria about their background and culture and traditions. For sure, she said, for sure." (01:52:17). Sam suggested that the cultural background of a child is an important factor when interacting with that child "because we are people who are, you know, our traditions and our customs are very much part of our identity" (01:51:48). Sam mentioned that considering a family's Muslim background is also an important consideration, which has been acknowledged at school for Sam's family regarding her son's halal dietary restriction. In Sam's view, culture, religion, and background are all important considerations for professionals to remain cognizant of when working with autistic Syrian refugee children. As described, culture is a salient part of treating and/or interacting with autistic Syrian refugee children. Sam viewed this as a universal phenomenon for individuals from any cultural backgrounds wherein "the child is born within his customs and background and culture" (01:52:12).

Summary. Sam's interview produced 11 clustered emergent themes: (1) Factors that Ease or Strain Resettlement; (2) Being Self-Sufficient; (3) Support and Service Satisfaction; (4) Recognizing Service Gaps; (5) Slipping Through the Cracks; (6) Comparing and Contrasting; (7) Stigmatizing Autism; (8) A Guardian Advocate; (9) Happy; (10) War-Related Adversities; (11) the Cultural Identity. Sam's description of her pre- and post-migration experiences entailed

circumstances of her family's resettlement, her identity, Canada as her new home, the impacts of crisis and stigma, and perspectives of support and service availability cross-contextually.

Higher Order Superordinate Conceptual Themes

Thus far, emergent themes were identified and mapped into clustered emergent themes that were described and attributed to specific participants. These clustered emergent themes were then organized to identify comparisons across participants, which yielded the following seven higher-order superordinate conceptual themes:

1. Crises Affecting Autism
2. Cultural Importance and Relevance
3. Impactful Perceptions
4. Support and Service Gaps
5. Positive Attributions
6. Quotidian Resettlement Difficulties
7. Vital Relational Networks

These higher-order superordinate themes will be defined, described, and elucidated below to reveal their central ideas. Each theme will include statements regarding its relevance to the research question. These will be briefly described in turn with a more comprehensive discussion to follow in the discussion. In addition, each theme will be framed by direct quotes from participants to explain the concept, meaning, and descriptions for the shared experiences and perspectives.

Crises Affecting Autism. Despite some variability regarding the specificities between experiences, all participants discussed the complexities that crisis had on their autistic children. Specifically, all participants described the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 on support

acquisition and how the Syrian crisis was a disruptive experience for their child; each described adversities related to their experience with war that, in conjunction with a global pandemic crisis, has impacted their family's resettlement experience. This theme relates to the research question as parent experiences with crisis influenced their overall resettlement experience as well as support and service access, perceptions of enhanced diagnostic complexity, and variation in what each family needs to address the residual impacts of war.

All participants described COVID-19 as a barrier to accessing supports for the family that impacted their resettlement. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has infringed on people's livelihood, safety, and security globally (WHO, 2020). In terms of support and service acquisition, Jenny and Sam noted the difficulties of COVID-19 for their children while Hannah discussed how COVID-19 was especially difficult on her and her partner. In her description of decreased support availability Jenny indicated, "everything was going smoothly till COVID happened and things stopped" (Jenny, 00:36:49). There has been a decrease in support satisfaction for Sam's son since the onset of COVID-19, "But this school, they don't have any activities because, Coronavirus. So, he [son] doesn't like this school" (Sam, 01:15:11). Although both Hannah and Jenny described personal difficulties with COVID-19, there were clear differences. For Jenny, COVID-19 exacerbated pressures onto her as a Syrian parent of two autistic children:

"it was stressful, especially for mom, and also for the kids not being able to go to school. It was hard. They got bored and we had no one to take us [Jenny's family] out of the house. So, this is hard. And, of course, on mom, it took the toll on her. But then again, the kids also was bored at home." (Jenny, 00:38:20)

Certainly, Jenny's experience with being a Syrian refugee during COVID-19 was demanding for her as a parent and troublesome for her children who had previously benefitted from activities that mitigated them being bored. In contrast, Hannah did not describe the impact that COVID-19 had on support and service acquisition for her child. Instead, COVID-19 acted as a barrier to her own resettlement experience in terms of language learning, "because of COVID, most of the schools that they [Hannah and her partner] were supposed to go to learn the language is closed" (Hannah, 00:48:10) and socializing, "because of COVID, they were deprived from the opportunity of making friends and knowing and meeting new people" (Hannah, 00:54:58).

All participants indicated their children were adversely impacted by the Syrian crisis. The Syrian crisis was described to be "very dangerous" (Jenny, 1:01:38), "horrible" (Sam, 01:42:24), and filled with "atrocities" (Hannah, 01:53:28). Jenny experienced a significant reduction in services for her eldest son and a decline in supports for the entire family, "when the war started it [supports and services] went downhill" (Jenny, 1:01:16). Sam described the compiling hardships of the Syrian crisis for her son, "So coming from a war background, fleeing from war, coming to a new culture and new society, new country. It adds up." (Sam, 01:38:00). Hannah indicated that her son was impacted by the traumas associated with the war, "The Syrian kids, and especially the autistic. They really experienced real fear and scare from the war." (Hannah, 01:53:06). Although all participants described concerns regarding the impact of the crisis on their children, only Hannah and Sam described these impacts in detail.

According to Hannah and Sam, the Syrian crisis contributed to trauma for their autistic children. As indicated by Hannah and her daughter, the residual impacts of the war are exacerbated because of the child's diagnostic presentation:

“This situation is still present now. At night, sometimes, he gets scared. When he is over worried, he bites off his nails. So, these situations are real...because he cannot express his fear. He is not able to do so. He cannot say, like, ‘I am scared’.” (Hannah, 01:56:49).

Relatedly, in addition to barriers to communication, Sam felt that the war resulted in marked changes in her son’s behaviours, “he feels everything that surround him except he cannot express. So, he shows and demonstrates that anxiety in acting up and being nervous. And you can feel them, that they’re not themselves” (Sam, 01:36:49). Hannah’s son has experienced lingering fears and behaviours because of the Syrian crisis,

“They [Hannah and her daughter] hope that (son) would be stronger, be more brave, and not to be scared from any outside influences because he used to get- anything would scare him. [He] wakes up at night scared because of what he been through and what he saw [in the war] back home” (Hannah, 01:53:44).

Due to the significance of the Syrian crisis, both parents suggested that the experience with war is part of their autistic child’s identity. Hannah indicated, “... they are not only autistic. Add to it the atrocities and what they went through in the war” (Hannah, 01:53:23). Similarly, Sam suggested that when servicing autistic Syrian children, it is important to consider war as a part of their circumstance, “So, this is the first thing she [Sam] would advise the service that is provided for the children here: take into consideration those children [are] coming from war.” (Sam, 01:37:05). Indeed, pre-migration experiences regarding the Syrian crisis are unique factors that impact autistic Syrian children and, therefore, should be attended to during supports, services, and their overall resettlement.

Cultural Importance and Relevance. Each participant described their perspective of how culture is implicated in service provision for their children. This overarching theme

considers the extent to which participants perceived culture as important and relevant in providing support and service to autistic Syrian children. Importance refers to the relative significance of culture whereas relevance refers to the extent to which culture is meaningful, applicable, or recognized by the participants and their children. Although there were some contrasting views on culturally embedded practice, participants had overlapping sentiments. As participants are migrating to a dissimilar cultural setting, it is important to consider the extent to which culture permeates participant's resettlement experience. These findings suggest that culture has idiosyncratic impacts on the resettlement experience of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children as well as their perspectives of supports and services for their autistic child(ren).

Jenny had the most contrasting view on culture, "she [Jenny] doesn't think that culture makes a difference much with the autistic kids" (Jenny, 01:22:32). Jenny asserted that sharing the human experience was more important than emphasising her culture, "She's [Jenny] a human being and I [Jenny] have humanity to share with, not a culture." (Jenny, 1:26:46). In fact, Jenny was indifferent to cultural variability and did not endorse cultural preferences, "I'm like my kids. I [have] no preference, no difference between any culture. So, she's [Jenny] open to all cultures." (01:26:31). This sentiment was likely influenced by her experiences with cultural discrimination during her displacement, "He [Jenny's husband] was dealt with [in] a bad way himself. In an unfair [and] unjust manner because he's Syrian. So, we used to receive half of what the Lebanese would make" (Jenny, 00:57:05). Although she perceived that culture was not an important factor in service and support provision, Jenny and Hannah shared similar perspectives on the relevance of culture for their children. Jenny indicated that her kids do not fully grasp cultural nuance, "So the change might affect them a little bit but doesn't matter because the way they comprehend culture or all of that- she [Jenny] cannot see it there [in her children]" (Jenny, 01:22:50).

Similarly, Hannah's son, "does not realize very much what a culture [is] and what is the difference of cultures" (Hannah, 01:40:13). Both Hannah and Jenny felt that culture was imperceptible for their children, which may be associated with behavioural expression consistent with autism, such as impairments with social communication.

Although culture was not as relevant for her son, Hannah and her daughter acknowledged that culture can be important for other autistic Syrian children, "it might be true for other kids, autistic kids, but for (son) in particular it did not constitute an obstacle in picking up anything that has been taught to him" (Hannah, 01:35:36). Importantly, Hannah and her daughter's acknowledgement of cultural importance was constrained by their personal experience with the son's view of culture, "he [Hannah's son] doesn't have the capacity and the awareness of a normal person about what is happening around him. So, he did not face this challenge, but for a normal person- I don't know." (Hannah, 01:38:35). When discussing the limitations around Hannah's son's perception of culture, an Arabic word (ادراك) that translates to 'awareness' was used. This word is significant as it connotes a universal or overarching sense of knowledge wherein a person who does not have this awareness lacks the ability to derive insight from abstract concepts in general. This perspective that culture is important was shared by Sam, who asserted that culture is vital and a salient part of one's identity, "The cultural background of the child has to be taken care of- [taken] into consideration when dealing with him. Because we are people who are, you know, our traditions and our customs are very much part of our identity" (Sam, 01:51:43). In contrast to the other two participants, Sam viewed cultural sensitivity as a relevant practice for her son, "she [Sam] said, for sure, for sure, she would love to see [professionals] taking into consideration, dealing with the children from Syria, about their background and culture and traditions. For sure, she said, for sure." (Sam, 01:52:17). Culture has

been taken into consideration for Sam's son, particularly with his Islamic dietary restrictions, which has made her feel "happy that they [are] paying attention to these things" (Sam, 01:54:09).

Certainly, there are differences in the extent to which culture is relevant and important to Syrian families of children on the autism spectrum. These differences are due to the family's personal experiences with culture and their perception of whether cultural awareness is impaired in their child's diagnostic presentation. Just as culture is a complex construct, participant experiences and perceptions of culture are nuanced; Sam and Hannah shared a perception of culture being important for Syrian autistic kids, and Jenny and Hannah shared sentiments that culture was not particularly relevant for their children based on their diagnostic profiles.

Impactful Perceptions. All participants discussed similar experiences with stigma, discrimination, and negative societal perceptions for their autistic children in Syria and throughout their displacement. These negative perceptions impacted the children through being discriminated against, ostracized, and enduring constant stigma. In addition, parents were upset and impacted through how these perceptions led to treatment of their children. In terms of this study's research question, considering the experiences of perceptions pre-migration is important in context of how parents experience societal perceptions of autism upon resettling in Alberta.

Across each interview, there was a general sense that autistic children were not accepted by the Middle Eastern societies, "They[re] dealt with in a very negative way. They're not accepted in the society" (Jenny, 00:53:22). Similarly, Sam indicated, "in Syria, the people can't accept this kind of person all the time" (Sam, 00:42:40). These two quotes also related to Hannah's experience, "So, it's [a] kind of feeling [of] not being accepted" (Hannah, 01:07:51). This unacceptance influenced the treatment of autistic children, which consisted of bullying and stigmatization. There were instances of relational bullying among the participant's children, "A

weird look. I feel like they are looking at him in a not normal way. Kids that don't understand him run away from him. They laugh at him" (Hannah, 01:09:42). Jenny experienced similar accounts of bullying from both the society and some family, "even with family- they [Jenny and family] would face people [who] would say stay away from them, [they would] take their kids away from the autistic kids. So, nobody plays with them." (Jenny, 00:53:08). This experience was echoed by Sam, who, in addition to relational bullying, "they command him to go and come and not treat him with respect" (Sam, 00:50:07), noted that her son experienced physical instances of bullying as well:

"Sam: I don't like to- speak with a bad word with him. I don't like someone to touch him or hit him. I don't like that.

Interviewer: And those are things that you experienced in Syria? People say bad words to him?

Sam: Yeah.

Interviewer: And they hit him?

Sam: Yeah." (Sam, 00:45:55).

Throughout the interviews, it was clear that the stigma toward autistic kids was persistent and pervasive. For Jenny, her experience of constant stigma led her to feel isolated, "I didn't want to go out at all. I wouldn't take them to anywhere because they [children] were not welcomed in the society." (Jenny, 00:54:04). While in Canada, Sam experienced a persistent stigma from individuals who originated from Middle Eastern societies, "As Arabs, (interviewer), they bring with them what people think and look and behave towards those kids, they bring [it] with them" (Sam, 01:04:42). Hannah indicated that the stigma toward her son were not isolated incidents, but instead, persisted throughout her son's life,

“they [Hannah and family] were not approving of the way he [son] was dealt with at school, from his peers, and, even when he grew older. The same kind of reaction from peers or the society. You can tell right away from the way people started to look at him.” (Hannah, 01:11:45).

Both Hannah and Sam made explicit comment regarding the impact that societal perceptions toward autistic children had on them as parents. After describing the type of stigma that her son experienced, Hannah indicated it was upsetting for her, “They laugh at him. That makes me feel really sad” (Hannah, 01:10:01). Along this line, Sam expressed that the negative perceptions and stigma toward her autistic child were problematic and unsettling, “[It was] very difficult for me to see my children in this case” (Sam, 00:44:17). Although Jenny did not make an explicit indication regarding how the societal perceptions were upsetting for her as a parent, it was clear that these perceptions were distressing and an anxiety-invoking experience:

“She [Jenny] said maybe God listen to us and to our need because she and her husband kept thinking what’s gonna happen to them [sons] when they grow older? [When] Mom and Dad pass. Those kids gonna be left in the streets. Nobody’s gonna take care of them.” (Jenny, 00:53:33).

Overall, all participants expressed that the societal perceptions and associated stigma were distressing experiences that either led to feelings of being upset or future uncertainty.

Support and Service Gaps. All participants described similar experiences with a lack of supports and services available to their autistic children in Syria and throughout their displacement. Although there were clear differences in the amount of supports and services that each participant received, the consensus was that their children’s needs were not met. In addition to the gaps experienced in Syria and throughout their displacement, participants also spoke to

areas of further need regarding Canadian support provision. Each participant expressed an overall sense of satisfaction with the available supports and services; however, there were several gaps addressed by participants. This theme addresses the research question through exploring parental experiences with accessing supports and service pre- and post-migration and how the relative presence or absence of supports/services relates to their resettlement experiences.

Sam viewed the lack of supports and services as due to the negative perceptions of autism in Syrian and Jordanian society, “They [the society] didn't give the services because the society does not acknowledge those kids with needs- those children in need” (Sam, 00:55:13). This was distinct from the other participants’ indications of lacked support and service availability; however, each participant, including Sam, expressed similar sentiments. Importantly, through the interviews with participants, it is unclear what may contribute to the lack of supports and services. Though, the common experience across participants was the fact that a lack of support/service impacted them.

Jenny discussed the lack of supports and services available to her in Syria, “She [Jenny] received none. This is the kind of service or help she got from the government and anything in Syria” (Jenny, 00:48:48). Sam’s experience was similar as she also experienced a lack of support, “There is no- Syria or Jordan, there is less support for my son. As well, there is no support.” (Sam, 01:28:24). In Hannah’s experience, her son did not receive the quality of care that he needed, “She [Hannah] noticed that no special care are given to those kids with autism. She [Hannah] did not find that this society is providing them with any (inaudible noise) special care that they needed” (Hannah, 01:06:20).

All participants shared their views on how resources, supports, and services are scarce for autistic children in Syria. Although Hannah’s son received support, he did not receive the level

of care he needed, “no specialist for him in Syria” (Hannah, 01:32:42). Hannah also noted gaps in support and service provision due to geography, “there are some government centres but they far away from where they lived.” (Hannah, 01:17:28). Along this line, Jenny expressed, “They [kids with special needs] don’t get a lot of support nor services.” (Jenny, 00:53:03). In both Syria and Jordan, there was a lack of support for Sam’s son, “They [services in Syria and Jordan] don’t have any support, we don’t have. They don’t take care about this kind of case.” (Sam, 00:52:07). Like Sam, Jenny also expressed a lack of supports and services available for her during her displacement, “neither in Lebanon, nothing is given to them [Jenny’s children]. So, they received nothing.” (Jenny, 00:49:40).

In Canada, there were areas of further need across participants, despite an expressed satisfaction with the supports and services that have been provided. The need for further support was unique to each participant; however, there was some key overlap. These needs are reflective of the perceived gaps in supports and services and the parents’ desire to fill those gaps through their suggestions. Sam indicated she would “love to see some specialized programs, where he [son] can pick up more skills” (Sam, 01:20:26). This indication varied from Jenny who expressed concerns with services for the whole family, “So, no service as far as the whole family, but for the kids, they started with the paperwork and then they started receiving the benefits.” (Jenny, 00:32:00). Both Jenny and Hannah indicated that a key need for servicing was the length of the appointment process. Regarding medical appointments for Jenny and her husband, “the only thing she [Jenny] would love to see, it is taking appointments. It takes longer, than it should.” (Jenny, 01:44:05). Hannah echoed this concern for specialized appointments for her son, “however, [it] takes a long time to take an appointment” (Hannah, 01:27:32). Hannah shared that an additional service need was English learning opportunities, “language [is] still consider[ed] a

challenge for us, especially when you cannot learn it from a school.” (Hannah, 00:48:25). Both Sam and Hannah referred to opportunities for their children to become contributing members of society through vocational training opportunities, which was also perceived to be a current service gap. Hannah indicated that she “would love to see them [her son] grow and learn a profession. A kind of profession that suits his needs and eventually get a job” (Hannah, 01:30:21). Relatedly, Sam indicated that she “would love to see some specialized programs where he can pick up more skills, more skills that would enable (son) to have a profession, to work. To be an active member of the society” (Sam, 01:20:25). Lastly, in addition to being sensitive of trauma associated with war, Sam also indicated that a professional that can act as a linguistic or cultural liaison would be a culturally responsive and effective resource for helping the children adjust to Canada and its unfamiliarity:

“So, this is the first thing she [Sam] would advise the service that is provided for the children here: take into consideration those children coming from war. So, this [war] gave them a high anxiety and [the] language barrier, here [in Canada], adds to that anxiety. They go to school [and] they deal with professionals [with] whom they cannot communicate with. So, mom is suggested: for those kids, [if they] would have an average teacher or professional who can communicate between the professionals and the kids. It might, at least at the beginning, ease up a little bit of that anxious barrier between the kids and the professionals and the new society.” (Sam, 01:37:05).

Positive Attributions. All participants expressed positive attributions toward resettlement in Canada as well as the supports and services available to them upon throughout their resettlement. Specifically, these positive attributions included being happy in Canada, being thankful for being resettled in Canada, satisfaction with support and service provision, and

viewing Canada as beneficial for their children's education and development. As will be described, parental positive attributions relate to their experiences with both supports/services as well as resettlement more generally.

All participants expressed happiness toward aspects of their resettlement experience in Canada. Hannah was "happy with all the service except with the long [waiting] time[s]." (Hannah, 01:27:18) and was especially pleased with Canadian services that offered her a sense of restoration from aspects of loss in Syria. In Syria, Hannah lost her kitchenware so when she came to Canada, she was happy with services that provided her with credit for new purchases:

"She [Hannah] loved the part of giving her money or credit in store and getting the kitchen stuff... Because, in Syria, she lost all her stuff, the kitchen stuff and those kind of stuff. That's why she was really happy to get new ones." (Hannah, 00:45:46).

Jenny's contentedness with resettlement in Canada included increased access to services and reduced levels of overt stigma, which contributed to a holistic sense of happiness:

"she's [Jenny] very happy here psychologically, emotionally. She appreciates the service in Canada. What they received as a family, as a humanitarian relationship. They [service providers] are welcoming you. Doesn't matter that you have to pay money for that [supports and services] or the way you look or [where] you came from. The way they are dealing with us [is] in a very humane manner. This is making us from inside very happy." (Jenny, 01:14:57).

Although Jenny is content with her resettlement in Canada and the services provided to her, she is especially happy with the supports and services for her children, "She's [Jenny] happy for the kids. That they are able to go to school... we [Jenny and husband] are happy when we see the kids. They have a life and they go to school." (Jenny, 00:27:04).

Sam also expressed happiness toward her resettlement experience. For Sam, resettling in Canada was an ideal that came to fruition as was expressed through deep contentment, “It’s very nice for me and for my family. We are very happy in Canada...we are very excited. We are very happy. This is, to come to Canada, it was my dream.” (Sam, 01:48:45).

Akin to the parents’ sentiments, all parents indicated that their children have benefitted from Canada. Hannah noted that her son has enjoyed his resettlement experience in Canada, “he [Hannah’s son] loved everything that is in Canada now. He loves everything.” (Hannah, 00:41:06). Similarly, when describing her children’s experience in Syria/Lebanon and Canada, Jenny indicated that her children are happier in Canada, “They enjoy all those services they are getting so, they look happier.” (Jenny, 00:45:56). Resettlement in Canada and the development of skills through supports and services for Sam’s son has contributed to an increased happiness for the entire family, “they’re [Sam’s family] happier as a family because (son) is picking up all those skills and the language and learning. So, this is good for the family.” (Sam, 01:48:09).

All participants expressed gratitude and appreciation for either the overall opportunity to resettle in Canada or aspects of their resettlement experience. At the most concrete linguistic level, this thankfulness was uttered through the phrase “thank God” (alhamdulillah; الحمد لله). In Arabic, the term “thank God” conveys a deep gratitude to God for their circumstance. Both Hannah and Sam used “thank God” when discussing their appreciation for aspects of Canada, “This is, to come to Canada, it was my dream and thank God, that God would give me this a dream” (Sam, 01:49:15). Sam attributed her resettlement in Canada as a blessing from God through use of this word. Similarly, Hannah used the term “thank God” when describing her appreciation of the education her son receives in Canada. The function of ‘thank God’ for Jenny was different as it connoted a sense of relief that circumstances were not worse than the current

hardships they were facing. In this way, resettlement offered a sense of alleviation from previous or potential hardships:

“he’s [Jenny’s husband] going to the doctors so, this again added to little bit of the frustration with everything. But she’s saying (الحمد لله) thank God he’s working a little bit. The health issue of the husband is one of the things that added to some of the difficulties they are facing” (Jenny, 00:42:04).

Through mentioning God, Jenny also showed gratefulness for resettling in Canada by indicating that it was an alleviated circumstance granted by God, “maybe God listen to us and maybe that’s why we are here in Canada” (Jenny, 00:53:52). For Jenny, life in Syria and Lebanon was difficult, which contributed to the gratefulness she feels for resettling, “He [husband] had to work all day till night. For her [Jenny], she had to stay with the kids, which was extremely hard for her she’s so grateful that she’s here.” (Jenny, 00:57:25).

Participants also expressed appreciation for the services that have been available to them and their children in Canada. Jenny especially valued the supports and services available to her family, “She [Jenny] appreciates the service in Canada” (Jenny, 01:15:00). Jenny listed three things that she was appreciative of; school, specialized programming for her kids, and the benefits she has been offered by the government:

“So, first thing is the benefits. The benefits that she is receiving. The programs like the ones that she mentioned- taking the kids and engaging them in activities and the third thing is the school. Those three things, she really appreciates.” (Jenny, 00:44:00).

While discussing aspects of service provision Hannah found helpful in Canada, she also expressed appreciation that the services have led to an increased quality of life, “Those services [in Canada] contributed to this betterment of life” (Hannah, 01:48:11). Along this line, Sam

indicated that, “Yeah, it was a very good- my experience for Canada, it was very good because they give us many supports for Syrian refugees. So, I think we don't need more than that.” (Sam, 00:16:51). In addition to a sense of appreciation for the supports and services available to them, Sam expressed a sense of contentment with the available supports, which was evident through her indication of ‘I think we don’t need more than that’.

