Navigating the Divide:

Uncovering Barriers to Post-Secondary Education for Newcomer Students

Philip Ackerman
Academic Coordinator - Social Service Worker - Immigrants and Refugees, Seneca College; M.Ed OISE

Ruth Naomi Damdar
MSW Ryerson University

2019

Designed and Illustrated by **Arthur Lucena**

Seneca

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the many people that lent their voices, time and support to this research project. This project would not have gotten off the ground without the generous support of the RBC and Seneca College. In addition, we are grateful for the support and participation of our community partner, the FCJ Refugee Centre, who continually champion the rights of precarious status populations living in Canada.

Special thanks to Chinue Bute, Anejah Jayarajah and Tanya Aberman for their tireless efforts as part of the research team. We would also like to acknowledge the support of the School of Community Services at Seneca College, including faculty and the program Chair, Biljana Bruce.

And of course, this project would not have been possible if it were not for the courage and resilience of the many newcomer students across the GTA who shared their experiences, and who articulated the many challenges they have faced, but also the important opportunities to overcome. We hope that the information offered through this project will break new ground, and continue to open up access to fair and equitable educational experiences at the post-secondary level.

Executive Summary

Despite a recent uptick in advocacy and awareness-raising work around access to education for newcomer students in Canada, several barriers continue to exist at multiple levels. The purpose of this research is to pinpoint and unpack some of the challenges that exist at the threshold of post-secondary education for newcomer students in Canada. This project engaged 31 participants that spanned an array of immigration statuses (refugee claimants, convention refugees, international students, non-status, etc.), to unearth some of the nuanced challenges they have faced in navigating post-secondary education in Ontario. The aim of the research was to explore the impacts of these disparities on mental health, identity constructs and overall well-being of migrant communities. Specifically, the report highlights how immigration status is taken up by administrators and other actors within this context – often negatively impacting current and prospective newcomer students. Finally, this report explores some existing interventions to mitigate these disparities, while offering recommendations to ignite positive change.

Seneca

RBC

FCJ Refugee Centre
Walking With Uprooted People

Contents

Part 1 – Introduction and Overview

Post-secondary institutions across Ontario espouse the value of global citizenship, affirming their commitment to welcome international students while promoting internationalization (Monahan, P., 2010; Hossain & Hiratsuka, 2017). Seneca for instance, prides itself on its diversity and acknowledges the value added by the international student population (Seneca, 2017). As stated by Seneca's president, David Agnew: "the internationalization of our campuses and our student body means, and it has to mean, much more than tuition income. International students, with their different perspectives and different experiences, bring an amazing diversity and amazing richness to our classrooms and our hallways" (Agnew, 2018). However, this focus on recruiting and celebrating international students is happening in tandem with the continued narrowing of Canadian immigration policies, resulting in heightened conditions of precarity and exclusion for many newcomer populations (Aberman & Ackerman, 2017). In fact, for many current and prospective students, immigration status is a prevalent barrier in accessing post-secondary education, as well as achieving an equitable participation once admitted. A calculated shift favouring temporariness over permanence in evolving immigration legislation has left many newcomers with extremely limited options to regulate their status in Canada and remain here safely and permanently (Aberman & Ackerman, 2017). Precarious migrant populations include those on work or study permits, inland refugee claimants, refused refugee claimants, sponsored spouses or children, visa overstayers and others not authorized to enter the country (Aberman & Ackerman 2017; Bhuyan, 2012; Landolt and Goldring, 2013; Magalhaes, Carrasco and Gastaldo, 2010; Villegas, 2014; Villegas, 2015). Much literature details how immigration status shapes access and experiences for diverse newcomer populations, leading to heightened marginalization and deleterious impacts on mental health and well-being (Soberano & Ackerman, 2017; Aberman & Ackerman, 2017; Forman, 2001; Landolt and Goldring, 2013; Villegas, 2014; Villegas, 2015). Among other necessary processes, these populations face multiple barriers in accessing multiple levels of education, as well as achieving a fair and equitable participation once in.