All participants shared an overwhelming satisfaction with the current level of supports and services provided to them. Sam expressed satisfaction with her son’s skill development, “What I found here is a beautiful country and a country that accommodated me and my son. He learned and picked up a lot of skills” (Sam, 01:11:14). Throughout the interview, Jenny expressed that she has experienced comprehensive care for her children in Canada, “she [Jenny] cannot think of anything she would ask for more. She would think of schools and they have it, and all the programs. So, she’s receiving everything she can think of from the government of Canada” (Jenny, 01:20:23). When asked about if any service or support in Canada has been unhelpful for her family, Hannah responded with a non-verbal indication of no. Hannah also expressed her satisfaction with the quality of professional care, “the teachers and they [teachers] were so nice and he [Hannah’s son] picked up the English language really quickly... they’re [professionals] good and everything, everybody in his work” (Hannah, 01:27:12). Sam and Jenny also expressed satisfaction with service quality. Sam noted, “the school was good, the teachers were good, the doctors were good, the professionals [were good]” (Sam, 01:20:26). Specifically, Sam acknowledged that the techniques used by professionals were helpful for her son, “Sometimes the teacher use[s] body language or uses some pictures or something photos to explain for the student. They use this way to make them understand more” (Sam, 01:39:31). Similarly, Jenny was also satisfied with the professionals she encountered, “They [professionals]

are very good, very proficient, and they know what they are doing. She [Jenny] didn't feel there is any kind of shortcoming on the professional side.” (Jenny, 01:44:39).

Lastly, each participant highlighted positive attributions to their resettlement in Canada through drawing comparisons between their experiences with supports and services in the Middle East and Canada. Although the interviewer did not specifically inquire about or allude to contrast in their experience, this was a common explanation that emerged across participants. Hannah described that, for her son, the type of education he receives “is really better here [Canada] than it is over there [Syria]” (Hannah, 01:37:44) and there has been improvements in his general lifestyle, “there has been a change, [interviewer], here [Canada], especially in (son's) life. It is more organized now. There is time for his meals, there's time for school, there's time for activities. So, life is more organized for him.” (Hannah, 01:47:07). Similarly, Sam indicated that Canada has provided her son with opportunities that he, otherwise, would never have received, “if I had lived forever in Jordan and Syria, he [Sam's son] wouldn't have got this kind of education.” (Sam, 01:11:35). Along this line, Jenny also indicated that the Albertan supports and services for her children are inherently positive, “here's much much better and the kids do not miss anything back in the Middle East” (Jenny, 01:14:12).

Overall, all participants demonstrated thankfulness regarding their resettlement experience in Canada and appreciation for the types of supports and services available. This appreciation is important to consider given the instabilities consistent with their experience with war, trauma, displacement, and a lack of support and service for their autistic children in Syria, Lebanon, and/or Jordan. Indeed, the difficulties associated with conflict as well as the barriers to support and service acquisition in the Middle East has contributed to the positive attributions that

they have associated with their resettlement experience. Although there are areas of continued need, all participants indicated that their experience with moving to Canada was positive.

Quotidian Adjustment Difficulties. Quotidian adjustment difficulties refer to difficulties that were experienced by participants in their day-to-day life and that posed challenges to their overall adjustment because of its continued impact in everyday life. That is, quotidian adjustment difficulties place demands on participants during their resettlement, which are challenging and, in many ways, impact their ability to access supports and services. These challenges include navigating the systems (e.g., completing paperwork, commuting, finding accommodation, familiarizing with Alberta Health Services), adapting to a novel society, finding employment, and language barriers. Quotidian barriers are those that many newcomer refugees may face due to the unfamiliarity of the society in which they have resettled. These barriers are ongoing and ones that many refugees may need support in overcoming. Barriers that were not considered to be quotidian included isolated incidents, brief hindrances, and/or unique circumstances albeit persistent in nature, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. All participants expressed that the experienced barriers were everyday impediments to daily living and were, therefore, quotidian.

First, a salient barrier to adjusting to life in Canada for each participant was English. Indeed, the process of resettling for participants was challenging when they lacked the language resources to navigate the society, including accessing supports and services for their children. For Hannah and her partner, the language barrier was significant to their everyday living, “the most challenging part, [interviewer’s name] is the language barrier.” (Hannah, 00:47:59). The language barrier impacted Hannah’s ability to complete everyday tasks independently, “When there’s language, someone needs to go with you. My daughter used to go with me.” (Hannah,

01:01:09). The language barrier also impeded Hannah's social adjustment, "staying home and not going to school to acquire the language, not only you know is the obstacle from getting the language, it [has] also prevented the Mom and Dad knowing new people" (Hannah, 00:48:37). Although Sam's language competency improved with time, she also acknowledged the difficulties of a language barrier:

"when we can't speak English, we can't speak and ask the doctor, go to the doctor, talk to him. Ask him about my son. Ask him to write reports about his case. Like this. So, everything you get in Canada is given for the language." (Sam, 00:39:10).

In addition to commuting and the weather being barriers to adjustment, Jenny also experienced language to be an area of difficulty, "The weather, the language barrier and not having a car. Everything else is positives, especially having doctors." (Jenny, 01:38:17). Like Sam, Jenny found that having knowledge of English was pivotal to her everyday living, "she [Jenny] can manage with small conversations and conducting her regular business. She is in command of little bit of English that she can manage." (Jenny, 01:33:26).

Next, participant experiences converged when discussing aspects of novelty that hindered their adjustment to Canada. There were several aspects of novelty that were difficult for Hannah and her family when adjusting to Canada:

"everything was new (Arabic word for "for example") credit card, those sort of stuff. We weren't used to it." (Hannah, 00:23:17).

"It took a year. It was very difficult in the first year. The whole system. It was using credit cards, the affairs, the language, the renting a place. Everything was new to them [Hannah and her family]." (Hannah, 00:23:30).

“it is the nature of the process itself. The amount of paperwork they had to fill” (Hannah, 01:25:22).

Clearly, in addition to language, the system, processes, and general novelty of Alberta acted as barriers to adjustment for Hannah and her family upon their arrival to Canada. Along this line, Sam indicated that Canadian society was new for her and, initially, this was difficult to grow accustomed to:

“Usually, the first thing for everything is very difficult. So, it's very difficult to move up from country to another country, another culture... For us, and for my children, [it] was very difficult. In the beginning [it] was very difficult.” (Sam, 00:25:43).

Due to this novelty, Sam found that it was pivotal to have settlement supports, “The first time we came, it's very difficult for us to know everything. So, we need someone to help us” (Sam, 00:22:31). This novelty resembled Jenny who indicated that her familiarity with Syria and Lebanon was comforting, “we miss home and family” (Jenny, 00:27:20). In fact, Jenny found that getting accustomed to the Canadian climate was a hardship for the family, “Second the nature of the weather. They're [Jenny and family] not used to- Middle Easterns are not used to forty below [weather]. It's [a] very hard change for them that they had to cope with” (Jenny, 01:37:46). Hannah and her family also faced barriers to their lifestyle when resettling in Canada, “they [Hannah and her daughter] confirm and affirm that the difficulty they faced for the routine and the different lifestyle, they faced [these difficulties] with coming to Canada (inaudible) daily life. So, it was hard for them.” (Hannah, 00:24:17). Certainly, various aspects of novelty in Canada were hardships for each participant, to which they grew accustomed overtime.

Two participants detailed the employment difficulties that resettling to Canada posed for their husbands. Sam's husband has had difficulty in establishing a small business for himself in Canada due to costs that would be incurred,

“he tried to find the store to open, like, butcher halal meat, but he can't because like the rental is very expensive. The bills also is very expensive, so he can't open a new job or a new store for him.” (Sam, 00:34:46).

Along this line, Jenny's husband found employment in Canada, which posed its own difficulties, “the husband was able to find a job right away and it's still very hard. It is tough with the income that we [Jenny and family] are making.” (Jenny, 00:29:59). Employment challenges are also a quotidian barrier impacting participants daily life and are, perhaps, exacerbated by other barriers such as reduced language proficiency and the novelty of the Canadian job market.

Participants faced both similarities and differences in the barriers to their resettlement that they faced in Canada. Foundationally, the barriers that participants experienced were barriers to their everyday living, which impacted their lifestyle, daily living, and adjustment process.

Vital Relational Networks. All participants mentioned the importance of varying social or family support systems on their resettlement to Canada. Resettling with a family or social networks or establishing such networks upon arrival were aspects that eased various difficulties associated with participant resettlement. Therefore, in terms of the research question, these relational networks are vital because of the profound impact they had on participant resettlement experiences.

Throughout her interview, Sam indicated that learning English and adjusting to Canada was a priority for her, which was bolstered by the social networks that she established:

“I have many classmates from different countries. They helped me to accept another friends from different culture. I talked to them. They be my friends. I call them every time. It's helped me... I need to speak with them. I need to speak English with them. I can't speak Arabic with them. So, it helped me to improve my speaking.” (Sam, 00:27:45).

Just as establishing a social network has been helpful for Sam’s adjustment, the lack of social networks thwarted adjustment to Canada for Hannah:

“they [Hannah and her partner] did not have the enough time to make friendship with people, to get to know people so they can have friends. So, this is the situation they are in now. Because of COVID, they were deprived from the opportunity of making friends and knowing and meeting new people and this is leading for mom and dad to be bored at home.” (Hannah, 00:54:45).

For both Hannah and Sam, their nuclear family was also a vital relational network for adjusting to Canada. Hannah’s daughters arrived in Canada before the rest of the family and had a pre-existing knowledge of English, which supported the family with completing everyday tasks, “When there’s language, someone needs to go with you. My daughter used to go with me. My daughter used to make a special time we would go on her days off. My daughter used to help me” (Hannah, 01:01:09). Having close family in Canada also bolstered Hannah’s son’s adjustment, “surprisingly he [Hannah’s son] adapted quickly. Surprisingly, and mom explained the reason for that, is [because of] his relationship with the sisters. He loves his sisters so much. He trusts them so much.” (Hannah, 00:40:12). Although they didn’t have extended family in Canada, the nuclear family was vital to a positive resettlement experience for Sam:

“However, now they're [Sam and family] closer to each other. Now, because they have no [extended] family. They only have each other. So, what you will see now, it is like the family is getting closer. The kids, mom, and dad are closer to each other, which is a positive change.” (Sam, 01:45:32).

Sam’s emphasis on the importance of the nuclear family in their resettlement differed from Jenny who highlighted the crucial role of extended family members. Resettlement was challenging for Jenny and her family who resettled in a country with less close and extended family members:

“we left family behind, we left our life behind. So, actually we are struggling between those- we are happy when we see the kids they have you know a life and they go to school. However, we miss home and family” (Jenny, 00:27:09).

Despite there being positive aspects with resettling, Jenny found that fewer family ties in Canada was particularly difficult for her, “We don’t have family except for one family, which is my husband’s uncle.” (Jenny, 00:27:40). Certainly, family was a sense of comfort and familiarity for Jenny and her family, “for us it was nice to know that we have a family. And there are families and so forth.” (Jenny, 01:06:17).

All participants expressed the crucial role of family or social support systems to their resettlement. Although participants had varying views on the relative role of relational networks, their experiences with or without these networks illustrates the importance of family and/or social ties for Syrian refugees in a host country. Ultimately, having family and/or social supports in Canada was crucial to the type of resettlement experience that participants had.

Summary

This chapter reviewed clustered emergent themes for each participant before identifying overlapping experiences across all participants. Participants provided rich descriptions of their

experiences with barriers to resettlement, appreciation of supports and services, views of support and service gaps, impacts of negative perceptions, cultural views, and the complexities of resettling due to crisis. These experiences draw important connections between what it means to be a diverse parent of an autistic child and access supports and services in an unfamiliar society as a refugee. Overall, resettlement in Canada is a deeply complex and nuanced experience that is impacted by several factors that either promote or derail adjustment efforts.

In the following section, the participant experiences will be further developed to understand newcomer diversity and servicing autistic children and their families in the context of humanitarian crises. The next section aimed to situate the results within theory, relevant research, and provide literature-informed practical implications. Indeed, contextualizing the experience of Syrian refugee parents, autistic children, and support and service provision is important for identifying gaps, suggesting policies to promote comprehensiveness, and advocate for supporting families with a social justice orientation.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This qualitative study on the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children explored participant experiences with resettlement and supports/services, which generated rich and detailed findings. Findings are rooted within IPA theory and participant experience, which were then expounded upon through the primary researcher's interpretations (Smith et al., 2009). This study provides an in-depth account of the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents in Alberta regarding their experiences with having an autistic child in the context of various pre- and post-migration factors. Specifically, the following research question was addressed: How has the lived experience of resettling in Alberta and accessing supports/services been for Syrian refugee families with an autistic child?

The findings provide important context to the experiences of Syrian refugee parents regarding their overall resettlement as well as availability, acquisition, and provision of supports and services. The following discussion will deepen the understanding of Syrian refugee parent experiences through cross-analysing the emergent and higher-order superordinate conceptual themes in terms of relevant literature in support/services, mental health, social justice, and Syrian refugee resettlement.

The existing research corpus lacks exploration of the experiences of refugee families with autistic children. Although this is a strength in terms of the present study's novelty, the disadvantage is that there is a lack of established research in which to situate the current findings. Therefore, the present study will relate its findings to research that explores the wellbeing of Syrian refugee children and parents. Deepening the understanding of first-person experiences is crucial to extend research on the experiences of parents of autistic children (e.g., Woodgate et al., 2008) to the complexities of the Syrian crisis and refugee resettlement in Canada (e.g., Ellis et

al., 2019). To ensure credibility and authenticity of the discussed findings, this chapter will emphasize meaning elicited by participant quotes while drawing connections between their experiences and the established research. This discussion aims to advance current knowledge while acknowledging individual nuance. This chapter will conclude with limitations and areas for future research to promote academic productivity in this much needed area of research.

Summary of the Study Results

The following sections will introduce literature-informed theories and relevant research to expound and contextualize the results. Before doing so, a summary of the shared thematic structure between participants is briefly outlined. All participants described experiencing barriers to their resettlement, positive experiences with support and service acquisition in Alberta, notable support/service gaps, various views on culture and its implications, experiences with stigma of autism, adverse impacts of the Syrian crisis for their autistic child(ren), and the importance of family/social supports in resettlement. Specifically, the following superordinate conceptual themes were derived: (1) Crises Affecting Autism; (2) Cultural Importance and Relevance; (3) Impactful Perceptions; (4) Support and Service Gaps; (5) Positive Attributions; (6) Quotidian Resettlement Difficulties; and (7) Vital Relational Networks.

After the following section (Considering Minority and Vulnerable Populations in Research), this thematic structure will be examined through two relevant theories specific to adaptation in resettled refugee populations. First, a brief review of the resource-based model of migrant adaptation (Ryan et al., 2008) will be presented and followed by its inclusion throughout the document to make connections between the research question and the findings. Next, the RAISED between Cultures Model (Georgis et al., 2017) is a theory on psychosocial adaptation that consists of six factors that will be described in more detail in its respective section.

Afterward, the shared conceptual thematic structure derived in the results will be situated in relevant literature and theories by introducing each theme as its own separate subheading. This process further expands on the results, derived deeper meaning, develops a rich interpretation that is grounded in participant interviews, and establishes the implications of this study.

Participant Member-Checking

The outcomes of member-checking are outlined here to balance verification of the results with the philosophical underpinnings of IPA. The clarifications by Jenny and Sam are discussed to provide information to the reader without influencing the original data analysis. The member checking table outlining participant feedback across themes is presented in Appendix C.

Jenny disagreed with how her experience fit into the theme ‘Vital Relational Networks’. Initially, the researcher interpreted the lack of family ties in Canada as a resettlement barrier due to indications Jenny made about missing her family and finding comfort with family presence in Syria and Lebanon. Jenny clarified that she has always been self-sufficient and that the lack of family was not a barrier, but the presence of family was helpful. Jenny’s feedback about how her experience fit into ‘Vital Relational Networks’ will be described in more detail in its respective section later in the discussion. Next, Jenny clarified that COVID-19 was the primary reason for her need for more prompt appointments. Initially, the researcher interpreted that this was a general concern; however, Jenny indicated that attending appointments had been particularly delayed during COVID-19.

Sam also provided key clarifications regarding her experience but did not disagree with how her experience fit into any of the contrived themes. In ‘Positive Attributions’ Sam’s responses were interpreted as content with the supports and services provided to her with a sense of those supports being sufficient, “Yeah, it was a very good- my experience for Canada, it was

very good because they give us many supports for Syrian refugees. So, I think we don't need more than that.” (Sam, 00:16:51). Sam clarified that this indication was specific to support and service provision prior to COVID-19. Since COVID-19 Sam felt as though support and service provision was not as adequate. Last, in the ‘Being Self-Sufficient’ theme, Sam agreed that she wanted to learn English to avoid relying on settlement supports; however, the primary reason for learning English was her motivation and desire to do so.

Considering Minority and Vulnerable Populations in Research

Although slowly evolving in school psychology, diversity research is crucial for informing best practice for children who are culturally and/or linguistically diverse (Song et al., 2019). It is well documented that minority populations are generally underrepresented in research (Knight et al., 2009). According to Shivayogi (2013), vulnerable populations are typically a “disadvantaged sub-segment of the community” (p. 53) and consist of several populations including children, those with special needs, minority populations, and/or refugees. There are several ethical and methodological challenges that hinder research with minorities, such as insensitivity to their beliefs in the research design, linguistic barriers in informed consent, and a lack of cultural understanding regarding the population under study (Knight et al., 2009). The prudence in conducting research with vulnerable populations, such as minority groups, includes ensuring confidentiality, protecting information, minimizing harm, and establishing fairness (Quinn, 2015). Nonetheless, it is important to investigate diverse populations because information gleaned from their participation is informative for developing policy, advancing knowledge, and delivering appropriate psychosocial intervention programs (Knight et al., 2009). Indeed, the inclusion of minority populations ensures that research is sensitive to beneficial or disadvantageous programming, such as with interventions (Braunach-

Mayer & Gibson, 2017). Relatedly, excluding vulnerable populations in research risks harm because of varying considerations in support and services for them (Gehlert & Mozersky, 2018). Indeed, designing research with vulnerable populations is important and should be carefully considered (Gehlert & Mozersky, 2018).

Consideration of the complexities, nuances, and importance of minority and vulnerable populations was pivotal to the development of this study. As discussed in the literature, it is important to develop research that investigates these populations to optimize service provision to them (Braunach-Mayer & Gibson, 2017; Gehlert & Mozersky, 2018). As indicated in Kirmayer and Jarvis (2019), “Indigenous peoples, immigrants and refugees and racialized groups, as well as some long-established ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious communities, experience inequities in mental health in Canadian society” (p. 12). Therefore, investigating phenomena through participant voices allows for support and service advocacy through a co-construction of knowledge and implications by social agents (researchers and participants), which are rooted within what participants say (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Smith et al., 2009).

There is a need for developing culturally responsive practice to bolster the resettlement outcomes of refugees while recognizing the diversity between various refugee groups (Newbold & McKeary, 2017). Advocating for awareness to diversity is important for servicing refugee children in the educational system (Gagné et al., 2017). Through an IPA approach, this project aimed to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children to understand their current needs and inform practical implications. IPA has strengths in research with refugee populations because it considers participants as experts in their experience of phenomena, emphasizes research reflexivity, obtains the essence of experience, allows for responses to emerge from non-leading questions, and co-constructs knowledge (Schweitzer & Steel, 2008).

This project aims to add to the growing literature of Syrian refugee resettlement in Canada while addressing the nature of supports and services for parents of autistic children.

Theoretical Frameworks in Refugee Resettlement

The resource-based model of migrant adaptation (Ryan et al., 2008) builds on several theories of migrant adaptation and is more specific to refugee populations. This theory elucidates how resource gain and loss throughout refugee's migration experience contributes to their adaptation upon resettlement. According to this model, the needs, goal, and experienced demands of refugees interacts with their existing resources or lack thereof to impact their adjustment process. In line with the research question and novel exploratory nature of this study, the purpose was not to determine levels of adaptation among Syrian refugee parents of autistic children; however, this model provides a useful framework within which to situate these findings. For example, quotidian resettlement difficulties are additional demands on the existing resources of refugees while increased access to supports and services are resource gains, which influence the overall resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees. This model will be used to link the findings to the research question and relevant literature throughout the discussion.

To investigate the Syrian refugee resettlement experiences and their psychosocial adjustment, Yohani et al. (2019) applied Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model (1994) and the RAISED between Cultures Model (Georgis et al., 2017). The use of both models stems from the notion that Bronfenbrenner's model does not adequately account for cultural and post-crisis nuances and their influence on child development outcomes (Yohani et al., 2019). Broadly, the Ecological Systems Model refers to the complex interaction of multiple contexts (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, chronosystem) that influence how children develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Neal & Neal, 2013; Yohani et al., 2019). The microsystem has the most

direct influence on the child and consists of their family and school (Neal & Neal, 2013). The mesosystem is the interaction between two or more microsystems and the exosystem refers to larger entities that impact the child such as, services, policies, and media (Neal & Neal, 2013). The macrosystem consists of sociocultural, national, and ideological influences. Finally, the chronosystem is the highest tier and most abstract system referring to temporal and spatial changes in the child's environment, which impacts them (Neal & Neal, 2013).

According to Yohani et al. (2019), the RAISED between Cultures Model adapts principles of the Ecological Systems Theory to be more applicable to immigrant and refugee populations due to its lack of culture and post-crisis adaptation considerations. These researchers selected the RAISED between Cultures Model to investigate psychosocial adaptation among Syrian refugee families (Yohani et al., 2019). The RAISED between Cultures Model is used to enhance effective intercultural practice through considering culture, pre- and post-migration factors, socialization, and the influence of multiple environments (Brosinsky et al., 2018). This model posits six factors to be considered by practitioners to influence child development outcomes optimally (Georgis et al., 2017; Yohani et al., 2019). These six factors are represented in the RAISED acronym: **r**eveal culture, **a**cknowledge pre-migration experiences, **i**dentify post-migration system barriers, **s**upport family and community strengths, **e**stablish connections between environments, and **d**etermine child outcomes together with families (Georgis et al., 2017; Yohani et al., 2019). These factors will be applied to the findings of this study to provide implications for practice and situate the results within an existing theoretical framework designed for refugee families of autistic children.

Reveal Culture

Considering the actions, beliefs, and values of Syrian refugee families is important for service providers and educators. Indeed, providing culturally sensitive care increases the satisfaction of newcomer families, which was evidenced by Sam who was happy that her son's school "send them [forms] for permission for Halal meat or [ask] are there any dietary restrictions" (Sam, 01:53:59). The importance of how individuals express culture was illustrated in Yohani et al. (2019) with reference to a situation where children were viewed as disrespectful in a school setting for not making eye-contact when it was a culturally bound behaviour. In fact, Georgis et al. (2017) indicated that "culturally-influenced behaviours and actions that may be seen as odd or problematic in one context may be cherished, necessary, and meaningful in another context" (p. 12). Considering these behaviours is important because, for example, reduced eye contact may be considered an autistic behaviour in Western contexts or a culturally-influenced behaviour in other contexts (Fox et al., 2017). Therefore, it may be inappropriate to structure teaching with a high emphasis on making eye contact.

In the present study, both Hannah and Sam expressed that considering culture in support and service provision is important. Specifically, Sam indicated, "The cultural background of the child has to be taken care of- [taken] into consideration when dealing with him. Because we are people who are, you know, our traditions and our customs are very much part of our identity" (Sam, 01:51:43). Therefore, it is crucial for practitioners and educators to attend to "culturally shaped expectations and behaviours" (p. 20) and collaborate with parents to optimize support and service provision to autistic children (Yohani et al., 2019). Considering collectivistic socialization, varying perspectives, and integrating cultural experiences into the classroom are ways to enhance adaptation outcomes among resettled refugees (Georgis et al., 2017).

Acknowledge Pre-migration Experiences

Each family who resettles in Canada has a unique experience in their country of origin and any host countries they have migrated/been displaced to (Georgis et al., 2017). For Syrian refugees, their pre-migration experience may include violence, separation, austere living conditions, and loss (Yohani et al., 2019). According to Georgis et al., pre-migration experiences impact the behaviours, expectations, and understanding of what various social, education, and specialized services consist of. Indeed, considering these experiences is an effective way to understand family backgrounds and “navigate their experiences” (Yohani et al., 2019, p. 22). Considering these experiences can be important for designing psychoeducational resources as well as inform policy makers, support/service providers, and settlement agencies of ways to help refugees navigate the system and adjust to Canada.

As illustrated by the results of the current study, an important pre-migration experience for Syrian families and their autistic children is the extent to which the Syrian crisis influenced the child’s behavioural presentation. Interestingly, Georgis et al. (2017) indicated that refugee children may be triggered by loud noises, which is important as auditory hypersensitivity is often present in autism (Lucker, 2013). This example illustrates how the intersection between pre-migration experiences and autism-related behavioural expression is crucial to consider. Certainly, considering how pre-migration experiences with conflict impacts the child’s behavioural and/or traumatic expressions is important (Georgis et al., 2017) and can be extended to autistic Syrian refugee children who resettle in Canada.

In addition, the results of the current study suggest an intersection between family experience and stigma toward their autistic child. Stigma is an important consideration as it may influence mental health outcomes among parents, identity of autistic individuals, and parental understanding of autism (Botha et al., 2020; Papadopoulos et al., 2019). For example, during

member-checking, Jenny's understanding of autism was characterized by difference, "she [Jenny] sees it as a different world, they communicate in a different way, and they don't really like to communicate with people around them" (Jenny, 00:00:46). This understanding changed when she came to Canada and autism was more accepted,

"she [Jenny] thinks that in her country or in our country, she was like they're gonna stay like that for the rest of their life, but here she has hope that they can change, they will learn, they're humans just like us, and there's room for change" (Jenny, 00:01:28).

In addition, it was clear that Sam's understanding of autism was influenced by the societal perceptions. In response to the question about whether her understanding of autism has changed since coming to Canada:

"Her [Sam's] own personal perspective to autism hasn't changed because she's always been accepting of kids who are like that [inaudible]... so she's saying because she had a kid with autism she understands and she feels for other kids and she's always been accepting of these cases." (Sam, 00:05:25).

The participants in this sample experienced adversity with the Syrian crisis and stigma toward autism, which had ongoing impacts when resettling in Canada. As discussed, pre-migration experiences interacted with parental understandings of autism, which has implications for the types of psychoeducational resources that would be beneficial. According to Georgis et al. (2017), considering the pre-migration experiences of children to Canada is vital because identification of those experiences may render the need for "additional psychological supports in the new country" (p. 15). Indeed, the results of this study suggested additional supports and services that would be beneficial to Syrian refugee children given their pre-migration experiences with stigma, crisis, and support/service gaps. Parents had varied needs, which

included more specialized supports and service, trauma-informed care tailored to the autistic child, and vocational opportunities. Parents were satisfied with the increased availability of supports and services upon their resettlement to Canada because of the lack of accommodated education and specialized services available to them as part of their pre-migration experience.

Identify Post-Migration Systemic Barriers

There are many resettlement barriers, such as language, social isolation, and socio-economic status, that are present for immigrants and refugees (Georgis et al., 2017; Yohani et al., 2019). The present study aimed to identify systemic barriers among Syrian refugee parents of autistic children in accessing supports and services for their children since, “Identifying these post-migration systemic barriers allows for better understanding of the stressors that these families face on a daily basis, which in turn can lead to the development of better strategies for facing these stressors” (Yohani et al., 2019, p. 22-23). In addition, post-migration barriers have the potential to impact parent and child wellbeing negatively and reduce collaboration between home, school, and services (Georgis et al., 2017). The present study identified several resettlement barriers resembling previous research, such as language, transportation, and social isolation (e.g., Agrawal, 2019; Farber et al., 2018; Oudshoorn et al., 2020), as well as unique barriers in support and service acquisition for autistic children and their families.

Unique barriers included a lack of knowledge of existing specialized programming and unfamiliarity with adult service application processes. These stressors can complicate support and service acquisition for parents who do not have informal information networks or constant contact with settlement counsellors. Both Hannah and Sam hope that their children can attend vocational training programs; however, the lack of knowledge of adult service application was evident during member-checking when Sam asked the researcher if he could write a report for

her son's AISH/PDD application. She then expressed she did not know who to contact to request a psychoeducational assessment, only that it had to be done to acquire programming.

Identification of these barriers can direct psychoeducational and information sharing resources for parents to benefit from.

Some resettlement barriers have unique impacts on Syrian refugee parents of autistic children. For example, language barriers complicated Hannah's navigation of the service application process for funding, "the sisters [Hannah's daughters] had the command of the English language, so they were able to follow up with the appointments and everything and all the affairs" (Hannah, 00:40:26). Transportation barriers impacted Jenny who often had to travel to attend appointments for her sons, "commuting back and forth to their appointment. Going to the designated office. This [is] what was hard for them [Jenny and her family]." (Jenny, 00:34:55). Although not directly indicated in the text, Hannah's experience with a lack of social contact can also have implications for her son because of reduced social opportunities. Some of these implications were evident through Hannah expressing the social nature of the family, "yes he loves people. Yes, he's very social. Yes, he doesn't mind being around people at all and mom and sister are [the] same." (Hannah, 00:59:06) and how a lack of social interaction is challenging for her son, "By himself [he] gets bored. He loves to be with people" (Hannah, 00:59:49).

Support Family and Community Strengths

As indicated by Georgis et al. (2017), there are several strengths or "funds of knowledge" (p. 18) that refugee and immigrant families contribute to their child's outcomes. These include resilience, multilingualism, culture, and unique family relationships. In line with the results of this study, relational networks are pivotal to resettlement adjustment outcomes. This finding relates to the literature because relational networks are part of the strengths that immigrant and

refugee families bring with them (Yohani et al., 2019). Language is a particularly important strength as multilingualism has positive impacts of child developmental outcomes, language is a vessel for cultural knowledge, and language helps children make connections to their family and community (Georgis et al., 2017). Since refugees, like the participants in this study, had limited English language competency upon arrival, it is important remain cognizant of ways to bolster second-language learning for the entire family while advocating for the child's retention of their first language. In addition, support and service providers should attend to the social, linguistic, and cultural strengths that families contribute and, when appropriate, incorporate those elements into practice. Autistic children have varying learning needs and language capabilities, which should be taken into consideration and navigating collaboratively with family members to ensure that developmental outcomes are optimized.

Establish Connections Between Environments

The importance of bridging the gap between the child's cultural environments is to ensure that their culture is valued, and the children do not feel othered, and to establish a strong bicultural identity, which is a protective factor for minority children (Georgis et al., 2017). Families should be encouraged to maintain their cultural identity, practices, and beliefs within the Canadian culture that they resettled in (Yohani et al., 2019). The participants in this study had varying views on the interrelations between their culture and the Canadian culture. Sam emphasized the importance of considering the overlap between the two cultures, "for sure, she would love to see [professionals] taking into consideration, dealing with the children from Syria about their background and culture and traditions." (Sam, 01:52:17). Jenny felt that a bicultural identity was not relevant for her children, "they [children] cannot comprehend an English culture, Western culture, versus Arabic culture" (Jenny, 01:23:26). Next, Hannah indicated that

“this culture is better for him than back home” (Hannah, 01:41:42), which suggests a degree of acculturation. Interestingly, Hannah often likened culture to education during the interview:

“because she [Hannah] doesn’t feel that he [son] has a full perception of what culture is, what is a culture, what he was in and what’s he’s [in] now. So maybe he doesn’t perceive or realize the big difference and when he came here, he just picked up the way he was taught and the education methods right away. He assimilated in it very, he got adjusted very [well] and she talked about maybe this question would be [relevant for] a completely normal child... A normal kid would find a different cultural, educational system.

However, it is a difference in the- it’s good. It’s to the better.” (Hannah, 01:38:56).

Indeed, culture is a deeply nuanced term, and some researchers argue that “the efforts to define the term are impossible” (Valsiner, 2019, p. 431). Therefore, it is important for practitioners to consider and explore refugees’ understanding of culture, aspects of their culture they would like addressed, and their expectations of support and services based on cultural views. This consideration can help practitioners effectively navigate practice with refugees that have children with special needs.

Based on the results of these findings, practitioners should consider the unique beliefs and perspectives of culture among participants when establishing connections between environments. As participants in the present study had varying perspectives of cultural relevance and importance, it is important to consider individuality when designing and implementing culturally responsive practice. Indeed, pre-migration experiences can influence perspectives of culture, which should be considered during support and service provision. Jenny confirmed during member-checking that her previous experiences with discrimination impacted her view of

culture; her view of culture prior to resettling was based on differentiation, which changed when she resettled in Canada:

“She [Jenny] feels, here, that she doesn’t see the differences in culture or in ‘what you are’. Before she came here, she used to think the same way, that culture matters and stuff but when she resettled here, her view of that changed” (Jenny, 00:37:11).

Determine Child Outcomes Together with Families

The final factor in the RAISED between Cultures Model emphasises the importance of collaboration with families to optimize child developmental outcomes (Georgis et al., 2017). The model acknowledges that families have varying realities and changing cultural frameworks, and that culture is complex (Georgis et al., 2017). As discussed in the previous section, participants in this study had varying perspectives of culture and their responses suggested differing understandings of what culture consists of. Establishing common goals and working toward a collaborative support structure for families is pivotal to child adjustment (Georgis et al., 2017). In fact, increased collaboration and “an increased understanding of cultural and language barriers can facilitate supports” (Yohani et al., 2019, p. 26). While acknowledging pre- and post-migration experiences (Georgis et al., 2017), this study also aimed to identify resettlement factors that impacted Syrian refugee parents of autistic children in accessing and using supports and services for their children. This study identified several autism-specific (e.g., difficulties with application processes, lack of knowledge of existing programs) and general (e.g., transportation, language, weather) barriers that impacted adjustment to Canada. Overall, the RAISED between Cultures Model offers a comprehensive and directly applicable theoretical framework to conceptualize the challenges that Syrian refugee parents of autistic children experienced and how policy makers, service providers, and practitioner can overcome them.

Relevance to the Literature

Through identification of participants' emergent themes and shared experiences via superordinate conceptual themes, this section will explore the connections between the derived themes and the existing literature base. Using the resource-based model of migrant adaptation (Ryan et al., 2008), the findings of each theme will be linked to an existing theory of adaptation to describe connections to the research question. As the results are discussed and implications are drawn, it is important for readers to consider the double hermeneutic in IPA research, which refers to the researcher interpreting meaning from the participant who attempts to make sense of their own experience while expressing meaning behind their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). That is, the researcher and the participant both assume a role in knowledge generation.

Each participant described their experiences with accessing, using, and benefitting from supports and services for their autistic children. Participants described the supports and barriers to resettlement, their perspectives on culture in practice, and various impacts on their autistic children as well as the services available to them. Participants experienced barriers and perks to resettlement, which is important for developing strategies to serve Syrian refugees who are on the autism spectrum and their families. Canada offers asylum to refugees on an annual basis and received over 700,000 refugees prior to the Syrian crisis (Barber, 2021; Ghahari et al., 2020). At the onset of the Syrian crisis, the government of Canada agreed to grant asylum to the "largest influx of refugees to date" (Barber, 2021, p. 3). Indeed, with increasing international conflict, there will be ongoing refugee resettlement in Canada with further possible influxes (Ghahari et al., 2020). Given that refugees will continue to resettle in Canada, research aimed at investigating their experiences with resettlement and addressing gaps in support/service provision are needed.

Participants faced several everyday barriers during their resettlement, which echoed previous research on Syrian refugee resettlement experiences (e.g., Agrawal, 2019; Ghahari et al., 2020). In addition, previous research has outlined several post-migration factors that contribute to increased mental health concerns for refugees (Newbold & McKeary, 2017) that also relate to the findings of this research. Through presenting each superordinate theme, relevant literature will be discussed in the context of meaning elicited from participants and interpretations gleaned from the researcher. As there were significant overlaps in participant experience, the superordinate themes represent a constellation of similarities regarding the participants' experience, which connects to both research and theories. Each of the seven superordinate themes will be presented with connections to the literature and practical implications. Afterward, the research question will be answered before discussing implications.

Crises Affecting Autism

Crisis can be conceptualized as an interaction between chronic and acute overwhelming demands, encumbered internal (e.g., coping) and external (e.g., lack of support) resources, and perceived negative circumstances (Hutchinson & Foster, 2019). According to the Humanitarian Coalition (n.d.), a humanitarian crisis is characterized by a large-scale threat to the welfare of groups of people. Research shows that autistic individuals are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of crisis due to aspects of their diagnostic presentation, such as sensory sensitivity, social communication, and restricted, repetitive behaviors and/or interests (Hutchinson & Foster, 2019). Jabri (2015) suggested that autistic children in the Syrian crisis may experience exacerbated behaviors consistent with their diagnostic presentation. Although the research on trauma and autism is still emerging, research suggests that individuals on the autism spectrum are at higher

risk for co-occurring conditions and exacerbated behavioural presentation after experiencing trauma and/or stressful life events (Fuld, 2018).

These findings on autism and crisis also relate to the impacts of COVID-19 on autistic individuals. Akin to being more vulnerable to the Syrian crisis (Jabri, 2015), autistic individuals are more vulnerable to global effects of the pandemic due to their diagnostic presentation (Baweja et al., 2021), and are particularly susceptible to the impacts of distress and poor adaptive coping strategies that, in conjunction with reduced service delivery, contribute to various challenges (Baweja et al., 2021). Indeed, the notion that autistic people are more vulnerable to the impacts of crisis extends to COVID-19 wherein large-scale disruptions and reduced service needs ensued. In addition to the vulnerability of autistic individuals, resettled refugees in Canada are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19 (Edmonds & Flahault, 2021). It is important to consider individuals who fulfill several categories of vulnerability (e.g., special needs, minorities, refugees; Shivayogi, 2013) that may make individuals doubly, triply, or even quadruply, vulnerable during calamity (Macklin, 2014).

Each participant indicated that their child was adversely impacted by the war. In line with the literature, Hannah and Sam both indicated that the Syrian crisis impacted their child's behavioural presentation due to their diagnostic presentation:

“This situation is still present now. At night, sometimes, he gets scared. When he is over worried, he bites off his nails. So, these situations are real...because he cannot express his fear. He is not able to do so. He cannot say, like, ‘I am scared’.” (Hannah, 01:56:49).

“he feels everything that surround him except he cannot express. So, he shows and demonstrates that anxiety in acting up and being nervous. And you can feel them, that they're not themselves” (Sam, 01:36:49).

Both participants indicated that their child displayed exacerbated behavioural presentation due to their social-communication impairments, which is a feature of autism outlined in the *DSM-5* (APA, 2013). These participants also endorsed symptoms consistent with other conditions, which aligns with research that found crisis is a risk factor for increased co-occurring conditions for autistic people (Fuld, 2018). In addition, participants experienced stressors associated with COVID-19 that impacted their autistic child, such as disrupted service delivery. COVID-19 impeded service delivery for Sam and Jenny's children. Hannah also experienced barriers to acquiring services to language, aligning with recent literature indicating that refugees experience additional barriers due to COVID-19 (Edmonds & Flahault, 2021). Resettled Syrian refugees have experienced crisis within crisis that, in addition to having autistic children, may increase their vulnerable state. Considering the impacts of crises on autistic children and their families are crucial given that the participants' experiences echoed literature that outlines increased resettlement stress and risk for various mental health symptoms (Baweja et al., 2021; Ellis et al., 2019; Fuld, 2018).

These findings relate to the resource-based model of migrant adaptation (Ryan et al., 2008) as crisis and displacement led to several resource losses among participants, including war-related distress, adverse impacts on the child's diagnostic presentation, decreased relational networks, and losses associated with forced displacement. In addition, there are several additional demands associated with the post-migration experience. For example:

“... for those kids would have an average teacher or professional who can communicate between the professionals and the kids. It might, at least at the beginning, it might ease up a little bit of that anxious barrier of the kids, between the kids and the professionals, and the new society. So, coming from a war background, fleeing from war, coming to a new

culture, and new society, new country. It adds up. Having a language barrier, it adds up. So, if she [a professional] would come and receive those kids, she [a professional] has to address those issues.” (Sam, 01:37:38).

Indeed, crisis influences a compilation of demands that taxes existing resources, which appropriate access to supports and services for Syrian families of autistic children can alleviate.

Cultural Importance and Relevance

The term culture is complex and nuanced and many researchers have aimed to operationalize the term. Based on the definition in Helms and Cook (1999), Ennis-Cole et al. (2013) reiterated culture as: “the values, beliefs, language, rituals, traditions, and other behaviours that are passed from one generation to another within any social group” (p. 279). This definition appears to be all encompassing and includes many loaded terms (e.g., values, beliefs) that would also benefit from their own definitions, illustrating the complexity of the term. Valsiner (2019) noted, “the efforts to define the term are impossible- culture belongs to the class of hyper-concepts the successful defining of which would reduce, rather than enhance, their usefulness” (p. 431). Therefore, the term ‘culture’ was not defined during the interview. To do so would impose the researcher’s biased understanding, which may influence participant responses. Hence, it is important to remain cognizant of participant responses to queries about culture because different people and different cultures may have varied understandings of the term.

It is well established that social communication impairments are a core feature of autism (APA, 2013). These impairments may be implicated in various aspects across cultures, such as perception of non-verbal expressions, socializing, and societal integration (Perepa, 2014). Indeed, according to the *DSM-5*, the diagnostic presentation of autism varies cross-culturally wherein individuals behave unconventionally in terms of relative cultural norms (APA, 2013).

Some participants in the present study indicated that culture was not relevant for their children because, in their view, their children did not have an accurate recognition of what culture consists of. Recall:

“he [Hannah’s son] doesn’t have the capacity and the awareness of a normal person about what is happening around him. So, he did not face this [cultural] challenge, but for a normal person- I don’t know.” (Hannah, 01:38:35).

“So, the change might affect them a little bit but doesn’t matter because the way they comprehend culture or all of that- she [Jenny] cannot see it there” (Jenny, 01:22:50).

There is a relative gap in research investigating autistic individuals’ experiences with culture and its nuances. In fact, the present researcher could not find any existing articles on this topic.

Therefore, studies that investigate familiarity as a variable in processing for autistic children (Shanok et al., 2019) and challenge the standard unidirectional focus that autistic people should accommodate to social interactions with neurotypical people (Casartelli et al., 2020) have important applications. That is, these studies provide insight into what is known about the diagnostic presentation of autism, which is used to make sense of why these participants felt that their children could not experience and/or understand culture. Shanok et al. discussed how familiarity supported emotional processing among autistic children, which begs the question of how processing unfamiliarity may be impacted in other aspects of life, such as culture. For autistic Syrian refugee children, unfamiliarity, abrupt transitions, and constantly changing environments can be factors that may impact their experience of culture. In addition, social interaction may be best understood through a bidirectional understanding of vitality forms (behavioural actions that denote mood, emotion, or attitude), which neurotypical adults struggle with identifying in autistic children (Casartelli et al., 2020). If participants were not attuned to

the types of behaviours that denote cultural experience in their children, then it can be difficult for them to conceptualize their child's cultural self. Considering the different ways that autistic people experience culture is important, including a shared identity with other autistic people. In fact, some researchers have even discussed the notion of 'autistic culture' wherein autistic individuals "have a distinct culture, different from that of neurotypical people" (Casio, 2015, p. 209; Fein, 2015; Gokh et al., 2018). This notion of 'autistic culture' further illustrates the complexity and nuance of culture and how it is a complex concept that cannot be defined (Valsiner, 2019). Nonetheless, getting a sense of how autistic people experience culture is pivotal to developing culturally responsive practice and addressing gaps in diversity research.

Indeed, the refugees' existing cultural resources can serve to constrain or provide "adaptive value" (p. 13) to their post-migration context (Ryan et al., 2008). In the current sample, culture was not a main contributing factor to the overall resettlement experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children accessing support and service. In fact, participants did not perceive culture as a barrier to the types of supports and services they have accessed.

Based on participant indications, there were varying degrees of the importance of culture in supports and services for autistic Syrian refugee children. Indeed, research shows that it is important to be culturally responsive to effectively employ treatment strategies that best services those from diverse backgrounds (Asnaani & Hofmann, 2012; Nastasi, 2017; Song et al., 2019). Given some endorsement of cultural importance among participants, cultural implications rooted within the results of this study will be discussed in the practical implications section below.

Culture and an Understanding of Autism. It is important to consider parental perceptions of cultural relevance for their children as it can impact resettlement, obtaining supports, and interacting with services in Canada. There are societal influences in the

conceptualization of culture with an understanding of autism that varies cross-culturally (Dyches et al., 2004; Ravindran & Myers, 2012). In Arabic, the understanding of autism is depicted through its colloquial word (متوحد; 'he who prefers to be alone'). The understanding of autism was explicitly expressed by one participant:

“Her [Hannah’s] idea about autism is that the child is mostly alone by himself. He plays by himself. He grows by himself. Sometimes he’s not overactive, he gets irritated quickly and he can hurt others. She said, thank God (son) is not that kind. He’s a little bit, he can be irritated a little bit - not much. But this is my understanding of autism. Being alone. The child being alone, wrapped in himself. There are places that he can be irritable and overactive, he can hurt others.” (Hannah, 01:45:07).

This quote reinforced the interviewer’s notion that participant views of autism reflected the word used for autism in many Arabic dialects. An understanding that autism is demonstrated as a preference for isolation and intense externalizing behaviours could contribute to misdiagnoses at a professional level, lack of specialization at a therapeutic level, and difficulties with navigating the child’s needs at a familial level. Jenny’s understanding of autism was discussed during member-checking, “[autistic kids] communicate in a different way, and they don’t really like to communicate with people around them” (Jenny, 00:00:46), echoing Hannah’s conceptualization that autistic people prefer to be alone.

Sam, on the other hand, had difficulty explaining her understanding of autism, which reinforces research suggesting less knowledge of autism among parents in Arab countries (Alnemary et al., 2017a; Mounzer & Al Khateeb, 2009). Sam expressed, “She [Sam] doesn’t feel that he [son] has a high level of autism. You need to watch over him and care for him but he’s not very severe” (Sam, 00:01:48). This understanding corresponds to the participants’ notion that

autism is characterized by the severity of externalizing behaviours and/or cognitive impairments. In addition, Sam indicated that, ‘He [Sam’s son] doesn’t have any friend[s]. In the same age, he doesn’t have any friend[s]. Just he has a friend, like his father’s friend[s]’ (Sam, 00:02:11).

When describing her understanding of autism, Sam frequently discussed how autistic people are viewed as different and are unaccepted, suggesting that her notion of autism is entangled with the societal perceptions:

“She [Sam] is saying that the way people look at you if you have autism in Arabic countries is they ignore you, and they make fun of you, they don’t really take care of these cases. However, this is different [in Canada] and the contrast of what happens in Canada and how people look at them and respect them and give them a chance.” (Sam, 00:04:09).

In response to if her understanding of autism changed upon her resettlement in Canada, “Her [Sam’s] personal perspective to autism hasn’t changed because she’s always been accepting of kids who are like that” (Sam, 00:05:25).

Indeed, parent understandings of autism is important to consider. To promote resettlement outcomes and support acquisition, differential understanding of autism should be considered. For families who resettle in Canada from Arab nations, it may be important to explore their understanding of autism to inform appropriate psychoeducational tools. Given that the culture in Syria is collectivist (Hadfield et al., 2017) and collectivism can influence parental understanding and treatment-seeking behaviours (La Roche et al., 2018), cultural relevance can be rooted within how parents make sense of their child’s diagnostic presentation.

Impactful Perceptions

Akin to the results of this study, research findings suggest that parents and their autistic children are negatively impacted by stigma (Broady et al., 2017). ‘Disablism’ is a form of stigma that views children with special needs as a burden to the parents (Broady et al., 2017). A reduced understanding of autism, skewed notions of raising an autistic child, refusal to engage with the autistic child, and being less inclined to support the family were ways that parents experienced stigma from others (Broady et al., 2017). In addition, there is a relation between stigma and the mental health levels of parents of autistic children (Papadopoulos et al., 2019). Papadopoulos et al. proposed a theoretical framework to explain the relation between stigma and parental mental health. In their theory, culture was one variable that moderated the bidirectional relation between stigma and poor mental health outcomes. Some of the moderating phenomena that contribute to the relation include social isolation, self-blame, and hopelessness (Papadopoulos et al., 2019). It is important to consider the mental health of parents given their crucial role in supporting their autistic children. Stigma also negatively impacts autistic individuals because they view autism as part of their identity and not a pathology that they need to rid themselves of (Botha et al., 2020).

All participants stated that their children experienced various instances of stigma, which was negatively impactful for both the child and the family. Although the results of this study cannot speak to the extent to which experiencing stigma influenced participants’ mental health, it was clear that stigma impacted them in various ways. Sam resisted stigma through making “sure that nobody would mock him, make fun of him, disrespect him” (Sam, 00:55:56). Akin to experiences with stigma outlined in Papadopoulos et al. (2019), Jenny felt socially isolated due to perception of autism in the society, “I didn’t want to go out at all. I wouldn’t take them to anywhere because they [children] were not welcomed in the society.” (Jenny, 00:54:04). Hannah

experienced sadness when her child was stigmatized against, “They laugh at him. That makes me feel really sad” (Hannah, 01:10:01).