Aberman & Ackerman (2017) describe access to education as an important site of border control, where necessary rights and services are potentially blocked by decision makers in positions of power. Ongoing and targeted advocacy in this area by multiple activist and community groups has led to a number of concessionary policies that permit greater access at elementary and secondary levels; however, possibilities at the post-secondary level are nearly non-existent, save a groundbreaking new access initiative at York University. This initiative facilitates access through a specially designed bridging program, and offers students with precarious status the opportunity to study without study permit requirements and at domestic rates (Villegas and Aberman, forthcoming). Moreover, even international students who gain access through international student programs, and convention refugees who are included within

the provincial mandate, continually face challenges while navigating the terrain of higher education. Immigration status as a barrier to education is a loss on multiple fronts. As one participant in our research stated,

> *You remember that quote where people say the cure for cancer could be locked in the brain of someone who never got the chance – like immigrants, or people with precarious status, or protected persons [...] – that those might be the people who figure out new things in this world. And this world is never going to move forward if we never get the chance to do something. [...]. Every person here deserves the chance for a better life, and I believe that a better life starts with education.*

Not only are the students themselves detrimentally impacted by this inaccess, but individual institutions and broader Canadian society lose out on an incredible potential and capacity for positive change. Marmolejo, Manley-Casimir & Vincent-Lancrin (2008) detail several risks and consequences for both individual students and the wider society when access to higher education is barred. They argue that promoting equitable access to education for migrant populations can lead to increased social capital, greatly benefitting individual families as well as wider society. When barriers to education are removed, as evidenced by the York project, positive impacts are palpable. Young people participating in this initiative describe feelings of finally "being home" and being able to look forward with certainty; while Rhonda Lenton, York's president attested to the importance of offering higher education to precarious migrant students (Wiens, 2018).

However, beyond this celebrated example at York University, current and prospective students with precarious immigration status continue to face a wide range of challenges when attempting to access colleges and universities in Ontario – the majority of which continue to deny entry due to eligibility requirements based on immigration status.

The purpose of this report is to explore how access to post-secondary education is tainted for current and prospective students with precarious immigration status – or having less than permanent residency or citizenship. Our objectives are two-fold: 1) to unearth some of the disparities faced by newcomer students at the intersection of immigration status and accessing post-secondary education; and 2) explore the impacts of these disparities on mental health, identity constructs and overall well-being. We also hope to 3) analyze and reflect on how immigration status is understood and taken-up by various administrators, guidance counsellors, and other relevant actors and decision makers who help facilitate the transition into post-secondary education; and 4) explore possible interventions to mitigate the disparities faced by precarious status students.

Theoretical Framework

To better understand these issues, we will largely work from a theoretical framework that draws on Intersectionality, Critical Border Studies, and the concept of the Shadow State. It is important to work from an understanding that newcomer students embody a wide range of dynamic identities, which not only shape their experiences of access and inclusion, but also inform how they are perceived by wider society, and how they make sense of the world. To borrow from Himani Bannerji (2005) as a starting point for this analysis, she argues that race, gender and class are inseperable, and our experiences are directly shaped and informed by their inter-constitutive relationship. Within these broad social constructs exist a myriad of additional identities and experiences that lend themselves to people's evolving material realities. Examples are limitless, but for our purposes here it is important to include immigration status as a priority marker in defining the experiences of newcomer students. Beyond this, multiple other factors are implicated in this discussion, such as language ability,

trajectories of migration, experiences with authority, experiences of trauma, social status, sexual identity, and social and chronological constructions of age. These factors work in dynamic ways to create or limit access for newcomer students, and are continuously being informed by broader racist and anti-migrant rhetoric and ideologies.

Internationally, border security has become increasingly rigid, reflecting a growing anti-migrant political landscape. In this context, we can understand borders as ideological sites that have manifested into physical sites aimed at controlling migrant bodies. As physical spaces, borders are structured and reinforced to selectively control who is able to get in or out of a country (Aberman, 2018; Macklin, 2002). Several authors add to this understanding by positing that borders are often sites of violence, othering, and political and social impositions (Aberman, 2018; Anzaldua, 1987; Brown, 2010; Luibheid, 2002). Ideological borders, or what we refer to as "re-bordering", is the process whereby racist and xenophobic attitudes prevalent within the nation-state are taken up by various actors at multiple sites - preventing many newcomers from accessing a fair and equitable participation in terms of healthcare, legal support, housing, essential community services, law enforcement, and for our purposes here, education (Carpenter & Ackerman, 2017). Through the re-bordering dynamic, migrant bodies are continually categorized and marked as deserving/undeserving, genuine/bogus, desirable/undesirable, legitimate/illegitimate, Other/non-Other, and so forth (Bauder, 2008; De Genova, 2002; Huot et al, 2015; Lawlor & Tolley, 2017; Park & Bhuyan, 2012; Razack, 1998; Sharma, 2000). Within this dynamic, migrants in Canada face additional hurdles in accessing necessary services. Some need to go to great lengths to prove their eligibility and worth, while others are outright barred due to their precarious immigration status.