During the member-checking process, Jenny added some of her experiences with disablism in Syria and Lebanon:

“A lot of people say may God help you, [for] two [both children], not just one [child]... I hate that word (God help you), I hate it so much... because I am strong, that [her autistic children] is what God gave me. Thank God. There are worst cases than this. There are more difficult things. Thank God they [her children] understand, their arms and legs are where they belong, they walk on their own, and they eat on their own. Thank God. There are people in more difficult situations than them and I say thank God.” (Jenny, 00:52:24).

In this context, the term God help you (الله يعينك) connotes a sense of pity and the children as burdens, which Jenny did not appreciate because she viewed her children as a fated from God and was grateful (thank God; الحمد لله) that her children’s circumstances were not worse. In addition, Jenny indicated that the perceptions of autism and Down Syndrome are negative to the extent that families try to hide their child from society, “She [Jenny] is saying that people in Lebanon and Syria, if they have kids with autism or Down Syndrome, they will hide the kids, not take them anywhere because they are ashamed about them” (Jenny, 00:24:35). This explanation echoes research that indicates that perceptions of disability in Syria include children that are “wholly defined by their disability and viewed as objects of pity to be kept out of public eye” (Dew et al., 2020, p. 11). In addition, the notion that autistic individuals are referred to as ‘crazy’ (Sam, 00:58:05) corresponds with Syrian perceptions that are documented in the literature wherein neurodevelopmental conditions correspond with insanity (Dew et al., 2020).

In line with research, participants experienced stigma through others' misunderstanding, avoiding, pitying, judging, and expressing prejudice toward their children. Overall, the negative societal perceptions were deeply impactful for participants on multiple levels, which is a form of personal resource loss in terms of the distress they experienced (Ryan et al., 2008). Certainly, the lack of acceptance and presence of stigma toward autistic children were factors that played a role in the accessibility and quality of supports and services that were available during their pre-migration. As described next, both Sam and Jenny expressed that there was a lack of supports and services generally, whereas Hannah emphasised a lack of quality supports.

Support and Service Gaps

Participants expressed a lack of support and service available to their children in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, which contributed to their sense of satisfaction and appreciation with resettling in Canada. These experiences with a lack of support and service in various Middle Eastern countries reflects literature indicating that autism supports are a gap that requires further consideration (Alkhateeb et al., 2019). There is a recognition among participants that, due to the lack of supports and services, service provision in Canada has been more optimal for their child's development and wellbeing:

“Those services [in Canada] contributed to this betterment of life” (Hannah, 01:48:11)

“she cannot think of anything [supports and/or services] she would ask for more” (Jenny, 01:20:23)

“There is no- [in] Syria or Jordan, there is less support for my son. As well, there is no support. But, in Canada, there is a different case. So, for the schools, or for the society, they can accept him, talk to him as a natural person, here it is different.” (Sam, 01:28:24).

Indeed, the lack of supports and services contributed to reduced levels of development for the participants' children. For example, Sam indicated, "if I had lived forever in Jordan and Syria, he wouldn't have got this kind of education" (01:11:35). Support and service gaps for incoming migrant and refugee populations is an important consideration given that early intervention is associated with positive outcomes in autism (K et al., 2017).

Although supports and services are offered to autistic Syrian refugee children in Canada, the amount, duration, and type of care they received in Syria and throughout their displacement are important factors to inform best practice. For instance, Sam's son did not receive consistent formal education in Jordan due to gaps in school systems and Hannah's son did not receive the quality of care he needed in Syria. Therefore, exploring the extent of support and services gaps as well as parent perspectives of care that their children require can help practitioners, program developers, and education staff facilitate optimal care for autistic Syrian refugee children. These considerations are especially important as these children reach the age of adulthood where considerably fewer supports and services are available for them in Canada (Howlin & Moss, 2012). Indeed, a lack of supports and services in autistic adults is correlated with an increase in mental health concerns (Camm-Crosbie et al., 2019). Given the context of service gaps in their life, bridging the gap between service providers and families of autistic Syrian refugee children is important to continue providing evidence-based care when services are no longer available.

According to participants, supports and services for autistic children in Syria are largely acquired privately, posing a barrier to those with less financial means. Both Jenny and Hannah accessed private supports whereas Sam did not. The fact that Sam's son received a diagnosis later than Jenny or Hannah's children may have contributed to this gap in support and service acquisition. However, it is important to consider the financial and geographical implications of

service availability in Syria. For example, Sam's family lived in a small town whereas the other two participants lived near or in major metropolitan areas, which may have also posed geographical limitations to accessing supports and services. Even Hannah, who lived just outside of a major metropolitan area, expressed that government funded centers were far from her, "there are some government centres but they [are] far away from where they [Hannah] lived. And they're [government centers] not as good as the private one" (Hannah, 01:17:28).

In addition, during member-checking, Sam noted that her son was not diagnosed as autistic until they arrived in Jordan, despite her concerns in Syria regarding her son's behaviours. This experience corresponds with underdiagnosing that is reported in the literature (Taha & Hussein, 2014). For Sam, both geographical circumstances as well as the absence of a diagnosis could have impacted an acquisition of services for her son.

Importantly, participants indicated several areas of further support and service need in Canada. In addition to trauma-informed suitable care, Hannah and Sam hoped for vocational training for their autistic children. Jenny indicated that supports for the whole family would further meet the family's needs. As described in Ryan et al. (2008), specific needs among refugees refer to the gains in resources that are required to enhance adaptation outcomes. Although the contrast between support and service access between Middle Eastern contexts and Alberta leads to a relative resource gain; however, as refugees discern discrepancies between the supports/services they have to what other members of the society have, there is a potential for a recognition of further needs to arise (Ryan et al., 2008). In the present sample, perceived gaps of supports and services in their pre-migration, gains in their post-migration, and areas of continued need are aspects of participant resettlement experiences among Syrian refugee parents of children on the autism spectrum.

Altogether, considering the needs of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children is important to establish best practice in line with a social justice orientation. Incorporating dialogue surrounding parent and child needs into practice, offering psychoeducational tools, and providing relevant resources to satisfy those needs are ways to alleviate a potential continuation of perceived support and service gaps.

Positive Attributions

Recently, many researchers have explored the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees in Canada (e.g., Aldiabat et al., 2021; Oda et al., 2019; Oudshoorn et al., 2020) and within Alberta more specifically (e.g., Agrawal, 2019; Agrawal & Sangapala, 2021; Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Drolet et al., 2020). Akin to the results of this study, Syrian refugees experienced both hardships and positive attributions with their settlement experience (e.g., Aldiabat et al., 2021; Oudshoorn et al., 2020). In fact, participants in one study expressed experiences that were structured into the following theme: “We are living in a rewarding yet challenging environment” (Aldiabat et al., 2021, p. 493).

In terms of positive attributions, Oudshoorn et al. (2020) found that participants were appreciative of their circumstance, perceived Canada as a blessing, and saw resettlement as a fate from God (Oudshoorn et al., 2020). These research findings resembled the current study wherein all participants expressed thankfulness to God for various aspects of their resettlement experience and some viewed Canada as fated or a blessing. In addition, participants in Oudshoorn et al. were satisfied with their decision to move to Canada due to safety, stability, and increased opportunity for their children. This notion of increased opportunity was echoed by participants in the current study. Specifically, Jenny indicated that she “moved here for the kids” (Jenny, 00:27:01) while Sam indicated that if she “had lived forever in Jordan and Syria, he [son]

wouldn't have got this kind of education" (Sam, 01:11:35). Hannah expressed that the Albertan services offered her son "this betterment of life" (Hannah, 01:48:13). Akin to Agrawal (2019), participants in the current study were generally "satisfied with their lives in Canada" (p. 958); a focal point of parent satisfaction was the increase in supports and services for their autistic children, which were otherwise unavailable in Syria and throughout their displacement.

In the present study, comparisons of support and service provision between Canada and Syria/areas of displacement emerged independent from question prompts. This finding was echoed by Kirova (2019) wherein Syrian refugees expressed that their resettlement experience was full of positives, such as safety, general life, and education, which was "better" (p. 3) than previous circumstances. In addition, Ryan et al. (2008) indicated that "displaced persons will inevitably compare their new environment to what they have left behind" (p. 8). In the present study, the positive associations with Alberta were intimately tied with an increase in access to supports and services, which is a form of resource gain (Ryan et al., 2008) that can contribute to both the participant's and child's psychosocial wellbeing. Overall, participants in the current study indicated that their children benefitted from the supports and services available to them, which was a positive aspect of their overall resettlement experience.

Quotidian Resettlement Difficulties

Some barriers experienced by parents in the present study, such as social isolation, transportation barriers, weather, employment, and language, were echoed by previous research (Agrawal, 2019; Farber et al., 2018; Oudshoorn et al., 2020). In the context of Ryan et al. (2008), these resource losses and experienced demands are important to consider as part of the participant's overall resettlement experience and potential adaptive outcomes over time. Language was an especially salient barrier in the literature, which contributed to other barriers

including increased relational isolation, reduced employability, and difficulties navigating various systems (e.g., obtaining housing; Agrawal, 2019; Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Oudshoorn et al., 2020). These findings were echoed in the present study wherein some participants experienced barriers to social adjustment, employment, and navigating the system. Language is a particularly important as linguistic competency is considered a cultural resource (Ryan et al., 2008). Indeed, language competency complicated access to supports and services for Syrian refugee parents of autistic children. For example, “When we can’t speak English, we can’t speak and ask the doctor, go to the doctor, talk to him. Ask him about my son. Ask him to write reports about his case.” (Sam, 00:39:10). In addition, Hannah needed language support to complete relevant paperwork for her son, “They [daughters] filled out the papers because [of] their command of the English language” (Hannah, 01:25:58). All participants had a competency in Arabic and Jenny had competency in Armenian, which relates to relevance-based resource changes given that this cultural resource has less “adaptive value” (p. 13) in Canada than it would in countries where the dominant language is Arabic or Armenian (Ryan et al., 2008). Indeed, acquired English skills constituted a resource gain for Sam and, to a lesser extent, Jenny.

In addition to the research outlining the impacts of crisis on autistic individuals, researchers have used theory to elucidate the impacts of crisis on resettled Syrian refugees of autistic children (e.g., Al Gharaibeh & O’Sullivan, 2021). The family stress theory outlines the outcomes of stress and how families cope with and experience stress (Hill, 1958). Based on this theory, the ABC-X model elucidates the variables that impacts adaptation to stressful situations where A represents the stressful event, B is the family’s pre-equipped coping resources, C is how the stressful situation is operationalized, and X is the resulting crisis (Hill, 1949; Hill, 1958; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). The outcome of the crisis is associated with further strains for the

family, which rendered adoption of the Double ABC-X model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). After the resulting crisis (X), the post-crisis occurs where aA represents the pileup of demands, bB is the pre-equipped and obtained coping resources, cC is how the post-crisis is operationalized, and xX is the extent to which the family adapts or adjusts to the situation. The Double ABC-X model has applicability to any situation where a family is strained. For example, White et al. (2011) reviewed literature that applied the Double ABC-X model to adaptation levels in parents of autistic children in the face of various stressors.

As there are several factors that contributed to emergence of Syrian crisis, Al Gharaibeh and O'Sullivan (2021) applied the family stress theory and Double ABC-X model to conceptualize the difficulties families endure because of the Syrian crisis to provide implications for practice. In fact, the impacts of the crisis (A), the level of family resources, maintained relationships, and operationalization (B and C) influence the level of adaptability or maladjustment among resettled participants (Al Gharaibeh & O'Sullivan, 2021). As the present study aimed to investigate the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children, the Double ABC-X model offers a theoretical framework for understanding how parents have adapted to life in Canada despite the pre- and post-migration barriers. While ensuring that the discussion is rooted in the participants' social world (Smith & Osborn, 2007), the Double ABC-X model will be discussed in relation to this study's findings.

Participants in this study experienced stress through the Syrian crisis, COVID-19, having an autistic child, and post-resettlement barriers. Specifically, there were several stressful events (A) associated with the Syrian crisis that included situations that were "very dangerous" (Jenny, 1:01:38), "horrible" (Sam, 01:42:24), and filled with "atrocities" (Hannah, 01:53:28). In addition, all three families were displaced, which is an added stressor. Although not discussed in

detail, coping resources (B) and how participants make meaning of the Syrian crisis (C) influences their level of adjustment or maladjustment as they continued their journey to Canada (X). For Sam, the Syrian crisis had traumatic effects that lessened with time, “we were affected and traumatized for the longest time. When we moved to Jordan, whenever a regular airplane going in the sky, we would go and hide,” (Sam, 01:42:29). Jenny experienced a loss of some previously established resources, “when the war started it [supports and services] went downhill” (Jenny, 1:01:16) and Hannah described the ongoing impacts of the crisis on her son, “This situation is still present now. At night, sometimes, he gets scared.” (Hannah, 01:56:49). Using the first part of the Double ABC-X model, the impacts of the Syria crisis are elucidated. In addition to the impacts of the Syrian crisis, participants in this study experienced stressors associated with the COVID-19 crisis, such as reduction in supports and services for Jenny, “everything was going smoothly until COVID happened and things stopped” (Jenny, 00:36:49) and Sam, “But this school, they don’t have any activities because Coronavirus.” (Sam, 01:15:11). A lack of social support and a sense of isolation were difficulties for Hannah, “because of COVID, they were deprived from the opportunity of making friends and knowing and meeting new people” (Hannah, 00:54:58). Moreover, experiencing stigma and navigating support and service acquisition were added stressors for parents of autistic children (Fido & Saad, 2013).

After the Syrian crisis, there were added stressors for refugees, such as resettlement. In the current study, navigating the systems (e.g., completing paperwork, commuting, finding accommodation, familiarizing with Alberta Health Services), adapting to a novel society, finding employment, and language were all resettlement barriers. These barriers represent a pileup of demands (aA) according to the Double ABC-X model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). During member-checking Jenny noted, “if you move houses in the same country you feel different, so,

how about a great shift from your country to a different country where everything else is different. So, of course it is going to be difficult” (Jenny, 00:45:19), which highlights barriers with novelty. Next, participants had various pre-equipped resources to manage these barriers (bB), such as relational networks, coping, and motivation to become more familiar with the society. Participants acquired several resources that helped them with their resettlement, such as settlement services and supports/services for their autistic children. Participants also operationalized their resettlement in Canada positively (cC). For instance, both Jenny and Sam viewed her resettlement as a blessing from God:

“maybe God listen to us and maybe that’s why we are here in Canada” (Jenny, 00:53:52).

“This is, to come to Canada, it was my dream. And thank God, that God would give me this dream (in Arabic, says ‘thank God’: ‘Alhamdulillah’ الحمد لله).” (Sam, 01:49:15).

In addition, despite endured difficulties, Hannah viewed Canada as a positive change for her son, “those services [in Canada] contributed to this betterment of life” (Hannah, 01:48:11). All these factors are important to consider when determining the extent to whether the family adjusted to their life in Canada (xX). Conceptualizing the impacts of the Syrian crisis, additional stressors, and resettlement for Syrian refugees are important for understanding the stress associated with their experience, which is informative for practitioners, policy makers, and service providers (Al Gharaibeh & O’Sullivan, 2021).

Vital Relational Networks

The role of family, community, and social supports have been widely implicated in research with Alon (2019) finding that relational network support is associated with maternal post-crisis adjustment. In fact, among refugees, family and social supports has a crucial role in mental health outcomes among resettled refugees in Canada (Agić et al., 2016). These

researchers indicated that relational support is an important factor for maintaining wellness of refugees who seek intervention in Canada. Indeed, considering that many refugees separate from friends and family when resettling is important in the context of their resettlement experience, namely with mental health adjustment (Agić et al., 2016). Family separation is seen as an adversity by many Syrian refugees when resettling in Canada (Oudshoorn et al., 2020). This adversity is also important in the context of support and service provision for refugees of autistic children because, in addition to obtaining information through settlement organizations, social networks also play a role in information dissemination (Beretta et al., 2018). Therefore, promoting social and community networks can be enriching for refugees to access and utilize supports and services for their children. Previous research that investigated the experiences of Syrian refugees in Canada found that many refugees longed for increased family, social, and community networks (Oudshoorn et al., 2020).

All participants detailed how the presence of relational networks supported their resettlement in Canada or how the lack of relational networks hindered their resettlement efforts. Specifically, Sam expressed how cultivating social relationships in her language classes promoted her resettlement and Hannah indicated how the lack of social relationships was a hardship for adjusting to Canada. Initially, Jenny indicated that she experienced a tension between a lack of family support in Canada and increased benefit in servicing to her children, “we left family behind, we left our life behind. So, actually we are struggling between those- we are happy when we see the kids they have you know a life and they go to school. However, we miss home and family” (Jenny, 00:27:09).

Jenny experienced a reduction of family networks in Canada, which was difficult, “We don’t have family except for one family, which is my husband’s uncle.” (Jenny, 00:27:40).

Importantly, during member checking, Jenny reframed her experience regarding the presence of relational networks and indicated that the lack of relational networks was not particularly difficult because she has always been self-reliant,

“ever since she [Jenny] got married and ever since she had the kids, she has been doing everything on her own and she has been depending on herself by herself. She has not received any help from family members back home” (Jenny, 00:55:31).

In addition, she expressed that the presence of her husband’s uncle had been a key resource for them, “there’s still family here. They [Jenny and her family] still have her husband’s relatives that they come take them and see them and ask about them and interact with them” (Jenny, 00:47:51). Despite the disagreement that lacking relational networks are barriers, the presence of relational networks has provided Jenny with support during her resettlement. Though, Jenny emphasised that her self-reliance negated any dependency on support from relational networks.

Overall, in line with the literature, the extent to which relational networks were present was crucial in resettlement for participants in the current study, which echoes social resources as a key component of the resource-based model of migrant adaptation (Ryan et al., 2008). As illustrated through the results, family, social, and community supports are pivotal to how Syrian refugee parents experienced ease or difficulty in their resettlement, which impacts their adjustment process. Indeed, increasing relational supports to incoming refugees can bolster their resettlement experience (Alon, 2019) and enhance their support and service acquisition through obtaining information from others (Beretta et al., 2018).

Addressing the Research Question

Although addressed throughout the last two chapters, this section aims to directly answer the research question that guided this research project. The research question will first be stated

followed by a brief answer grounded in the findings of this study, which has been detailed throughout the results and discussion chapters. The research question guiding this project was: How has the lived experience of resettling in Alberta and accessing supports/services been for Syrian refugee families with an autistic child?

The types of supports and services available to the autistic child(ren) in their pre- and post-migration experience varied slightly; however, the common theme was that the children received a lack of supports in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan with more opportunities for support and service opportunities in Alberta, Canada. In Alberta, these children received more supports relative to their pre-migration experiences, which contributed to an increased satisfaction with their overall resettlement experience. Indeed, the opportunity for increased access to supports and services among Syrian refugee parents of autistic children has been a positive experience.

There have been several aspects of aide to ease the resettlement process for participants. Jenny received brief settlement support until her husband found employment, support from relatives, and indicated a lack of support and service regarding the entire family's resettlement. Hannah received financial support for buying new home items, family support, and satisfying basic living needs (e.g., clothing, food). Sam attended an English learning center, received support with everyday living, assistance with identifying accommodation, social supports, and interpretation service to help navigate various Albertan systems. Although there were several aspects that aimed to ease resettlement for refugees, each participant described various quotidian resettlement barriers that were aspects of difficulty during their resettlement experience. Although some were temporary (e.g., the initial novelty of Canada), others were continuous challenges (e.g., language, employment, transportation, reduced relational support), which uniquely contributed to each participant's adaptation process.

Parents felt that the increase in supports and services available to them had positive impacts and enhanced their child's functioning through skill development and learning opportunities. There were slight variances in the responses given; however, parents felt that their family situation was positively impacted by increased access to supports and services. All participants indicated positive aspects of their resettlement experience whether through increased quality of life, more established daily routines, or a whole-family happiness/satisfaction with the skills the child is learning. Hannah and Sam experienced enhanced family connections due to the supports and services available to their children. Parent responses suggested that the ability to access support and services contributed to enhanced family outcomes, which was not available to them in Syria and throughout their displacement due to perceived gaps in those contexts. The findings suggest that supports and services were beneficial to the children's daily living in Alberta through increased opportunities for learning, more organization and structure, and newly acquired skills. These benefits positively impacted the resettlement experience of Syrian refugee parents in terms of their children through opportunities to engage in more enriching activities, formalized schooling, and targeted skill development.

In terms of supports and service gaps, parents did not experience support/service in Syria or throughout their displacement and, so, they often drew comparisons with Alberta. These comparisons suggested that parents feel that there should be more support and service available, more accessible public service, and more specialized care to autistic children in Syria. Indeed, participant pre-migration experiences are pivotal to understanding the adjustment process in the host country (Ryan et al., 2008; Yohani et al., 2019). Therefore, understanding that nature of supports and services pre-migration helps contextualize each participant's current resettlement experiences. Similarly, the nature of perceptions toward autism during participant's pre-

migration were overwhelmingly negative. In fact, parents felt as though negative societal perceptions was a barrier to positive outcomes for their children. In Alberta, each parent described various support and service needs that were specific to their unique experience, which relates to continued need as a part of their resettlement experience. There was overlap between Hannah and Sam who both voiced a hope and need for vocational training opportunities for their children as well as services that are sensitive and responsive to the impacts of the Syrian crisis on their autistic children. In addition, both Hannah and Jenny expressed the need for more prompt appointments for medical care. Sam expressed a need for more specialized programming for her child's skill development. Hannah expressed a need for more English language learning service. Lastly, apart from the medical appointments, Jenny felt that more services should be geared toward the parents of autistic children during resettlement.

Finally, participants' experiences with crises are an important part of their resettlement and access to support and services. The unprecedented circumstances of COVID-19 have a unique impact on adjusting to a novel society as a resettled refugee. In the present sample, COVID-19 acted as a barrier to accessing supports and services for the family and/or the autistic child. In addition, experiences with the Syrian crisis led to loss, trauma, and/or disrupted servicing for participants. These pre-migration experiences coupled with the expressed need for responsive care for Hannah and Sam's children were part of the resettlement experience post-migration. Overall, as suggested through contrived higher order superordinate conceptual themes, resettlement and access to supports and services led to overall thankfulness for resettling in Alberta as well as certain areas of difficulty and continued need. Indeed, the complex interplay between crises, satisfaction, supports and services gaps, barriers to resettlement, relational

networks, encountered stigma, and perspectives of culture outlined how Syrian refugee parents of autistic children experience resettlement and access to supports and services.

Practical Implications

In addition to the implications already discussed throughout this chapter, this section aimed to further develop implications for practice through synthesizing key implications based on the results of this study. This section will first describe how these findings inform support and service provision for refugees of autistic children in Canada. In addition, culturally responsive practice will be discussed to voice these findings through a social justice orientation.

Support and Service Implications

The results of this study elucidated different parental understandings of autism, variances in support and service acquisition, and diverse pre-migration experiences. The degree to which participants utilize settlement resources, language competency, and relational networks as informal information sources are factors that influence support and service acquisition. This study has discussed several practical implications to reduce support/service acquisition barriers, address unmet needs, and bolster effective support/service provision. Such implications included, but were not limited to, impacts of differential understandings of autism, expanding informal information sources, increasing psychoeducational resource dissemination upon initial resettlement, and considering the pre-migration experiences on a per-individual basis. Additional implications are outlined below.

Addressing the Need for Support Groups. As refugees “rely heavily on informal sources, such as friends and relatives” (Agrawal, 2019, p. 944) for obtaining direction on how to navigate various systems (e.g., housing), it is difficult for Syrian refugee parents of autistic children to learn how to navigate support/service acquisition processes when lacking appropriate

relational networks. Creating opportunities to establish a social network with other refugee or migrant populations can be helpful. For example, such groups can include practitioner facilitated support groups for refugee/migrant populations, which lead to the opportunity for parents to establish a relational and informal information-sharing network with other families. Indeed, support groups among parents of children with special needs are helpful and satisfying (Solomon et al., 2001). These groups have a host of benefits for participants, such as increased knowledge of autism, obtaining psychoeducation, and enhancing problem-solving skills (Banach & Couse, 2012). In addition, there are cited benefits in social support contributing to post-crisis growth among mothers of autistic children through enhanced wellbeing, bettered quality of life, and reduced stress (Alon, 2019).

Addressing the Need for Helpful Information. Research suggests that volunteering opportunities and pre-migration orientations are crucial to the resettlement outcomes among refugees (Abid, 2020). In the current study, Sam found that volunteering helped her, “improve my language skills” (Sam, 00:41:47). Increasing, expanding, and continuing to offer such opportunities to refugee parents of autistic children can not only benefit their English language skills, but also help establish relational networks. In addition, volunteering opportunities in various settings that service autistic children can increase their informal understanding of support/service provision and allow parents to obtain direct experience. The benefits associated with pre-migration orientations can further optimize resettlement adjustment outcomes for refugee parents with autistic children. That is, for refugees who are identified as a parent of an autistic child(ren), pre-migration orientations can include steps in navigating application processes, contact information for local agencies/organizations, and explanations of current research in autism. This pre-migration orientation can be especially helpful for parents as the

process of resettling can be particularly overwhelming. In fact, information overload “acts as a barrier to acquisition of useful information and its subsequent use” (Qayyum et al., 2014, para. 124). As a result, refugees may access support from primary service providers but not reach out to other providers (Qayyum et al., 2014). Providing information to refugees in a gradual, tangible, and strategic manner may help alleviate some of the information overload experienced.

Addressing the Need for Crisis Sensitive Practice. Some parents perceive their autistic children to be disproportionately more affected by the impacts of the Syrian crisis due to their existing autism diagnosis. Hannah and Sam suggested that practitioners incorporate care that is sensitive to the impacts of crisis in their provision of supports and services. There are several trauma-informed strategies that were offered in Gagné et al. (2018) based on the work of various educators; these tips include emphasizing rapport, establishing safe relational connections with students, providing social-emotional learning opportunities, solidifying a routine, and referring children who have exceptional needs. These strategies can be extended to individuals who work with autistic Syrian refugee children.

Dababnah et al. (2019) investigated the outcomes of a culturally sensitive and trauma-informed intervention program designed for Syrian refugee families of autistic children, which is important because culture, socio-economic status, and crisis can all impact an autistic person’s presentation. This 12 week program is delivered to parents, which has been beneficial for parents to engage in continued implementation and learn how to manage their children’s behaviours, develop stronger parent-child relationships, and reduce parental stress (Dababnah et al., 2019; McConachie & Diggle, 2007). In addition to these behavioural components, the program also consisted of psychoeducation on autism for parents to increase their knowledge (Dababnah et al., 2019). The inclusion of behavioural strategies, psychoeducational components, and social

support were of benefit to parents (Dababnah et al., 2019). Additional positive outcomes for parents included increased skill in parenting their children, enhance family dynamics, and greater self-confidence (Dababnah et al., 2019). Indeed, programs that are designed to be appropriate for refugee families of autistic children have positive outcomes. Two parents in the present study specifically advocated for increased services that addresses their child's traumatic pre-migration experiences. To ensure applicability of such intervention approaches, considering research that has investigated program outcomes among the Syrian refugee population is encouraging (e.g., Dababnah et al., 2019). Adapting such programs to an Albertan or broader Canadian context can be beneficial for resettled Syrian refugee parents and their autistic children.

Culturally Responsive Practice

Culture is highly influential in the presentation of autism (Dababnah et al., 2019) as well as the manifestation and outcomes of mental health concerns in people (Kirmayer & Jarvis, 2019). In their review of the literature, Kirmayer and Jarvis (2019) found several strategies to enhance culturally responsive mental health care. Enhanced culturally adaptive interventions and bolstering clinicians' cultural understanding are two areas to ensure culturally responsive practice. Notably, cultural adaptation is the "systematic modification of an evidence-based treatment (EBT) or intervention protocol to consider language, culture, and context in such a way that it is compatible with the client's cultural patterns, meanings, and values" (Bernal et al., 2009). As cultural adaptations are typically developed with rigor and not immediately accessible, practitioners can also employ various cultural modifications. First, during treatment, framing the intervention as beneficial to the specific concerns that the client is experiencing, including "culturally emphasized symptoms... and culturally specific symptoms" (Hinton & Patel, 2017, p. 704) is helpful. Incorporating various culturally relevant metaphors and analogies can help

ground the treatment for clients (Hinton & Patel, 2017). Promoting flexibility, incorporating coping techniques rooted in cultural/religious practices, and presenting information in the context of local knowledge/psychology are additional ways to modify practice to be responsive to various groups (Hinton & Patel, 2017). Lastly, capitalizing on “existing strengths (e.g., support of family and community) and existing coping strategies (e.g., meditation, singing songs, having tea with friends)” (Gruner et al., 2020, p. 12) are also beneficial to client adaptation.

Next, as Canada has great diversity, practitioners should develop a general cultural understanding to ensure that they are reflexive of their biases, perception of other cultures, can navigate practice with various cultural groups, and are able to work with interpreters and cultural brokers (Kirmayer & Jarvis, 2019). Clinicians should also be cognizant of the limits in their cultural knowledge through embracing cultural humility, which consists of being respectful and open to clients’ cultural understanding of various conditions and treatments (Kirmayer & Jarvis, 2019). To ensure practitioners are not asserting their own competency at the expense of client expertise, cultural safety addresses the power imbalance and aims to share the power in practice. Using interpreters and cultural brokers can optimize care as well (Kirmayer & Jarvis, 2019).

Refugees have reported greater mental health concerns arising from post-migration stressors rather than pre-migration experiences (Slobodin et al., 2018). Therefore, this study aimed to address the experiences of Syrian refugees regarding resettlement barriers. As post-migration stressors are salient in the presentation of mental health conditions, it is important for practitioners to not overemphasise a trauma narrative. Indeed, many refugees were traumatized by the impacts of the war; however, western models may emphasise trauma labels, which may be incompatible with and undermine the resilience that many refugee populations display (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). Some refugees undeniably endorse that they have been

traumatized but reject the notion that this trauma overshadows their resilience and debilitates them from being a contributing member of the society in which they have resettled (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012). Certainly, practitioners should be aware of this trauma narrative and aim to explore the needs of refugees on an individual basis instead of overgeneralizing the traditional western mental health model that conceptualizes “refugee people within a deficit or pathology framework and that the refugee trauma discourse is so prevalent that it permeates our whole social fabric” (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012, p. 63). In addition, it is important to ensure that evidence-based programs developed in higher socioeconomic settings are adapted for people of lower socioeconomic status (Slobodin et al., 2018). Lastly, as schools are the constant point of contact among refugee children, developing the responsiveness of professionals in this setting to working with this population is key to optimize support and service provision (Gagné et al., 2017). Specifically, Sam advocated for initial language support, which could be a beneficial resource in the school setting:

“So, this is the first thing she [Sam] would advise the service that is provided for the children here: take into consideration those children coming from war. So, this [war] gave them a high anxiety and [the] language barrier, here [in Canada], adds to that anxiety. They go to school [and] they deal with professionals [with] whom they cannot communicate with. So, mom is suggested: for those kids, [if they] would have an average teacher or professional who can communicate between the professionals and the kids. It might, at least at the beginning, ease up a little bit of that anxious barrier between the kids and the professionals and the new society.” (Sam, 01:37:05).

Contributing New Knowledge

This study makes several novel and important contributions to ongoing knowledge generation in the literature. To the researcher's knowledge, it is the first study to investigate the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children. More specifically, researchers have yet to examine the experiences of Syrian refugee parents in terms of accessing supports and services upon resettling with their autistic child(ren). Although qualitative studies have investigated the experiences of Syrian refugees in Canada (e.g., Agrawal, 2019; Oudshoorn et al., 2020), there has yet, to the researcher's knowledge, to be an IPA study investigating the implications of resettlement to support and service provision among refugees with a special needs child. Recent research has investigated Syrian refugee resettlement through a descriptive phenomenological analysis framework, but an IPA methodology has yet to be applied, which is "useful in examining contextual features of experiences that might have direct relevance to practice" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 734). Qualitative research has explored the barriers and/or service needs of refugees of autistic children and/or related conditions (Bešić & Hochgatterer, 2020; Lim et al., 2020; Mirza & Heinmann, 2012); however, researchers have yet to investigate the experiences of Syrian refugees of autistic children in the Canada and in the context of pre- and post-migration service and support acquisition. As Canada has an increased uptake of refugees (Barber, 2021), the current study fills important gaps in the existing research.

As culturally responsive practice and situating research within a social justice orientation is at the forefront of diversity research in school psychology (Song et al., 2019), this research makes important contributions to identifying and providing implications regarding support and service gaps for minority populations. In addition, it is crucial to consider, evaluate, and adapt practice to best serve our vulnerable populations as Canada continues to prioritize refugee resettlement efforts. Although specifically investigating Syrian refugees, this project's findings

and implications can be applied to other refugee populations as well. Indeed, it is important for research to continue to investigate migrant populations regarding service provision as various populations have idiosyncratic experiences.

This project has the potential to impact Syrian refugees and their autistic children positively through informing service providers, practitioners, and policy makers of their experiences with support and service access. This study identified areas of benefit as well as areas of further need, which is of equal importance. Specifically, this project has the potential to positively impact Syrian refugees through (1) enhancing visibility of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children's voices; (2) providing key implications for practice rooted within this study's findings; (3) providing a safe space for refugees to share their lived experiences; (4) presenting the genuine experiences of refugees in triumph of any stereotyped trauma narratives; (5) rooting participant experiences in theoretical frameworks as a way to advance their voices in practice; and (6) presenting the experiences of refugees in an empathic, authentic, and systematic way. Therefore, this study has the potential to impart Syrian refugee viewpoints, experiences, and knowledge and amplify their voice as an opportunity for service to acknowledge autism from a humanitarian crisis perspective.

Considering Generalizability in Qualitative Research

Although “generalizability of qualitative research findings is usually not an expected attribute” (Leung, 2015, p. 326), there are qualitative researchers that aim to generalize their results based on explicit evidence (Smith, 2018). Indeed, a strength of this study included its small sample size and in-depth interviews rendering rich accounts of participant experience (Smith, 2018). Therefore, a small sample size limiting generalizability is not a constraint in the present study as not all qualitative studies are generalizable (Smith, 2018). Indeed, “qualitative

research *can be and is at times generalizable*” (Smith, 2018, p. 140). Hence, to negate the discussion of generalizability would be a limitation of the study because ignoring generalizability would disempower the crucial importance that qualitative research has to knowledge generation (Smith, 2018). According to guidelines set out by Smith, the present study aimed to provide “thick descriptions and rich interpretations” (p. 142) so that “the readers themselves can discern what is similar and different to their own situations” (p. 142), which is a form of generalizability called naturalistic generalizability. This process was adapted to outline practical implications that policy makers, practitioners, and service providers can adopt from the findings of this study and readers can advocate for based on participant experiences that resonate with them. This process places the onus on readers to consider whether the results are generalizable to them (Smith, 2018). Therefore, the present study does not assert generalizability as a key methodological factor. Instead, the research aimed to provide in-depth contextual, observational, and participant quotes to allow readers to consider how the results relate to their experience.

Limitations

The above section highlights several strengths and crucial areas of contribution; however, there are several limitations to address. Documenting and discussing study limitations ensures transparency and maintains researcher reflexivity. Through addressing these limitations, future research can strategize ways to reduce and eliminate these limitations to advance knowledge.

Considerations in Cross-Language Studies

Although previously discussed with more detail in the methodology section of this study, the tensions between benefits and limitations in cross-language studies became more evident as this study unfolded. As interpreters are part of knowledge generation in qualitative research, they also take on a “dual interpreter/gatekeeper role” (Chiumento et al., 2018) in terms of the

knowledge that gets filtered. Although the present study employed a qualified interpreter who was comprehensive, in line with literature guidelines (e.g., Croot et al., 2011), the researcher did not have the linguistic competency to conduct the research in both languages himself, which has implications for shared power. Nonetheless, the use of interpreters in cross-language research is compatible with phenomenology (Croot et al., 2011) and has a host of benefits, including the opportunity for linguistic minorities to address practice that impacts them (Squires et al., 2020).

Despite the stated benefits and pre-emptive steps to ensure rigor and attempts to share the power with participants, cross language research is a deeply complex process. Researchers who are the linguistic outsider can experience barriers to building rapport with participants (Cormier, 2018). In addition, the lack of linguistic competency to conduct academic projects in the minority language may reinforce the power imbalance through having to communicate through a linguistic liaison (Cormier, 2018). Certainly, “in educational research issues of power are often ‘ignored or marginalized’” (Cormier, 2018, p. 329), which was a risk to the participants in the present research and, thus, a limitation.

Next, the lack of researcher bilingual competency constrained how he could interact with the data during the live interview. In addition, the process of having an interpreter lengthened the expected interview time, which required more commitment from participants and could have led to interviewee fatigue. The interpreter was not a member of the research team and was an external hire from a qualified organization and there remains contention in the literature regarding the benefits and limitations of such practice. The limitations of including an external hire led to lacked opportunities to consult with the interpreter about the interview content outside of the interview. The opportunity to consult would have been advantageous given the intimate relation that the interpreter had with knowledge generation in this project. Indeed, interpretation

services have considerable financial implications and booking consultative session would be an added cost, which was not feasible for the present study. Future research should consider consultative sessions with interpreters/translators as a part of budgeting for the study.

Considerations in Culture and Theory

Despite the aim to investigate cultural experiences among Syrian refugee parents of autistic children during their resettlement experience and access of support and service, this relative saliency lost momentum as the study unfolded. Indeed, this study has various implications to inform culturally responsive practice; however, this study is limited by the lack of emphasis that culture had in the interview schedule. That is, further exploration of culture with participants may have led to richer findings. This study did not claim an explicit theoretical lens after careful consideration of the literature (e.g., Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Although an informed decision, these limitations associated with a lack of probing around culture could be owed, in part, to the lack of established theoretical lens. Therefore, future research should consider the role that a theoretical lens can play in aligning the purpose of a study with how it is conducted and the results that are subsequently acquired.

Parent Diversity

The present study included a sample of Syrian mothers of an autistic child with a brief interaction with one husband. This is a limitation as experiences with supports and services can vary based on the sex of the parent because of varying perspectives, needs, and experiences (Potter, 2016). Therefore, the lack of fathers in the sample constrained the extrapolation of information to parents of Syrian parents of autistic children more generally. As fathers of autistic children have varied experiences with support acquisition, it would be important to investigate the experiences of Syrian fathers of autistic children during their resettlement in Canada. As

Syria is a collectivist society and many families subscribe to more “traditional sex role expectations” (Haboush, 2005, p. 476), it is important consider how family roles interact with their experiences with resettlement and support and service provision for their children. In addition, it is important to consider where families originate from in Syria as local factors can impact their socialization. For example, families from Damascus may subscribe to less traditional sex roles than families from smaller towns (Haboush, 2005). Considering variances in the resettlement experiences, socialization, and perspectives of raising autistic children are all important factors to consider among mothers and fathers.

Sample Bias

Despite following sampling guidelines outlined by Smith et al. (2009), it is important to note that the purposeful and snowballing strategies sampled only a small subset of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children in Alberta. The sample consisted of two families who resettled in Calgary and one family who resettled in Edmonton, which limits the interpretation of Syrian refugees resettling in smaller metropolitan or rural areas. Differences in population size across cities and towns may contribute to differences in support and service provision to resettled Syrian refugees, which the results of this study did not investigate. As sampling was purposeful, there is always a potential that those who expressed interest in participating may have experiences that vary from those who chose not to. For example, included participants could have certain perspectives of supports and services in Alberta as well as varying experiences with accessing supports and services. In addition, it is crucial to acknowledge that the complexity of the child’s presentation leads to opportunities for accessing supports and services that are dissimilar from those with less complex presentations.

The present study consisted of a sample of three participants, which is at the lower end of the range recommended by Smith et al. (2009). Although small sample size and rich interviews are a relative strength (Smith, 2018), limitations included constraints with recruiting this niche population. Indeed, the opportunity to sample more participants would allow for the data to reach a clearer point of saturation, which refers to the process of sampling participants until information gleaned from the interviews becomes redundant (Sim et al., 2018). The in-depth and comprehensive interviews aimed to counteract limits in sampling; nonetheless, a larger sample size would mitigate limits with saturation imposed by a lower sample-size in qualitative research.

Importantly, participants included in this study migrated to Alberta between 2017 and 2019, which is a temporal limitation. As participants recently migrated, it is possible that they had more limited experience to contribute to this study. As resettlement “evaluations are likely to change over time if migrants perceive a gap between their life conditions and those of the resident population” (Ryan et al., 2008, p. 9), migration temporality can lead to different results in terms of satisfaction and access to supports and services.

Lastly, participants were sampled through settlement agencies and a psychologist in private practice, which may also have contributed to sampling bias because of differences in government assisted refugees (GARs) and privately sponsored refugees (PSRs). Jenny and Sam arrived through settlement agencies and were GARs. Research suggests that GARs have statistically higher levels of unmet physical and mental health needs than PSRs (Oda et al., 2019). In addition, when compared to GARs, PSRs were found to be more educated, in better health upon arrival, have less pre- and post-migration stressors due to different resettlement routes and overall shorter times in displacement, less resettlement barriers, and more support during resettlement (Oda et al., 2019). These statistics have implications for the applicability of

the present study. Although Hannah and her family arrived as PSRs, they relied on settlement supports through CCIS. The aim of this study was not to compare GAR and PSR support and service acquisition and, so, this was not investigated. Like Sam and Jenny, Hannah experienced language barriers; though, her daughters arrived in Canada with some English competency. This study's thematic structure revealed that Hannah and the other participants had shared experiences. Perhaps, Hannah's daughters arriving as PSRs influenced access to support and service acquisition for the family. Nonetheless, further research should consider including PSRs as well as GARs to investigate the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic parents and discern similarities or differences in support and service acquisition.

Researcher Bias

Researcher bias is an important limitation to highlight in qualitative research where knowledge is generated and co-constructed through the participant and researcher as social agents (Ormston et al., 2013). The researcher is a Middle Eastern, European, Muslim, educated, lower middle-class, and Canadian-born parent. Indeed, in line with guidelines set out by the literature, I aimed to adopt a reflexive position throughout all stages of the research study (Smith et al., 2009). Although precautions were taken to reduce bias, eliminating bias is an unattainable feat. Therefore, my position as researcher and the aforementioned biases undoubtedly influenced my interpretations and role in knowledge generation. Through reflexivity and grounding analysis in participant quotes, the researcher aimed to ensure that his interpretations were authentic to the participants' experiences (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Through bridling, this researcher acknowledged and controlled the influence of his bias throughout the project (Dahlberg, 2006). In addition, this researcher engaged in member checking as a step to reduce potential bias. Therefore, although necessary steps were taken to reduce bias in the present study, bias is a

reality in qualitative research and, so, was named as a limitation for this project as it should be “acknowledged as a limitation in all types of research” (Roberts & Priest, 2006, p. 45).

COVID-19

It is important to acknowledge global circumstances that may inadvertently be extraneous variables in research. Although not an initial area of inquiry, it was clear that COVID-19 emerged as a crisis within a crisis for Syrian refugee parents of autistic children. COVID-19 has had impacts on a plethora of life factors, including support and service provision to families of autistic children (Latzer et al., 2021). The participants in this study also referred to difficulties that COVID-19 had on their resettlement. COVID-19 and factors relating to being a resettled Syrian refugee parent were, in some cases, intertwined experiences for the participants in the present study. Indeed, COVID-19 has become part of the unique experience of Syrian refugees in terms of their resettlement in Canada. COVID-19 can be viewed as a limiting factor because of its independent influence on support and service provision, which could vary from refugees that resettled prior to COVID-19 restrictions. However, COVID-19 is a reality that has permeated the experiences of individuals on a global scale and was therefore impossible to isolate from research. Indeed, COVID-19 was a complicating factor for resettled participants in the present study, which can inform support and service provision for vulnerable populations in future situations where unprecedented circumstances occur.

Future Directions

As this research project unfolded, additional gaps in the literature became apparent. These gaps are areas that future researchers can investigate to expand the research corpus regarding migrant vulnerable populations of children with special needs. Continuing such

research would be beneficial to further inform support and service provision. The following subheadings will review several areas to consider in future research.

Sampling Autistic Refugees

Although the present study was designed to investigate the experiences of parents of autistic children, future research should consider sampling the autistic Syrian refugee population. Indeed, “where a non-autistic researcher is interviewing an autistic research participant about their lived experience in relation to autism, there is much to be gained from deeper exploration of this, potentially very specific, hermeneutic” (MacLeod, 2019, p. 59). Therefore, exploring the experience of being autistic in relation to pre- and post-migration factors under circumstances of humanitarian crises is a gap that remains. More specifically, future research can extend the present study to investigating experiences with supports and services among autistic Syrian refugee children and adolescents. In addition, the participants in the present study indicated their perspectives of how their child was adjusting to Canada and experiencing the support and services available to them. To understand the lived experiences of autistic Syrian refugee individuals more authentically and discern how they make sense of the available supports and services, it is crucial to glean from their first-hand experiences.

Autism and Refugee Adults

Related to the previous point, research should also investigate the first-hand experiences of autistic Syrian refugee adults in their resettlement to Canada. In addition, investigating the experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic adults is also an important research consideration. In Alberta, support and service provision varies considerably between youth and adult populations. To understand support/services resettlement experiences more holistically, researchers should not neglect autistic adults, which has been the case in literature development

(Howlin & Moss, 2012). Unless they have co-occurring cognitive and/or mental health conditions, autistic adults often have limited access to services and have poorer life outcomes (Howlin & Moss, 2012). Based on the results of the present study, there are considerable gaps in support and service to autistic individuals in Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan that sometimes result in autistic individuals slipping through the cracks and not receiving consistent formal education. Given this lack of supports and services, autistic adults may be increasingly vulnerable when they resettle to a place with adult-related support and services that are “limited and inadequate” (Howlin & Moss, 2012, p. 279). Therefore, researchers should consider autistic refugee adults to inform support and service providers of ways to enhance their resettlement outcomes.

Diverse Populations

The findings of this project have important implications for how practitioners, service providers, and policy makers view support and service acquisition among Syrian refugee parents of autistic children in Alberta. Notably, there are several barriers to accessing supports, positive attributions with service provision, and areas of continued need expressed by parents. Future research should aim to continue to fill these gaps through applying similar methodologies to explore the experiences of various minority, vulnerable, and migrant populations. Indeed, the experience of resettlement varies as function of unique pre- and post-migration factors. Therefore, this research project encourages future projects to contribute research that aims to enhance knowledge to promote culturally sensitive and culturally responsive practice.

Understanding Autism

In addition to Hannah expressing her idea of autism in the interview, the researcher asked Jenny and Sam about their understanding of autism during member-checking. A brief discussion around this topic does not do it justice as there are historical, societal, conceptual, and personal

influences that can shape how an individual understands autism. This notion was evidenced through the term that many Arabic speaking participants used to refer to autistic people. In addition, Colbert et al. (2017) found various sociocultural and environmental factors that influence Hispanic people's understanding of autism. Future research should investigate the understanding of autism among Syrian refugees as well as other migrant, minority, and vulnerable populations. Indeed, how a parent conceptualizes autism can influence how they access, use, and provide supports to their children. In addition, exploring how autistic Syrian refugee individuals conceptualize autism is also important to inform practice. Therefore, information-sharing, psychoeducational resources, and autism support and service provision can be bolstered through increasing our knowledge of how diverse individuals view autism.

Lessons Learned

After completing data collection, it became clear that exploring how participants conceptualized culture would have been beneficial. Therefore, the construct of culture was explored with both Jenny and Sam during member-checking. Future research should consider the impact of topics in diversity research on the target population to be more sensitive and responsive in research design. It is difficult, if not impossible, to define 'culture' due to the complexity of the term (Valsiner, 2019). Researchers that remain reflexive of their notion of culture should seek to explore participants' understanding of culture. Although I was reflexive of the fact that my views of culture might not be shared by participants, it was an oversight to not remain reflexive of how participants conceptualize culture. Thus, in future research I would aim to shift the narrative to participants as a perspective-taking strategy to understand their perspectives of such constructs. This practice can add to furthering my repertoire of culturally responsive practice.

Fortunately, one of the recruitment organizations was able to provide me with insight toward the Syrian refugee population as a cultural broker. In addition to advising culturally sensitive methods of recruitment, this recruitment organization also informed me of important information regarding Syrian refugees, which was a lesson learned. Initially, the project was designed to sample only English-speaking participants due to the competency of the researcher. However, it became clear that, not only would this practice reinforce the hegemony of English, but it would be extremely unlikely that there would be a sample within this already niche population. In addition, if I did find participants, they would likely make up a specific and, potentially less representative, sample of the population. The recruitment organization notified me that those who would have the English competency to undergo an hour-long interview in that language are likely those who arrived with some English competency. In Syria, individuals with an English competency tend to make up a higher socio-economic and more educated class and, therefore, likely have different experiences with support and services than many other refugees. Indeed, limiting eligibility to only English would not be feasible for this project due to sampling constraints as well as aims to fill gaps in the literature for readers to draw implications from.

Finally, as a graduate student and first-time qualitative researcher there were countless lessons in navigating a cross-language qualitative research project. I investigated, learned, and navigated the nuances with completing a cross-language qualitative study with rigor, credibility, and authenticity. Not only did this consist of having to work in teams but I also acknowledged the limits of my competency and sought to expand on them. Although it is preferred for researchers to be fluently bilingual, it is still an empowering experience for participants to share their experiences in their native language and contribute to study that impacts them directly. Albeit immensely rewarding, cross-language qualitative research is intensely challenging. I

learned that language is packed with meaning and metaphors that, as I incorporated English and Arabic into the interpretive process, created a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. I learned that consulting with knowledgeable bilingual peers is an insightful process that added layers to the interpretive process.

Overall, this project offered me the opportunity to grow as a researcher and expand my competency. Completing this project was a rewarding, yet sentimental experience due to the intimacy that I developed with the content that I was a social agent in generating. Although qualitative research is described to be the “poor cousin of quantitative research” (MacLeod, 2019, p. 49), I learned that qualitative is a rich method of study that allows for researchers to access the phenomena of participants in a way that is crucial for advancing research.

Conclusion

This project was an IPA examination of the lived experiences of Syrian refugee parents of autistic children regarding their resettlement in Alberta and experience with supports and services. There were several unique resettlement experiences that participants had upon migrating to Alberta and accessing supports and services for their children. In addition, participants noted their experiences with support and services in Syria and throughout their displacement as well as several pre-migration factors that impacted their family. These rich clustered emergent themes formed overarching higher order superordinate conceptual themes:

1. Crises Affecting Autism
2. Cultural Importance and Relevance
3. Impactful Perceptions
4. Support and Service Gaps
5. Positive Attributions

6. Quotidian Resettlement Difficulties

7. Vital Relational Networks

These themes integrated with the contemporary literature to discuss its relation to minority and vulnerable populations as well as various theoretical frameworks, such as the resource-based model of migrant adaptation (Ryan et al., 2008), Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems model (1994) and the RAISED between Cultures Model (Georgis et al., 2017). Each theme was also investigated individually to elucidate the overlap between the findings of this study with relevant research. Implications for practice were also reviewed to inform service providers, practitioners, and policy makers of ways to address support and service provision for Syrian refugees. This study is the first to investigate the resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees of autistic children. The project has the potential to benefit Syrian refugees as well as other migrant populations through its investigation of pre- and post-migration experiences, amplifying the voices of Syrian refugees, offering key implications for practice, presenting their genuine experiences, and addressing the deficit-based trauma narrative.

Limitations of this study included considerations in cross-language studies, considerations in culture and theory, the lack of parental diversity, sample bias, acknowledging researcher bias, and COVID-19 variables. Suggestions for future research included sampling autistic refugees, investigating adult populations, furthering research with diverse populations, and investigating the understanding of autism across culture. Although this IPA study is the first to address support and service access among Syrian refugee parents of autistic children, there are gaps that have yet to be filled. This project adds to research that aims to understand the perspective of various minority, vulnerable, and migrant populations as a way to situate practice within a social justice orientation.

References

- Abdullahi, I., Leonard, H., Cherian, S., Mutch, R., Glasson, E. J., de Klerk, N., & Downs, J. (2017). The risk of neurodevelopmental disabilities in children of immigrant and refugee parents: Current knowledge and directions for future research. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 5(1), 29–42. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-017-0121-5>
- Abid, G. (2020). *Literature review on best practices in government-funded services supporting the resettlement and integration of government-assisted refugees*. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Literature-Review-on-Best-Practices-in-Services-the-Abid/fb629cd40cde9368b97c6cd18e90393cf5ebbe06>
- Abou-Saleh, M. T., & Hughes, P. (2015). Mental health of Syrian refugees: looking backwards and forwards. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 2(10), 870–871. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(15\)00419-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(15)00419-8)
- Abu Kwaik, K., Saad, M., Chatzikyriakidis, S., & Dobnik, S. (2018) Shami: A corpus of Levantine Arabic dialects. *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation*, 1-8. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12358/25163>
- Abu-Ras, W., & Hosein, S. (2015). Understanding resiliency through vulnerability: Cultural meaning and religious practice among Muslim military personnel. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 7(3), 179–191. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000017>
- Agic, B., McKenzie, K., Tuck, A., & Antwi, M. (2016). *Supporting the Mental Health of Refugees to Canada*. Mental Health Commission of Canada. https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2016-01-25_refugee_mental_health_backgrounder_0.pdf.

- Agrawal, S. K. (2019). Canadian refugee sponsorship programs: Experience of Syrian refugees in Alberta, Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 20(4), 941–962.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0640-7>
- Agrawal, S., & Sangapala, P. (2021). Does community size matter in the settlement process? The experience of Syrian refugees in Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 22(2), 653–672. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-020-00761-6>
- Akesson, B., & Sousa, C. (2020). Parental suffering and resilience among recently displaced Syrian refugees in Lebanon. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 29(5), 1264–1273.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-019-01664-6>
- Alase, A. (2017). The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 5(2), 9–19. <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.5n.2p.9>
- Al-Farsi, Y. M., Al-Sharbati, M. M., Al-Farsi, O. A., Al-Shafae, M. S., Brooks, D. R., & Waly, M. I. (2011). Brief report: Prevalence of autistic spectrum disorders in the sultanate of Oman. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 41(6), 821–825.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-010-1094-8>
- Al Gharaibeh, F., & O'Sullivan, J. (2021). The impact of war followed by forced displacement on women and children: How Syrian mothers perceive their experiences. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijssp-11-2020-0508>
- Al-Mamri, W., Idris, A. B., Dakak, S., Al-Shekaili, M., Al-Harhi, Z., Alnaamani, A. M., Alhinai, F. I., Jalees, S., Al Hatmi, M., El-Naggari, M. A., & Islam, M. M. (2019). Revisiting the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder among Omani children: A multicentre study.

Sultan Qaboos University Medical Journal [SQUMJ], 19(4), 305–309.

<https://doi.org/10.18295/squmj.2019.19.04.005>

Al-Qaryouti, I., Nachabe, G., & Leeder, T. (2017). Inclusion of an autistic child in kindergarten facility: A case study. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Studies [JEPS]*, 11(4), 803–817. <https://doi.org/10.24200/jeps.vol11iss4pp803-817>

Al-Saadi, H. (2014). Demystifying ontology and epistemology in research methods. *Research gate*, 1(1), 1-10.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260244813_Demystifying_Ontology_and_Epistemology_in_Research_Methods

Alallawi, B., Hastings, R. P., & Gray, G. (2020). A systematic scoping review of social, educational, and psychological research on individuals with autism spectrum disorder and their family members in Arab countries and cultures. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 7(4), 364–382. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-020-00198-8>

Aldiabat, K., Alsayheen, E., Aquino-Russell, C., Clinton, M., & Russell, R. (2021). The lived experience of Syrian refugees in Canada: A phenomenological study. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(2), 484–506. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4334>

Aldosari, M., Fombonne, E., Aldhalaan, H., Ouda, M., Elhag, S., Alshammari, H., Ghazal, I., Alsaleh, A., Alqadoumi, T., Thomson, R., Al Khasawneh, M., Tolefat, M., & Alshaban, F. (2019). Validation of the Arabic version of the social communication questionnaire. *Autism*, 23(7), 1655–1662. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361318816065>

Aljarallah, A., Alwaznah, T., Alnasari, S., & Alhazmi, M. (2007). *A study of autism and developmental disorders in Saudi children. King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. <http://www.kacst.edu.sa/>

- Alkhateeb, J. M., Hadidi, M. S., & Alkhateeb, A. J. (2016). Inclusion of children with developmental disabilities in Arab countries: A review of the research literature from 1990 to 2014. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 49*(50), 60–75.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2015.11.005>
- Alkhateeb, J. M., Kaczmarek, L., & Al Hadidi, M. S. (2019). Parents' perceptions of raising children with autism spectrum disorders in the United States and Arab countries: A comparative review. *Autism, 23*(7), 1645–1654.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361319833929>
- Almshosh, N. (2015). Highlighting the mental health needs of Syrian refugees. *Intervention, 13*(2), 178–181. <https://doi.org/10.1097/wtf.0000000000000085>
- Alnmary, F. M., Alnmary, F. M., & Alamri, Y. A. (2017a). Autism research: Where does the Arab world stand? *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 4*(2), 157–164. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-017-0104-6>
- Alnmary, F. M., Alnmary, F. M., Alamri, A. S., & Alamri, Y. A. (2017b). Characteristics of Arabic websites with information on autism. *Neurosciences, 22*(2), 143–145.
<https://doi.org/10.17712/nsj.2017.2.20160574>
- Alon, R. (2019). Social support and post-crisis growth among mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder and mothers of children with down syndrome. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 90*, 22–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2019.04.010>
- Alqahtani, M. J. (2012). Understanding autism in Saudi Arabia: A qualitative analysis of the community and cultural context. *Journal of Pediatric Neurology, 10*, 15–22.
<https://doi.org/10.3233/JPN-2012-0527>

- Altieri, M. J., & von Kluge, S. (2009). Searching for acceptance: Challenges encountered while raising a child with autism. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability, 34*(2), 142–152. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668250902845202>
- Al Hessian, M., Bengtsson, S., & Kohlenberger, J. (2016). *Understanding the Syrian educational system in a context of crisis*. EconStor, 1-44. <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/156317>.
- American Psychological Association. (1990). *APA guidelines for providers of services to ethnic, linguistic, and culturally diverse populations*. American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/pi/oema/resources/policy/provider-guidelines>.
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>
- Amin, M. E., Nørgaard, L. S., Cavaco, A. M., Witry, M. J., Hillman, L., Cernasev, A., & Desselle, S. P. (2020). Establishing trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative pharmacy research. *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy, 16*(10), 1472–1482. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2020.02.005>
- Asnaani, A., & Hofmann, S. G. (2012). Collaboration in multicultural therapy: Establishing a strong therapeutic alliance across cultural lines. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 68*(2), 187–197. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.21829>
- Assalman, I., Alkhalil, M., & Curtice, M. (2008). Mental health in the Syrian Arab Republic. *International Psychiatry, 5*(3), 64–66. <https://doi.org/10.1192/s1749367600002095>
- Attum, B., Hafiz S., Malik, A., & Shamoan, Z. (2021). Cultural competence in the care of Muslim patients and their families. *StatPearls Publishing*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK499933/>.

- Ayoub, M. (2020). An investigation of the experiences of Syrian refugee students in Canadian elementary schools: A mixed-methods study. [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Windsor]. <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/etd/8344>
- Bai, D., Yip, B. H., Windham, G. C., Sourander, A., Francis, R., Yoffe, R., Glasson, E., Mahjani, B., Suominen, A., Leonard, H., Gissler, M., Buxbaum, J. D., Wong, K., Schendel, D., Kodesh, A., Breshnahan, M., Levine, S. Z., Parner, E. T., Hansen, S. N., ... Sandin, S. (2019). Association of genetic and environmental factors with autism in a 5-country cohort. *JAMA Psychiatry*, *76*(10), 1035–1043. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.1411>
- Baio, J., Wiggins, L., Christensen, D. L., Maenner, M. J., Daniels, J., Warren, Z., Kurzius-Spencer, M., Zahorodny, W., Robinson, C., Rosenberg, White, T., Durkin, M. S., Imm, P., Nikolaou, L., Yeargin-Allsopp, M., Lee, L. C., Harrington, R., Lopez, M., Fitzgerald, R. T., ... Dowling, N. F. (2018). Prevalence of autism spectrum disorder among children aged 8 Years- autism and developmental disabilities monitoring network, 11 sites, United States, 2014. *MMWR. Surveillance Summaries*, *67*(6), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6706a1>
- Banach, M., & Couse, L. J. (2012). Interdisciplinary co-facilitation of support groups for parents of children with autism: An opportunity for professional preparation. *Social Work with Groups*, *35*(4), 313–329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01609513.2012.671103>
- Barber, S. (2021). Achieving holistic care for refugees: The experiences of educators and other stakeholders in Surrey and Greater Vancouver, Canada. *British Educational Research Journal*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3730>

- Baweja, R., Brown, S. L., Edwards, E. M., & Murray, M. J. (2021). COVID-19 pandemic and impact on patients with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-04950-9>
- Beltekin, N. (2016). Turkey's progress toward meeting refugee education needs the example of Syrian refugees. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, (66), 175-190. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1149137.pdf>
- Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 15(2), 219–234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570210146285>
- Beretta, P., Sayyad Abdi, E., & Bruce, C. (2018). Immigrants' information experiences: an informed social inclusion framework. *Journal of the Australian Library and Information Association*, 67(4), 373–393. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24750158.2018.1531677>
- Bernal, G., Jiménez-Chafey, M. I., & Domenech Rodríguez, M. M. (2009). Cultural adaptation of treatments: A resource for considering culture in evidence-based practice. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 40(4), 361–368. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016401>
- Bernier, A. S., & McCrimmon, A. W. (2021). Attitudes and perceptions of Muslim parents toward their children with autism: A systematic review. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-021-00256-9>
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>
- Berryman, D. R. (2019). Ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods: Information for librarian researchers. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, 38(3), 271–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02763869.2019.1623614>

- Bešić, E., & Hochgatterer, L. (2020). Refugee families with children with disabilities: Exploring their social network and support needs. A good practice example. *Frontiers in Education*, 5, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.00061>
- Bhayana, A., Bhayana, B. (2018). Approach to developmental disabilities in newcomer families. *Canadian Family Physician*, 64(1), 567-573. <https://www.cfp.ca/content/64/8/567>
- Bhui, K. (2015). Apples, refugees, and emotions. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 207(4), 369–370. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.207.4.369>
- Bhugra, D., Gupta, S., Schouler-Ocak, M., Graeff-Calliess, I., Deakin, N. A., Qureshi, A., Dales, J., Moussaoui, D., Kastrup, M., Tarricone, I., Till, A., Bassi, M., & Carta, M. (2014). EPA guidance mental health care of Migrants. *European Psychiatry*, 29(2), 107–115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eurpsy.2014.01.003>
- Biedenbach, T., & Jacobsson, M. (2016). The open secret of values: The roles of values and axiology in project research. *Project Management Journal*, 47(3), 139–155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/875697281604700312>
- Blakemore, E. (2019, March 29). *What was the Arab Spring and what caused it to happen?* Culture. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/arab-spring-cause>.
- Blaikie, N. (2007) *Approaches to social inquiry* (2nd ed.), Cambridge: Polity.
- Botha, M., Dibb, B., & Frost, D. (2020). "Autism is me": An investigation of how autistic individuals make sense of autism and stigma. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/gv2mw>
- Bose, P. S. (2020). The shifting landscape of international resettlement: Canada, the US and Syrian refugees. *Geopolitics*, 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2020.1781820>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: a practical guide for beginners*. Sage Publications.
- Braunack-Mayer, A. J., & Gibson, O. R. (2017). Including minority populations in research: we must do better. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 207(1), 22–23.
<https://doi.org/10.5694/mja17.00305>
- Broadly, T. R., Stoyles, G. J., & Morse, C. (2017). Understanding carers' lived experience of stigma: The voice of families with a child on the autism spectrum. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 25(1), 224–233. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12297>
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). *Ecological models of human development*. In International Encyclopedia of Education (2nd ed., Vol. 3). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Brosinsky, L., Georgis, R., Gokiart, R., Mejia, T., & Kirova, A. (2018). RAISED between cultures: New resources for working with children of immigrant or refugee background. *Childhood Education*, 94(2), 18–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2018.1451686>
- Bush, A. A., & Amechi, M. H. (2019). Conducting and presenting qualitative research in pharmacy education. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 11(6), 638–650.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2019.02.030>
- Canadian Psychological Association. (2017). *Canadian code of ethics for psychologists* (4th ed.). Ottawa, ON: Author. https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Ethics/CPA_Code_2017_4thEd.pdf
- Canadian Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Culturally competent care for diverse groups*. Canadian Psychological Association. <https://cpa.ca/practice/Cultural/#Workers>.
- Camm-Crosbie, L., Bradley, L., Shaw, R., Baron-Cohen, S., & Cassidy, S. (2019). 'People like me don't get support': Autistic adults' experiences of support and treatment for mental health

difficulties, self-injury and suicidality. *Autism*, 23(6), 1431–1441.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361318816053>

Capps, R., Newland, K., Fratzke, S., Groves, S., Auclair, G., Fix, M., & McHugh, M. (2015).

Integrating refugees in the United States: The successes and challenges of resettlement in a global context. *Statistical Journal of the IAOS*, 31(3), 341–367. <https://doi.org/10.3233/sji-150918>

Carter, S. M., & Little, M. (2007). Justifying knowledge, justifying method, taking action:

Epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(10), 1316–1328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307306927>

Casartelli, L., Federici, A., Fumagalli, L., Cesareo, A., Nicoli, M., Ronconi, L., Vitale, A.,

Molteni, M., Rizzolatti, G., & Sinigaglia, C. (2020). Neurotypical individuals fail to understand action vitality form in children with autism spectrum disorder. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 117(44), 27712–27718.

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2011311117>

Cascio, M. A. (2015). Cross-cultural autism studies, neurodiversity, and conceptualizations of autism. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, 39(2), 207–212.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11013-015-9450-y>

Cawthorpe, D. (2017). Comprehensive description of comorbidity for autism spectrum disorder in a general population. *The Permanente Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.7812/tpp/16-088>

Central Intelligence Agency. (2021). *SYRIA*. Central Intelligence Agency.

<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/syria/#government>

Çeri, V., Nasıroğlu, S., Ceri, M., & Çetin, F. Ç. (2018). Psychiatric morbidity among a school sample of Syrian refugee children in Turkey: A cross-sectional, semi-structured,

standardized interview-based study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 57(9). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2018.05.019>

Chan, Z., Fung, Y. L., & Chien, W. T. (2015). Bracketing in phenomenology: Only undertaken in the data collection and analysis process. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(30), 1–9.

<https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2013.1486>

Cheung, F., Kube, A., Tay, L., Diener, E., Jackson, J. J., Lucas, R. E., Ni, M. Y., & Leung, G. M. (2020). The impact of the Syrian conflict on population well-being. *Nature Communications*, 11(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-17369-0>

Chiumento, A., Rahman, A., Machin, L., & Frith, L. (2018). Mediated research encounters: methodological considerations in cross-language qualitative interviews. *Qualitative Research*, 18(6), 604–622. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794117730121>

CMAS. (2015). *Caring for Syrian refugee children: A program guide for welcoming young children and their families*. <https://cmascanada.ca/2015/12/12/caring-for-syrian-refugee-children-a-program-guide-for-welcoming-young-children-and-their-families/>

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.

Collins, C. S., & Stockton, C. M. (2018). The central role of theory in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17, 1–10.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918797475>

Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Understanding Research*, 25(6), 435-436. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Trustworthiness-in-Qualitative-Research.-Connelly/1c355176db8d576ca90a272fe6a97c76804ddf46>

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Trustworthiness-in-Qualitative-Research.-Connelly/1c355176db8d576ca90a272fe6a97c76804ddf46>

- Colbert, A. M., Webber, J., & Graham, R. (2017). Factors that influence autism knowledge in Hispanic cultures: A pilot study. *Journal of racial and ethnic health disparities*, 4(2), 156-164. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-016-0213-4>
- Cormier, G. (2018). The language variable in educational research: an exploration of researcher positionality, translation, and interpretation. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 41(3), 328–341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727x.2017.1307335>
- Crabtree, S. A. (2007). Family responses to the social inclusion of children with developmental disabilities in the United Arab Emirates. *Disability & Society*, 22(1), 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590601056618>
- Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 35(2), 236–264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000006287390>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Croot, E. J., Lees, J., & Grant, G. (2011). Evaluating standards in cross-language research: A critique of Squires' criteria. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 48(8), 1002–1011. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2011.04.007>
- Crotty, M. (1989). *The foundations of social research*. London: Sage.
- Dababnah, S., & Parish, S. L. (2013). “At a moment, you could collapse”: Raising children with autism in the West Bank. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(10), 1670–1678. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.07.007>

- Dababnah, S., Habayeb, S., Bear, B. J., & Hussein, D. (2019). Feasibility of a trauma-informed parent–teacher cooperative training program for Syrian refugee children with autism. *Autism, 23*(5), 1300–1310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361318805368>
- Dahlberg, H., & Dahlberg, K. (2019). The question of meaning—a momentous issue for qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being, 14*(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2019.1598723>
- Dahlberg, K. (2006). The essence of essences – the search for meaning structures in phenomenological analysis of lifeworld phenomena. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being, 1*(1), 11–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620500478405>
- Dardas, L. A., & Ahmad, M. M. (2014). Quality of life among parents of children with autistic disorder: A sample from the Arab world. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 35*(2), 278–287. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2013.10.029>
- Dardas, L. A., & Simmons, L. A. (2015). The stigma of mental illness in Arab families: A concept analysis. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, 22*(9), 668–679. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12237>
- Davis, N. O., & Carter, A. S. (2008). Parenting stress in mothers and fathers of toddlers with autism spectrum disorders: Associations with child characteristics. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 38*(7), 1278–1291. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-007-0512-z>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage.
- Dew, A., Lenette, C., Smith, L., Boydell, K., Bibby, H., Lappin, J., Coello, M., Raman, S., Velkou, K., Wells, R., Momartin, S., Blunden, H., Higgins, M., Murad, M., Barry, J., & Mohammad, Y. (2020). ‘To the Arabic community disability is not normal’: Multiple

stakeholder perceptions of the understandings of disability among Iraqi and Syrian people from refugee backgrounds. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 00, 1–22.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feaa111>

Diamond, M., & Oberg, C. (2019). Gender-related challenges in educational interventions with Syrian refugee parents of trauma-affected children in Turkey. *Children*, 6(10), 1–9.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/children6100110>

Dowling, M. (2007). From Husserl to van Manen: A review of different phenomenological approaches. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 44(1), 131–142.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2005.11.026>

Drolet, J., & Moorthi, G. (2018). The settlement experiences of Syrian newcomers in Alberta: Social connections and interactions. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 50(2), 101–120.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/ces.2018.0017>

Drolet, J., Moorthi, G., Elford, L., Weightman, A., El Char, D., Al Saadi, E., Khoury, C., & Smith, E. (2020) The Alberta Syria refugee project: Understanding trauma and resilience in refugee resettlement. In Hamilton L. K., Veronis, L., & Walton-Roberts, M. (Eds.), *A national project: Syrian refugee resettlement in Canada*. (1st ed., pp. 65 – 84). McGill-Queen’s University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv176ktst.9>

Duell-Piening, P. (2018). Refugee resettlement and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *Disability & Society*, 33(5), 661–684.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1444582>

Dyches, T. T., Wilder, L. K., Sudweeks, R. R., Obiakor, F. E., & Algozzine, B. (2004).

Multicultural issues in autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 34(2), 211–222. <https://doi.org/10.1023/b:jadd.0000022611.80478.73>

- Eapen, V., Mabrouk, A. A., Zoubeidi, T., & Yunis, F. (2007). Prevalence of pervasive developmental disorders in preschool children in the UAE. *Journal of Tropical Pediatrics*, 53(3), 202–205. <https://doi.org/10.1093/tropej/fml091>
- Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. R. (2015). *Management and business research* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Eastwood, J. G., Jalaludin, B. B., & Kemp, L. A. (2014). Realist explanatory theory building method for social epidemiology: A protocol for a mixed method multilevel study of neighbourhood context and postnatal depression. *SpringerPlus*, 3(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2193-1801-3-12>
- Edmonds, C. O. (2017). Designing emergency preparedness resources for children with autism. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 64(4), 404–419. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1034912X.2016.1264577>
- Edmonds, J., & Flahault, A. (2021). Refugees in Canada during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(947), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18030947>
- Eldin, A. S., Habib, D., Noufal, A., Farrag, S., Bazaid, K., Al-Sharbati, M., Badr, H., Moussa, S., Essali, A., & Gaddour, N. (2008). Use of M-CHAT for a multinational screening of young children with autism in the Arab countries. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 20(3), 281–289. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540260801990324>
- El-Khani, A., Ulph, F., Peters, S., & Calam, R. (2018). Syria: Refugee parents' experiences and need for parenting support in camps and humanitarian settings. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 13(1), 19–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450128.2017.1372651>

- Ellett, J. (2011). Narrative and phenomenology as methodology for understanding persistence in art teachers: A reflective journey. *Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education*, 2011(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.17077/2326-7070.1407>
- Ellis, B. H., Winer, J. P., Murray, K., & Barrett, C. (2019). Understanding the mental health of refugees: Trauma, stress, and the cultural context. *The Massachusetts General Hospital Textbook on Diversity and Cultural Sensitivity in Mental Health*, 253–273. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20174-6_13
- Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K., & Kyngäs, H. (2014). Qualitative content analysis. *SAGE Open*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>
- Elsabbagh, M., Divan, G., Koh, Y.-J., Kim, Y. S., Kauchali, S., Marcín, C., Montiel-Nava, C., Patel, V., Paula, C. S., Wang, C., Yasamy, M. T., & Fombonne, E. (2012). Global prevalence of autism and other pervasive developmental disorders. *Autism Research*, 5(3), 160–179. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.239>
- Eltyeb, D. E. (2017). Autistic spectrum disorders: The challenge of early detection in the Arab region. *Journal of Medical Science and Clinical Research*, 5(9), 27644–27648. <https://doi.org/10.18535/jmscr/v5i9.46>
- Ennis-Cole, D., Durodoye, B. A., & Harris, H. L. (2013). The impact of culture on autism diagnosis and treatment. *The Family Journal*, 21(3), 279–287. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1066480713476834>
- Emery, A., & Anderman, L. H. (2020). Using interpretive phenomenological analysis to advance theory and research in educational psychology. *Educational Psychologist*, 55(4), 220–231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2020.1787170>

- Erlingsson, C., & Brysiewicz, P. (2013). Orientation among multiple truths: An introduction to qualitative research. *African Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 3(2), 92–99.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afjem.2012.04.005>
- Farber, S., Mifsud, A., Allen, J., Widener, M. J., Newbold, K. B., & Moniruzzaman, M. (2018). Transportation barriers to Syrian newcomer participation and settlement in Durham region. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 68, 181–192.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2018.03.014>
- Fido, A., & Saad, S. A. (2013). Psychological effects of parenting children with autism prospective study in Kuwait. *Open Journal of Psychiatry*, 03(02), 5–10.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpsych.2013.32a002>
- Fischer, C. T. (2009). Bracketing in qualitative research: Conceptual and practical matters. *Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4-5), 583–590. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503300902798375>
- Fein, E. (2015) Making meaningful worlds: Role-playing subcultures and the autism spectrum. *Culture, Medicine & Psychiatry*, 39, 299–321. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11013-015-9443-x>
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., & Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36(6), 717-732.
<https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-1614.2002.01100.x>
- Fox, F., Aabe, N., Turner, K., Redwood, S., & Rai, D. (2017). “It was like walking without knowing where I was going”: A qualitative study of autism in a UK Somali migrant community. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 47(2), 305–315.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-016-2952-9>

- Fuld, S. (2018). Autism spectrum disorder: The impact of stressful and traumatic life events and implications for clinical practice. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 46(3), 210–219.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-018-0649-6>
- Gagné, A., Schmidt, C., & Markus, P. (2017). Teaching about refugees: Developing culturally responsive educators in contexts of politicised transnationalism. *Intercultural Education*, 28(5), 429–446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2017.1336409>
- Gagné, A., Al-Hashimi, N., Little, M., Lowen, M., & Sidhu, A. (2018). Educator perspectives on the social and academic integration of Syrian refugees in Canada. *Journal of Family Diversity in Education*, 3(1), 48–76.
<https://doi.org/http://familydiversityeducation.com/index.php/fdec/article/view/124/122>
- Gause, G. F. (2011). Why Middle East studies missed the Arab Spring: The myth of authoritarian stability. *Council on Foreign Affairs*, 90(4), 81–90.
<https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/23039608>
- Gehlert, S., & Mozersky, J. (2018). Seeing beyond the margins: Challenges to informed inclusion of vulnerable populations in research. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 46(1), 30–43.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1073110518766006>
- Georgis, R., Brosinsky, L., Mejia, T., Kirova, A., Gokiart, R., & Knowledge Exchange Advisory (2017). RAISED between cultures: A knowledge and reflection guidebook for intercultural practice in the early years. Edmonton, AB: Community-University Partnership, University of Alberta. <https://www.ualberta.ca/community-university-partnership/resources/reference-materials.html>
- Ghahari, S., Lui, J., Nagra, S., & Morassaei, S. (2020). The life experiences of refugees in Canada: A comprehensive scoping review to identify unmet needs and barriers. *Journal of*

International Migration and Integration, 21(4), 1249–1261.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-019-00727-3>

Gokh, A. F., Mineev, V. V., & Viktoruk, E. N. (2018). Defending identity and diversity: The potential of cultural anthropology for reshaping autism. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences*, 11(12), 1947–1961.

<https://doi.org/10.17516/1997-1370-0368>

Gollnick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C (2013). Religion. In D.M. Gollnick & P. C. Chinn (Authors), *Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society* (3rd ed., pp. 171- 204). Pearson.

Government of Alberta. (2019). *Family support for children with disabilities act*.

https://www.qp.alberta.ca/570.cfm?frm_isbn=9780779811281&search_by=link.

Government of Alberta. (2021a). *FSCD Eligibility*. <https://www.alberta.ca/fscd-eligibility.aspx>.

Government of Alberta. (2021b). *PDD- Eligibility*. <https://www.alberta.ca/pdd-eligibility.aspx>.

Government of Alberta. (2021c). *Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH)*.

<https://www.alberta.ca/aish.aspx>.

Government of Canada. (2020). *#WelcomeRefugees: Canada resettled Syrian refugees*.

Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/welcome-syrian-refugees.html>.

Gruner, D., Magwood, O., Bair, L., Duff, L., Adel, S., & Pottie, K. (2020). Understanding supporting and hindering factors in community-based psychotherapy for refugees: A realist-informed systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(4618), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17134618>

- Grzadzinski, R., Huerta, M., & Lord, C. (2013). DSM-5 and autism spectrum disorders (ASDs): An opportunity for identifying ASD subtypes. *Molecular Autism*, 4(12), 12.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/2040-2392-4-12>
- Guruge, S., Sidani, S., Illesinghe, V., Younes, R., Bukhari, H., Altenberg, J., Rashid, M., & Fredericks, S. (2018). Healthcare needs and health service utilization by Syrian refugee women in Toronto. *Conflict and Health*, 12(46), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-018-0181-x>
- Guo, Y., & Beckett, G. H. (2007). The hegemony of English as a global language: Reclaiming local knowledge and culture in China. *Convergence*, 40(1-2), 117-131.
https://doi.org/10.1163/9789087904401_006
- Habayeb, S., Dababnah, S., John, A., & Rich, B. (2020). Cultural experiences of Arab American caregivers raising children with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 50(1), 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-04218-3>
- Haboush, K. L. (2005). Lebanese and Syrian Families. In M. McGoldrick, J. Giordano, & N. Garcia-Preto (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (pp. 468–486). The Guilford Press.
- Hadfield, K., Ostrowski, A., & Ungar, M. (2017). What can we expect of the mental health and well-being of Syrian refugee children and adolescents in Canada? *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 58(2), 194–201. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cap0000102>
- Hansen, L., & Huston, P. (2016). Health considerations in the Syrian refugee resettlement process in Canada. *Canada Communicable Disease Report*, 42(2), 53–57.
<https://doi.org/10.14745/ccdr.v42is2a02>
- Hartley, S. L., Barker, E. T., Seltzer, M. M., Floyd, F., Greenberg, J., Orsmond, G., & Bolt, D. (2010). The relative risk and timing of divorce in families of children with an autism

spectrum disorder. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 24(4), 449–457.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019847>

Hassan, A. (2019a). The Syrian mental health crisis: present findings and future directions.

Harvard Public Health Review, 21, 1-5. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48515225>

Hassan, A. (2019b). Arab views on autism. *Encyclopedia of Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 1–5.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-6435-8_102309-1

Hassan, G., Ventevogel, P., Jefee-Bahloul, H., Barkil-Oteo, A., & Kirmayer, L. J. (2016). Mental

health and psychosocial wellbeing of Syrians affected by armed conflict. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 25(2), 129–141. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s2045796016000044>

Hedar, M. (2017). Mental health during the Syrian crisis: How Syrians are dealing with the psychological effects. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 99(3), 927–935.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/s1816383119000080>

Helms, J. E., & Cook, D. A. (1999). *Using race and culture in counseling and psychotherapy: Theory and process*. Allyn and Bacon.

Hendricks, D. (2010). Employment and adults with autism spectrum disorders: Challenges and strategies for success. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 32(2), 125–134.

<https://doi.org/10.3233/jvr-2010-0502>.

Hill, R (1949). *Families under stress*. Harper & Row.

Hill, R. (1958). Generic features of families under stress. *Social Casework*, 49, 139- 150.

Hill, R. (1984). Epistemology, axiology, and ideology in sociology. *Mid-American Review of Sociology* 9 (2), 59-77.

Hinton, D. E., & Patel, A. (2017). Cultural adaptations of cognitive behavioral therapy.

Psychiatric Clinics, 40(4), 701-714. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psc.2017.08.006>

- Hijazi, Z., & Weissbecker, I. (2014). *Syrian crisis: Addressing regional mental health needs and gaps in the context of the Syria crisis*. <https://internationalmedicalcorps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Syria-Crisis-Addressing-Mental-Health.pdf>
- Hobfoll, S. E. (2001). The influence of culture, community, and the nested-self in the stress process: Advancing conservation of resources theory. *Applied Psychology, 50*(3), 337–421. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00062>
- Hodgetts, S., Nicholas, D., Zwaigenbaum, L., & McConnell, D. (2013). Parents' and professionals' perceptions of family-centered care for children with autism spectrum disorder across service sectors. *Social Science & Medicine, 96*, 138–146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.07.012>.
- Howlin, P., & Moss, P. (2012). Adults with autism spectrum disorders. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 57*(5), 275–283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/070674371205700502>
- Humanitarian Coalition. (n.d.). *What Is a Humanitarian Emergency?* <https://www.humanitariancoalition.ca/what-is-a-humanitarian-emergency>.
- Hussein, H., Taha, G. R. A., & Almanasef, A. (2011). Characteristics of autism spectrum disorders in a sample of Egyptian and Saudi patients: Transcultural cross-sectional study. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health, 5*(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1753-2000-5-34>
- Husserl, E. (1962). *Ideas. General introduction to pure phenomenology*. New York, NY: Collier Books
- Hutchinson, M., & Dorsett, P. (2012). What does the literature say about resilience in refugee people? Implications for practice. *Journal of Social Inclusion, 3*(2), 55–78. <https://doi.org/10.36251/josi.55>

- Hutchinson, P., & Foster, B. (2019). *In crisis with autism spectrum disorder: Review of the evidence*. http://www.autismnovascotia.ca/userfiles/1/ASD_Crisis_Stabilization_Paper.pdf.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (2019). *How Canada's refugee system works*. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/canada-role.html>.
- Jabri, S. (2015). The children with autism spectrum disorders in Syrian crisis: Challenges and recommendations. *International Journal of Emergency Mental Health and Human Resilience*, 17(04), 676–677. <https://doi.org/10.4172/1522-4821.1000285>
- Janak., E. (2018). Bracketing and bridling: Using narrative reflexivity to confront researcher bias and the impact of social identity in a historical study. *Philanthropy & Education*, 1(2), 82–93. <https://doi.org/10.2979/phileduc.1.2.04>
- K, P., Srinath, S., Seshadri, S. P., Girimaji, S. C., & Kommu, J. V. S. (2017). Lost time—Need for more awareness in early intervention of autism spectrum disorder. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry*, 25, 13–15. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2016.07.021>
- Kant, I. (1999). *The critique of pure reason*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett. (Originally published 1781)
- Karadag, M., Gokcen, C., Dandil, F., & Calisgan, B. (2017). Our experience with Syrian refugee patients at the child and adolescent psychiatry clinic in Gaziantep, Turkey. *International Journal of Psychiatry in Clinical Practice*, 22(2), 157–159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13651501.2017.1387269>
- Karim, S., Islam, M. N. (2016). Syrian crisis: geopolitics and implications. *BISS Journal*, 37(2), 107-132. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317692563_Syrian_Crisis_Geopolitics_and_Implications

- Kenny, L., Hattersley, C., Molins, B., Buckley, C., Povey, C., & Pellicano, E. (2016). Which terms should be used to describe autism? Perspectives from the UK autism community. *Autism*, 20(4), 442–462. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361315588200>
- Khalaf, M. (2020). Identifying barriers to implementing the DSM-5 in the diagnosis process of autism spectrum disorder in two Arab countries. *Egyptian Journal of Social Work*, 9(1), 17–36. <https://doi.org/10.21608/ejsw.2020.68752>
- Khashanah, K. (2014). The Syrian crisis: A systemic framework. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 7(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17550912.2014.881006>
- Kheir, N., Ghoneim, O., Sandridge, A. L., Al-Ismail, M., Hayder, S., & Al-Rawi, F. (2012). Quality of life of caregivers of children with autism in Qatar. *Autism*, 16(3), 293–298. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361311433648>
- Kirmayer, L. J., & Jarvis, G. E. (2019). Culturally responsive services as a path to equity in mental healthcare. *HealthcarePapers*, 18(2), 11-23. <https://doi.org/10.12927/hcpap.2019.25925>
- Kirova, A. (2019). Introduction: Syrian refugees' encounters with the education system in their initial resettlement in Canada. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education*, 14(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29369>
- Kirsch, A. C., Huebner, A. R., Mehta, S. Q., Howie, F. R., Weaver, A. L., Myers, S. M., ... & Katusic, S. K. (2020). Association of comorbid mood and anxiety disorders with autism spectrum disorder. *JAMA pediatrics*, 174(1), 63-70. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.4368>
- Knight, G. P., Roosa, M. W., & Umana-Taylor, A. J. (2009). *Studying ethnic minority and economically disadvantaged populations methodological challenges and best practices*. American Psychological Association.

- La Roche, M. J., Bush, H. H., & D'Angelo, E. (2018). The assessment and treatment of autism spectrum disorder: A cultural examination. *Practice Innovations*, 3(2), 107–122.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/pri0000067>
- Latzer, I. T., Leitner, Y., & Karnieli-Miller, O. (2021). Core experiences of parents of children with autism during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. *Autism*, 25(4), 1047–1059.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320984317>
- Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(3), 21–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200303>
- Lazarus, R. S. & Folkman, S. (1984) *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*. New York: Springer.
- Lee, C. J. G. (2012). Reconsidering constructivism in qualitative research. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44(4), 403–412. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00720.x>
- Leung, L. (2015). Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research. *Journal of family medicine and primary care*, 4(3), 324 – 327. <https://doi.org/10.4103/2249-4863.161306>.
- LeVasseur, J. J. (2003). The problem of bracketing in phenomenology. *Qualitative Health Research*, 13(3), 408–420. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732302250337>
- Lim, N., O'Reilly, M., Sigafos, J., Lancioni, G. E., & Sanchez, N. J. (2020). A review of barriers experienced by immigrant parents of children with autism when accessing services. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-020-00216-9>

- Lopez, K. A., & Willis, D. G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research, 14*(5), 726–735.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732304263638>
- Lucker, J. R. (2013). Auditory hypersensitivity in children with autism spectrum disorders. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 28*(3), 184–191.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1088357613475810>
- Macklin, R. (2014). Studying vulnerable populations in the context of enhanced vulnerability. In D. P. O’Mathuna, B. Gordijn, M. Clarke (Eds.), *Disaster Bioethics: Normative Issues When Nothing is Normal*. (pp. 159 – 173). Springer Netherlands.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-3864-5>
- MacLeod, A. (2019). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a tool for participatory research within critical autism studies: A systematic review. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders, 64*, 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2019.04.005>
- Mandell, D. S., Wiggins, L. D., Carpenter, L. A., Daniels, J., DiGuseppi, C., Durkin, M. S., Giarelli, E., Morrier, M. J., Nicholas, J. S., Pinto-Martin, J. A., Shattuck, P. T., Thomas, K. C., Yeargin-Allsopp, M., & Kirby, R. S. (2009). Racial/ethnic disparities in the identification of children with autism spectrum disorders. *American Journal of Public Health, 99*(3), 493–498. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2007.131243>
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*(4), 370–396.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>
- Masri, A. T., Suluh, N. A., & Nasir, R. (2013). Diagnostic delay of autism in Jordan: Review of 84 cases. *Libyan Journal of Medicine, 8*(1). <https://doi.org/10.3402/ljm.v8i0.21725>

- Matson, J. L., & Goldin, R. L. (2013). Comorbidity and autism: Trends, topics and future directions. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders*, 7(10), 1228–1233.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rasd.2013.07.003>
- Mayan, M. J. (2009). *Essentials of Qualitative Inquiry*. Routledge.
- Mays, N., & Pope, C. (2000). Assessing quality in qualitative research. *British Medical Journal*, 320(7226), 50-52. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.320.7226.50>
- McCleary, D. (2020). *The lived experiences of adolescent Syrian refugees: Their resettlement in Ontario*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Niagara University]. Proquest Dissertations Publishing.
- McConachie, H., and Diggle, T. (2007). Parent implemented early intervention for young children with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, 13(1): 120–129. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2753.2006.00674.x>
- McCormick, M. (n.d.). Immanuel Kant: Metaphysics. Retrieved from
<https://iep.utm.edu/kantmeta/>
- McCubbin, H. I., & Patterson, J. M. (1983). The family stress process. *Marriage & Family Review*, 6(1-2), 7-37. https://doi.org/10.1300/j002v06n01_02
- McGaha, K. K., & D’Urso, P. A. (2019). A non-traditional validation tool: Using cultural domain analysis for interpretive phenomenology. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 22(6), 585–598. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2019.1621474>
- Melton, G. P. (2013). Somali refugee student experiences in U.S. public high schools (Order No.3574649). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1450158848).
- Mishori, R., Aleinikoff, S., & Davis, D. (2017). Primary care for refugees: Challenges and opportunities. *American Family Physician*, 96(2), 112–120.
<https://doi.org/https://www.aafp.org/afp/2017/0715/p112.html>

- Minhas, R. S., Graham, H., Jegathesan, T., Huber, J., Young, E., & Barozzino, T. (2017). Supporting the developmental health of refugee children and youth. *Paediatrics & Child Health, 22*(2), 68–71. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pch/pxx003>
- Mire, S. S., Gealy, W., Kubiszyn, T., Burrridge, A. B., & Goin-Kochel, R. P. (2015). Parent perceptions about autism spectrum disorder influence treatment choices. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 32*(4), 305–318. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088357615610547>
- Mirza, M., & Heinemann, A. W. (2012). Service needs and service gaps among refugees with disabilities resettled in the United States. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 34*(7), 542–552. <https://doi.org/10.3109/09638288.2011.611211>
- Moore, J. A., Scharf, R. J., Malik, F., & Nyp, S. S. (2020). Beyond developmental supports for a child refugee. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, 41*(6), 496–498. <https://doi.org/10.1097/dbp.0000000000000814>
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 250–260. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250>
- Mostafa, A. (2011). Addressing autism in the Arab world. *Nature Middle East, 147*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221679995_Addresssing_autism_in_the_Arab_world
- Mounzer, W., & Al Khateeb, J. (2009). *Parents' Satisfaction with Services provided to their children with Autism in Syria*. Arabian Academy for Special Education journal, *9*(2), 89-107. <https://core.ac.uk/display/334473227>

- Musarurwa, H. J., & Kaye, S. B. (2017). Unpacking the Syrian crisis: A literature review. *Information Management and Business Review*, 8(6), 32–38.
[https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v8i6\(i\).1516](https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v8i6(i).1516)
- Nastasi, B. K. (2017). Cultural competence for global research and development: Implications for school and educational psychology. *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*, 5(3), 207–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2016.1276817>.
- National Association of School Psychologists (2020). NASP 2020 Domains of Practice. Retrieved from <https://www.nasponline.org/standards-and-certification/nasp-2020-professional-standards-adopted/nasp-2020-domains-of-practice>
- Neal, J. W., & Neal, Z. P. (2013). Nested or networked? Future directions for ecological systems theory. *Social Development*, 22(4), 722–737. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12018>
- Newbold, B., & McKeary, M. (2017). Investigating the diversity of Canada's refugee population and its health implications: Does one size fit all? *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*, 13(2), 145–156. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijmhsc-02-2015-0007>
- Noon, E. J. (2018). Interpretive phenomenological analysis: An appropriate methodology for educational research? *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 6(1), 75–83. <https://doi.org/10.14297/jpaap.v6i1.304>
- Obeid, R., Daou, N., DeNigris, D., Shane-Simpson, C., Brooks, P. J., & Gillespie-Lynch, K. (2015). A cross-cultural comparison of knowledge and stigma associated with autism spectrum disorder among college students in Lebanon and the United States. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45(11), 3520–3536. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-015-2499-1>

- Oda, A., Hynie, M., Tuck, A., Agic, B., Roche, B., & McKenzie, K. (2019). Differences in self-reported health and unmet health needs between government assisted and privately sponsored Syrian refugees: A cross-sectional survey. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 21*(3), 439–442. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-018-0780-z>
- Ofner, M., Coles, A., Decou, M.-L., Do, M. T., Bienek, A., Snider, J., & Ugnat, A.-M. (2018, April 19). *Government of Canada*. Autism Spectrum Disorder among Children and Youth in Canada 2018. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/autism-spectrum-disorder-children-youth-canada-2018.html>.
- Oner, O., Kahilogullari, A. K., Acarlar, B., Malaj, A., & Alatas, E. (2020). Psychosocial and cultural needs of children with intellectual disability and their families among the Syrian refugee population in Turkey. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research, 64*(8), 644–656. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12760>
- Ormston, R., Spencer, Liz., Barnard, M., & Snape, D. (2013). In J. Ritchie, J. Lewis, M. N. C. Nicholls, & Ormston, R. (Eds.). *Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students and researchers*. Sage. http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/58628_Ritchie__Qualitative_Research_Practice.pdf
- Ostrand, N. (2015). The Syrian refugee crisis: A comparison of responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. *Journal on Migration and Human Security, 3*(3), 255–279. <https://doi.org/10.14240/jmhs.v3i3.51>
- Oudshoorn, A., Benbow, S., & Meyer, M. (2020). Resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 21*(3), 893–908. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-019-00695-8>

- Padgett, K. D. (2014). Choosing the right qualitative approach(es). In K. D. Padgett (Author), *Qualitative and Mixed Methods in Public Health*, 29–46.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483384511>
- Papadopoulos, C., Lodder, A., Constantinou, G., & Randhawa, G. (2019). Systematic review of the relationship between autism stigma and informal caregiver mental health. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 49(4), 1665–1685. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-018-3835-z>
- Papoudi, D., Jørgensen, C. R., Guldberg, K., & Meadan, H. (2020). Perceptions, experiences, and needs of parents of culturally and linguistically diverse children with autism: A scoping review. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 8(2), 195–212.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-020-00210-1>
- Park, H. R., Lee, J. M., Moon, H. E., Lee, D. S., Kim, B.-N., Kim, J., Kim, D. G., & Paek, S. H. (2016). A short review on the current understanding of autism spectrum disorders. *Experimental Neurobiology*, 25(1), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.5607/en.2016.25.1.1>
- Pathak, V., Jena, B., & Kalra, S. (2013). Qualitative research. *Perspectives in clinical research*, 4(3), 192. <https://doi.org/10.4103/2229-3485.115389>
- Pepperell, T. A., Paynter, J., & Gilmore, L. (2016). Social support and coping strategies of parents raising a child with autism spectrum disorder. *Early Child Development and Care*, 188(10), 1392–1404. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2016.1261338>
- Perepa, P. (2014). Cultural basis of social ‘deficits’ in autism spectrum disorders. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 29(3), 313–326.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2014.908024>

- Perkins, J. (2018) *Settlement Experiences of Syrian Refugees*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation].
The University of Western Ontario.
- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Czasopismo Psychologiczne Psychological Journal*, 20(1), 7–14. <https://doi.org/10.14691/cppj.20.1.7>
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2014). *Essentials of Nursing Research: Appraising Evidence for Nursing Practice*. Wolters Kluwer Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Potter, C. A. (2016). “I received a leaflet and that is all”: Father experiences of a diagnosis of autism. *British Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 45(2), 95–105.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/bld.12179>
- Qayyum, M. A., Thompson, K. M., Kennan, M. A., & Lloyd, A. (2014). *The provision and sharing of information between service providers and settling refugees*. Information Research: an international electronic journal. <http://informationr.net/ir/19-2/paper616.html#.YOsNbm7F1p8>.
- Qoronfleh, M. W., Essa, M. M., Alharahsheh, S. T., Al-Farsi, Y. M., & Al-Adawi, S. (2019). Autism in the gulf states: A regional overview. *Frontiers in Bioscience*, 24(2), 324–336.
<https://doi.org/10.2741/4721>
- Quinn, C. R. (2015). General considerations for research with vulnerable populations: Ten lessons for success. *Health & Justice*, 3(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40352-014-0013-z>
- Raslan, N., Hamlet, A., & Kumari, V. (2021). Mental health and psychosocial support in conflict: Children’s protection concerns and intervention outcomes in Syria. *Conflict and Health*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-021-00350-z>

- Ravindran, N., & Myers, B. J. (2012). Cultural influences on perceptions of health, illness, and disability: A review and focus on autism. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 21(2), 311–319. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-011-9477-9>
- Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2019). *Syrian Outcomes Report*. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/syrian-outcomes-report-2019.html>
- Rice, J. (2017). Advocacy for refugee children with disabilities. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology*, 59(7), 669–669. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dmcn.13446>
- Ritchie, K., Sinacore, A. L. (2020). Message from the guest editors. *Psynopsis: Human rights and social justice*, 42(4), 4-5. <https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Psynopsis/2020-Vol42-4/index.html#p=1>.
- Roberts, P., & Priest, H. (2006). Reliability and validity in research. *Nursing standard*, 20(44), 41-45. <https://doi.org/10.7748/ns2006.07.20.44.41.c6560>
- Rohlf, M. (2020). Immanuel Kant. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant/>
- Rose, D., Thornicroft, G., Pinfold, V., & Kassam, A. (2007). 250 labels used to stigmatise people with mental illness. *BMC Health Services Research*, 7(97), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-7-97>
- Russell, B. (2020). *A Priori Justification and Knowledge*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/apriori/>.
- Ryan, D., Dooley, B., & Benson, C. (2008). Theoretical perspectives on post-migration adaptation and psychological well-being among refugees: Towards a resource-based model. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem047>
- Salloum, W., & Habash, N. (2013). Dialectal Arabic to English machine translation: Pivoting through modern standard Arabic. In *Proceedings of the 2013 Conference of the North*

American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Human Language Technologies (pp. 348-358). <https://nyuscholars.nyu.edu/en/publications/dialectal-arabic-to-english-machine-translation-pivoting-through->

Sarikoudi, G., & Apostolidou, A. (2020). Parenting and education: The example of refugee parents in Greece. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 36(1), 40–49.
<https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.40629>

Schweitzer, R., & Steel, Z. (2008). Researching refugees: Methodological and ethical considerations. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Doing cross-cultural research: Ethical and methodological perspectives* (1st ed., pp. 87- 101). Springer Netherlands.

Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9). <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n9p9>

Seltzer, M. M., Greenberg, J. S., Floyd, F. J., Pettee, Y., & Hong, J. (2001). Life course impacts of parenting a child with a disability. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 106(3), 265–286. [https://doi.org/10.1352/0895-8017\(2001\)106<0265:lcioipa>2.0.co;2](https://doi.org/10.1352/0895-8017(2001)106<0265:lcioipa>2.0.co;2)

Shanok, N. A., Jones, N. A., & Lucas, N. N. (2019). The nature of facial emotion recognition impairments in children on the autism spectrum. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*, 50(4), 661–667. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-019-00870-z>

Shebib, B. (2020). *Choices: interviewing and counselling skills for Canadians*. Pearson.

Shivayogi, P. (2013). Vulnerable population and methods for their safeguard. *Perspectives in Clinical Research*, 4(1), 53. <https://doi.org/10.4103/2229-3485.106389>

- Shorey, S., Ng, E. D., Haugan, G., & Law, E. (2019). The parenting experiences and needs of Asian primary caregivers of children with autism: A meta-synthesis. *Autism, 00*(0), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361319886513>
- Sim, A., Fazel, M., Bowes, L., & Gardner, F. (2018). Pathways linking war and displacement to parenting and child adjustment: A qualitative study with Syrian refugees in Lebanon. *Social Science & Medicine, 200*, 19–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.01.009>
- Sirin, S. R., & Aber, J. L. (2018). Increasing understanding for Syrian refugee children with empirical evidence. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies, 13*(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450128.2017.1409446>
- Slobodin, O., Ghane, S., & De Jong, J. T. V. M. (2018). Developing a culturally sensitive mental health intervention for asylum seekers in the Netherlands: A pilot study. *Intervention, 16*(2), 86–94. https://doi.org/10.4103/intv.intv_2_18
- Smiley, K., Gerstein, B., & Nelson, S. (2018). Unveiling the autism epidemic. *Journal of Neurology and Clinical Neuroscience, 2*(2), 1. <https://www.pulsus.com/scholarly-articles/unveiling-the-autism-epidemic.pdf>
- Smith, B. (2018). Generalizability in qualitative research: misunderstandings, opportunities and recommendations for the sport and exercise sciences. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 10*(1), 137–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676x.2017.1393221>
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2007). *Chapter 4: Interpretative phenomenological analysis*. http://med-fom-familymedresearch.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2012/03/IPA_Smith_Osborne21632.pdf.

- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis as a useful methodology for research on the lived experience of pain. *British Journal of Pain, 9*(1), 41–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2049463714541642>
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research*. Sage.
- Solomon, M., Pistrang, N., & Barker, C. (2001). The benefits of mutual support groups for parents of children with disabilities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 29*(1), 113–132. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1005253514140>
- Song, S. Y., Miranda, A. H., Radliff, K. M., & Shriberg, D. (2019). *School psychology in a global society: Roles and functions*. Bethesda, MD: NASP Publications.
- Squires, A. (2009). Methodological challenges in cross-language qualitative research: A research review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 46*(2), 277–287. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2008.08.006>
- Squires, A., Sadarangani, T., & Jones, S. (2020). Strategies for overcoming language barriers in research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 76*(2), 706–714. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.14007>
- Stewart, L. A., & Lee, L. C. (2017). Screening for autism spectrum disorder in low- and middle-income countries: A systematic review. *Autism, 21*(5), 527–539. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361316677025>
- Steup, M., & Neta, R. (2020). *Epistemology*. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/epistemology/>.
- Sukamolson, S. (2007). Fundamentals of quantitative research. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242772176_Fundamentals_of_quantitative_research

- Syam, H., Venables, E., Sousse, B., Severy, N., Saavedra, L., & Kazour, F. (2019). “With every passing day I feel like a candle, melting little by little.” experiences of long-term displacement amongst Syrian refugees in Shatila, Lebanon. *Conflict and Health*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13031-019-0228-7>
- Syrian American Medical Society. (2018). *Human devastation syndrome: The impact of conflict on mental health*. SAMS Mental Health Committee. <https://www.sams-usa.net/reports/human-devastation-syndrome-the-impact-of-conflict-on-mental-health/>
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2019). *Using multivariate statistics*. Boston: Pearson.
- Taha, G. R., & Hussein, H. (2014). Autism spectrum disorders in developing countries: Lessons from the Arab world. *Comprehensive Guide to Autism*, 2509–2531. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-4788-7_98
- Tangen, D. (2009). Identifying the learning development of students who are refugees. *Australian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 19(2), 150–160. <https://doi.org/10.1375/ajgc.19.2.150>
- Tavory, I., & Timmermans, S. (2014). *Abductive analysis: theorizing qualitative research*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, M. J., Rosenqvist, M. A., Larsson, H., Gillberg, C., D’Onofrio, B. M., Lichtenstein, P., & Lundström, S. (2020). Etiology of autism spectrum disorders and autistic traits over time. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 77(9), 936. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.0680>
- Tebes, J., K. (2005). Community science, philosophy of science, and the practice of research. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(3-4), 213–230. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-005-3399-x>

- Teherani, A., Martimianakis, T., Stenfors-Hayes, T., Wadhwa, A., & Varpio, L. (2015). Choosing a qualitative research approach. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 7(4), 669–670. <https://doi.org/10.4300/jgme-d-15-00414.1>
- Temple, B., & Young, A. (2004). Qualitative research and translation dilemmas. *Qualitative Research*, 4(2), 161–178. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794104044430>
- The World Bank. (n.d.). *Arab World*. <https://data.worldbank.org/region/arab-world>.
- Todres, L., Wheeler, S., (2001). The complementarity of phenomenology, hermeneutics and existentialism as a philosophical perspective for nursing research. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 38(1), 1–8. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0020-7489\(00\)00047-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0020-7489(00)00047-X)
- Tol, W. A., Song, S., & Jordans, M. J. (2013). Annual research review: Resilience and mental health in children and adolescents living in areas of armed conflict - a systematic review of findings in low- and middle-income countries. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 54(4), 445–460. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12053>
- Tuck, A., Oda, A., Hynie, M., Bennett-AbuAyyash, C., Roche, B., Agic, B., & McKenzie, K. (2019). Unmet health care needs for Syrian refugees in Canada: A follow-up study. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 21(6), 1306–1312. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-019-00856-y>
- Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 11(1), 80–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325010368316>
- Tuffour, I. (2017). A critical overview of interpretative phenomenological analysis: A contemporary qualitative research approach. *Journal of Healthcare Communications*, 02(04). <https://doi.org/10.4172/2472-1654.100093>

- Tye, C., Runicles, A. K., Whitehouse, A. J., & Alvares, G. A. (2019). Characterizing the interplay between autism spectrum disorder and comorbid medical conditions: An integrative review. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 9*, 1- 21. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2018.00751>
- Uddin, M. N., & Hamiduzzaman, M. (2011). The philosophy of science in social research. *The Journal of International Social Research, 2*(6), 654-664.
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Philosophy-of-Science-in-Social-Research-Uddin-Hamiduzzaman/1afa7415378689e0ebc4a3f3848fb0c518961574>
- UNHCR. (2015). *Culture, context, and the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of Syrians*.
<https://www.unhcr.org/protection/health/55f6b90f9/culture-context-mental-health-psychosocial-wellbeing-syrians-review-mental.html>
- UNHCR. (2019). *Global Trends - Forced Displacement in 2018 - UNHCR*. UNHCR Global Trends 2018. <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/>.
- UNHCR. (2021). *Syria emergency*. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html>.
- Valsiner, J. (2019). Culture & Psychology: 25 Constructive years. *Culture & Psychology, 25*(4), 429–469. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067x19872358>
- van Heijst, B. F. C., & Geurts, H. M. (2014). Quality of life in autism across the lifespan: A meta-analysis. *Autism, 19*(2), 158–167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361313517053>
- van Nes, F., Abma, T., Jonsson, H., & Deeg, D. (2010). Language differences in qualitative research: Is meaning lost in translation? *European Journal of Ageing, 7*(4), 313–316.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10433-010-0168-y>
- Vidal, V., McAllister, A., & DeThorne, L. (2020). Communication profile of a minimally verbal school-age autistic child: A case study. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 51*(3), 671–686. https://doi.org/10.1044/2020_lshss-19-00021

- Volkmar, F. R., Paul, R., Rogers, S. J., & Pelphrey, K. A. (Eds.). (2014). *Handbook of autism and pervasive developmental disorders, diagnosis, development, and brain mechanisms: Diagnosis, development, and brain mechanisms*. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca>
- White, S. E., McMorris, C., Weiss, J. A., & Lunsky, Y. (2011). The experience of crisis in families of individuals with autism spectrum disorder across the lifespan. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 21*(3), 457–465. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-011-9499-3>
- Williams, P. (2008). Emergent Themes. In Lisa M. Given (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Sage Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909.n129>
- Wong, J. P. H., & Poon, M. K. L. (2010). Bringing translation out of the shadows: Translation as an issue of methodological significance in cross-cultural qualitative research. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing, 21*(2), 151–158. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659609357637>
- Woodgate, R. L., Ateah, C., & Secco, L. (2008). Living in a world of our own: The experience of parents who have a child with autism. *Qualitative Health Research, 18*(8), 1075–1083. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732308320112>
- World Health Organization. (2020). *Impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods, their health and our food systems*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people%27s-livelihoods-their-health-and-our-food-systems>.
- World Health Organization. (2021). *Autism spectrum disorders*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/autism-spectrum-disorders>.
- Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology & Health, 15*(2), 215–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08870440008400302>

- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and method* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yohani, S., Brosinsky, L., & Kirova, A. (2019). Syrian refugee families with young children: An examination of strengths and challenges during early resettlement. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education, 14*(1), 13–32. <https://doi.org/10.20355/jcie29356>
- Young, A., Nicholas, D. B., Chamberlain, S.-P., Suapa, N., Gale, N., & Bailey, A. J. (2019). Exploring and building autism service capacity in rural and remote regions: Participatory action research in rural Alberta and British Columbia, Canada. *Autism, 23*(5), 1143–1151. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361318801340>
- Zaki, R. A., & Moawad, G. E. L. (2016). Influence of autism awareness on the psychological well-being of mothers caring for their children with autism. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice, 6*(9), 90-100. <https://doi.org/10.5430/jnep.v6n9p90>

Appendix A: Select Arabic Quotes

Select Arabic quotes and their direct translations were included to enhance visibility of Arabic and give power to it as the minority language (Cormier, 2018). Three sample Arabic quotes for each participant are provided below alongside translations. Direct translations were used in lieu of the interpreter's indications to ensure lexical equivalence of what the participant says by focusing on "obtaining the most exact word equivalences" (Cormier, 2018, p. 335). The interpreter offered conceptual equivalence for data analysis purposes through her indications, which is "preferred for qualitative research, since it is a method that translates participants' ideas" (Cormier, 2018, p. 336). Nonetheless, this research opted for lexical equivalence for displaying participant quotes below to allow for their words to be visible in the study.

Participant	Arabic Quote	Time Stamp	Direct Translation
Participant 1: Jenny	<p>بالمنطق يعني واحد إذا بغير بلدو صعب شوي بيترك أهل بيترك ناسو صعب شوي بس نحنا كرمال الولاد يعني بس يعني جينا كتير منيح صار للولاد نحنا عام نتعذب يعني صراحة بس مشان الولاد كتير منيح عام يروحو عل مدرسة الدكاتراه بيهتمو فيهن يعني</p>	(Jenny, 00:26:28)	<p>Reasonably, when someone changes their country, it is a bit difficult, they leave their family and their people, it is a bit difficult. But for the kids, meaning, when we came, it became very good for the kids. We are struggling, honestly, but for the kids it is so</p>

			good. They are going to school and the doctors are taking care of them.
Participant 1: Jenny	وتاني سني بلش الحرب إنو راح كل شي ما ضل ولا مدرسة ولا شي إنحبسنة ضلينا نحن شي ثلاث سنين تقريباً تحت الحرب ونهرب من هون لا هونيك صار كثير صعب، إنو مشان الولاد،	(Jenny, 00:59:25)	And the second year the war started, and everything was gone. There didn't remain any school and we were imprisoned at home. We kept fleeing from the war for around three years, from here to there, it was very difficult, meaning for the kids
Participant 1: Jenny	ا ما خص يعني لأن الأوتزم مش مثل طفل عادي يعني ما بفكرو بهيدي الشغلات ما بفكرو هني بيمشو بالروتين مثلاً بغير الروتين شوي يمكن بيتديأو بيرجعو بيمشو بالروتين ما بفكرو إنو المجتمع وهون غير ما	(Jenny, 01:21:55)	They [culture and autism] are not related, because autism is not like a normal child, meaning they don't think about these things [culture]. They don't think [about it], they go

	<p>بفكرو، هنن بيرتاح نفسياً وبيمشوا (غير مسموع)</p>		<p>by routine. For example, if the routine changes a little bit, they get annoyed and then get back to another routine. They don't think that the society here is different, they get psychologically comfortable and go (inaudible).</p>
Participant 2: Hannah	<p>الحقيقة بسورية ما عندهم إهتمام يعني كثير لهي الحالات يعني ما شفت يعني إنو مراكز خصوصي يعني إنو مشان حالة (ابني) مثل ما في هون</p>	(Hannah, 01:06:06)	<p>In fact, in Syria, they don't have any care for these cases, meaning I didn't see special centers for cases like my son like there is here [in Canada].</p>
Participant 2: Hannah	<p>يعني كل شي كان جيد الحقيقة الصراحة الأنسات إلي عام يدرسو (ابني) كثير كثير يعني لقيت في تحسن</p>	(Hannah, 01:26:32)	<p>Everything was good, in fact, honestly, the teachers who are teaching my son [are</p>

			good]. I found so so much improvement.
Participant 2: Hannah	<p>توحد يعني أه إنو بيقتد لحالو بيرسم لحالو يعني شغلاتو لحالو ما بخلي حدا يدأرن، لعبتو لحالو إيه هيك يعني هيك بيغنيلي التوحد، كمان عندو شغلات عصبية يعني بعصب كتير بيضرب بينذي أنا هيك بعرف التوحد يعني بس الحملدة ابني مع عندو ياهن هدول الأعراض</p>	(Hannah, 01:44:33)	<p>Autism means that he sits by himself, draws by himself, his stuff are just for him, he doesn't let anyone touch them, his toy just for him.</p> <p>That's what autism means for me. They also have anger issues, they get angry lots, they hit and harm, that's what I know about autism, but thank God my son doesn't have these symptoms.</p>
Participant 3: Sam	<p>في بعض الناس زي ما قلت إنو بياخدو الأمر أو إنو بياخدو هو على أساس إنو مسخرة أو يعني مثل الأهل مثل المجنون عرفتي ثلون</p>	(Sam, 00:53:40)	<p>There are some people, like I said, that take things or take him as if he is someone to make fun of, or like an oaf, or crazy. Do you know</p>

	فبصيرو إينو يقولو إينو أهبل مجنون		what I mean? So, they start saying calling him an oaf or crazy.
Participant 3: Sam	من لما جيت لکندا کل يوم وأنا عم بدرس لغة عم بدرس لغة عم قوي لغتي مشان ما احتاج حدا	(Sam, 01:12:58)	Ever since I came to Canada, every day I study language, I study the language to strengthen my language so I wouldn't need anyone.
Participant 3: Sam	نو يكون في برامج مختصة مثلا لوضعو هو يعلمو فيها مثلاً يمكن حرفة أو يعلمو فيها مثلاً أي شي مثلاً أو مهنة أو شي إنو هو يتعلم يكتسب مهارات	(Sam, 01:20:09)	That there would be special programs, for example, for his case. For example, to teach him a profession or trade or anything that he would learn and gain skills [from].

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Interview Protocol:

Please note that this is a semi-structured script and not all questions will be asked of participants. As well, additional follow-up probes will be asked, as needed, based on participant responses to these initial questions.

Overall Experience

- How was your overall experience coming to Canada?
- When did you arrive to Canada?
 - Upon your arrival, what sorts of resettlement services were available to you?
- How was the journey to Canada with a having a child with autism?
- Please describe how the resettlement process was in terms of having a child with autism?
 - How was the resettlement experience for him/her/them?
- What aspects of your resettlement have you found to be of ease, if any?
- What aspects of your resettlement have you found particularly difficult, if any?
- What has been helpful for your resettlement experience?

Supports and Services

- In Syria, how is autism perceived?
 - In what ways does perception influence support for children with autism?
 - How so?
 - What kinds of supports are offered for children with autism?
 - Were any of these supports made available to you?
- Throughout your journey to Canada, what kinds of supports were offered for your child with autism?

- Were any of these supports made available to you?
- Upon resettling in Canada, how was your experience with obtaining supports for your child?
 - Were any of these supports made available to you?
 - How did you find the process of working with a Canadian professional?
 - Was there anything that was particularly helpful in their approach?
 - Was there anything that was unhelpful in their approach?
- Please describe how similar or different the supports and services are in Syria versus Canada?
 - Have supports/services in either country been beneficial to you and your child with autism? How so?
 - Have supports/services in either country been unhelpful to you and your child with autism?
- If we were able to have the best possible supports that would meet your family's needs in the best way possible, what would that support include?
 - How so?
 - What aspects of services are a must have when working with your child with autism?
 - What aspects of services are a must have when working with other Syrian children with autism?

Parent-child Relationships/Family Dynamics

- In what ways did resettling in Canada impact you, your child, and your family in terms of having a child with autism?
 - How did this impact your ability to obtain supports for your child?
- How has your connection with your child or family changed or remained similar since resettling in Canada?

- How has adjusting to life in Canada been for you, your family, and your child?

- How so?

-Are there supports that could help in this regard?

End

- What are key things that professionals should be aware of when working with Syrian refugee children with autism?

- Should professionals be aware of the Syrian culture when working with a Syrian child with autism?

- What might be important in this regard?

- What about with that child's family?

- In what ways can professionals develop a good working relationship with Syrian refugee families and their children with autism?

-Do you have anything else you would like to share with me that you think is important for me to know?

Appendix C: Member Checking Table

Themes		Participant		Comments
Higher Order Superordinate Conceptual Theme	Clustered Emergent Themes	1	3	
	Experiencing Negativity	✓	N/A	
	Everyday Barriers to Everyday Living	✓	N/A	
	Positives that Outweigh the Negatives	✓	N/A	
	Loss and Unfamiliarity	✓	N/A	Indicated that, with time, they can adjust to the unfamiliarity of Canada.
	Importance of the Family Self	✓	N/A	
	Gratitude	✓	N/A	
	Priorities	✓	N/A	
	I Have Humanity to Share with	✓	N/A	
	Welcomed and Unwelcomed	✓	N/A	Indicated that in Lebanon and Syria, autistic children and children with Down Syndrome are hidden from society because families feel ashamed.

	God Listened to Us	✓	N/A	
	Defining Supports and Service	✓	N/A	Emphasised that there was no support in Syria.
	Factors that Ease or Strain Resettlement	N/A	✓	
	Being Self-Sufficient	N/A	CL	Sam was presented with the interpretation that she wanted to learn English to be self-sufficient and avoid the potential that her needs would be not met by language liaisons. Sam agreed with this interpretation but emphasized that the biggest reason for learning English was her motivation and desire to do so.
	Support and Service Satisfaction	N/A	✓	
	Recognizing Service Gaps	N/A	✓	
	Slipping through Cracks	N/A	✓	
	Comparing and Contrasting	N/A	✓	
	Stigmatizing Autism	N/A	✓	Sam elaborated on and reiterated some aspects of her

				experiences regarding stigma toward autism. She indicated that most people have the stigma toward autism, and it persists across contexts. She indicated that the Arab perception of children with special needs are inherently negative.
	A Guardian Advocate	N/A	✓	
	Happy	N/A	✓	
	War-Related Adversities	N/A	✓	
	The Cultural Identity	N/A	✓	
Crises Affecting Autism		✓	✓	
Cultural Importance and Relevance		✓	✓	Jenny indicated that in Canada there are no differences in treatment based on religion or culture. Jenny expressed that prior to her resettlement, she felt as though culture was a defining feature of who you are. Since resettling, her perception changed and now

				she feels that being human is more important than identifying with a culture.
Impactful Perceptions		✓	✓	
Support and Service Gaps		CL	✓	<p>Jenny emphasised that there is a lack of services and supports in Syria and Lebanon.</p> <p>Jenny provided a clarification regarding her need for more prompt appointments in Canada. Jenny clarified that the appointment delays have been especially prominent during COVID-19. Prior to COVID, she did not have issues with appointments.</p> <p>Sam emphasised that there is no moral support for children in Syria and Jordan.</p>

Positive Attributions		✓	CL	<p>Jenny emphasised the importance of being able to attend school in Canada.</p> <p>Sam provided clarification regarding her sense of sufficiency with the supports and services provided to her in Canada. She indicated COVID-19 derailed the supports and services for her son. During COVID-19, supports and services have not sufficiently met the family's needs.</p>
Quotidian Adjustment Difficulties		✓	✓	<p>Jenny indicated that moving countries is difficult.</p> <p>Sam indicated that migrating was hard. She thanked God that it got easier with time.</p>
Vital Relational Networks		×	✓	<p>Jenny disagreed with how her experience fit into this theme. She disagreed with the notion</p>

				that a lack of family was a resettlement barrier. She then highlighted that the presence of family was helpful for resettling.
--	--	--	--	--

✓ = Participants agreed that all provided examples were congruent with the theme and theme definition

× = Participants disagreed that provided examples were congruent with the theme and theme definition

CL = Participants agreed that the provided examples were congruent with the overall theme and theme definition but clarified or disagreed with one or more details in the theme.

N/A = Participants did not have examples that contributed to this theme