Thus, in both the settlement and post-secondary sectors, gatekeepers and other actors take on the role of immigration authority, embodying the "shadow state" (Wolch, 1989). Bhuyan (2012) details Thomas Hammer's (1985, 1999) distinction between immigration integration and immigration control, highlighting a tightly entangled relationship between border control and settlement practice. By settlement practice, we mean the envelope of programs and services that support newcomer adaptation and integration at the community level. Within this framework, one can argue that settlement functions as the "shadow state" of immigration, continuing to regulate and determine access for racialized migrant bodies (Wolch, 1990). In other words, the "shadow state" exists when various actors – including guidance counsellors, school administrators and other community and institutional actors – voluntarily take on the roles and behaviours of Canadian Border Service Agents, physically and socially controlling migrant populations. Several examples emerge throughout this research that highlight the ways professionals across Ontario demand proof of immigration status and then determine access for newcomer students accordingly. These actors are in effect re-bordering the settlement and integration processes for these populations.

Those that have more stable immigration status in Canada are arguably afforded 'citizenship privilege'. McIntosh (1989) describes privilege in general as "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious to (p. 1)." These assets reflect the identity dynamics described above and include race, gender, class and even citizenship – elements that carry a certain amount of privilege and benefit. As McIntosh (1989) notes, privilege is not earned nor the result of merit, but is systemic. In the case of citizenship privilege, it largely derives from the process of re-bordering. Examples of citizenship privilege in this context would include: not having to worry about being deported or detained; being able to work without your SIN number being a barrier; and not being continually criminalized and illegalized by wider society. In this case, examples of citizenship privilege as they pertain to post-secondary institutions may include: students being able to qualify for OSAP or scholarships; students being admitted

into schools without having their immigration status impede or prevent their admittance; and staff who may not have to worry about how immigration status acts as an impediment for students.

This theoretical framework provides the tools necessary to undertake the robust analysis of the experiences of precarious migrant youth as they navigate the threshold of post-secondary education in Ontario.

Methodology

To meet our research objectives, we engaged in a qualitative study, focusing on the narratives and oral histories of 31 participants. According to Creswell and Poth (2017), an oral history occurs when personal reflections about events, their causes and effects are collected from one or multiple individuals. Personal reflections within this context may contain stories told about organizations (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this case we sought the stories of individuals who held some form of precarious immigration status when attempting to access post-secondary institutions. We hoped their stories would speak to the reasons they may have faced difficulties accessing post-secondary education, as well as the impacts of such difficulties on their mental health.

It is important to acknowledge the social locations and positionality of the researchers as well as participants. The principle researcher is a full-time faculty member at Seneca College, but also has strong ties to the community through his work at a Toronto-based, grassroots organization called the FCJ Refugee Centre. His positionality benefitted this project, as it facilitated access to participants at a post-secondary institution, as well as through community migrant networks. However, it is important to note that the principle researcher undertook this project as a Canadian-born, self-identified cis-gender man, holding a certain amount of unearned privilege. This is noteworthy, as certain power relations emerge from this positionality, particularly in regards to relationality with research participants, and the subject matter. In addition to the principle researcher, the research team consisted of a Master's of Social Work student from Ryerson, a full-time Seneca student in the Social Service Worker – Immigrants and Refugees (SSW-IR) program, and members of the FCJ Youth Network. Half the research team had been actively involved for several years in supporting newcomer youth in achieving an equitable participation in school, and raising awareness around these issues. In order to further mitigate potential power imbalances, other members of the research team - including self-identified youth - carried out the research when possible.

The team had originally set out to undertake three focus groups made up of ten participants each, as well as ten individual interviews (totalling 40 participants). In the end, we ran four focus groups with a total of eighteen participants (7, 5, 4 and 2) and 13 individual interviews, totalling 31 participants. The only criteria that we set for the recruitment process was that participants had to have applied, attempted to apply, or were ready to apply for post-secondary education in Ontario, and had identified as having some form of precarious immigration status at the time they applied. These statuses included convention refugees, refugee claimants, international students, people accepted on humanitarian and compassionate grounds, and non-status individuals. It is important to reiterate these categories of immigration status, as they underline the experiences of students laid out in this report.

Looking more closely at this cross-section of participants: 12 participants identified as female and 19 identified as male; 18 participants had been accepted into college or university and were already attending classes at the time of the interviews; 6 had applied, been accepted, and were anticipating starting soon; and 7 had been rejected or were delaying applying due to reasons connected to their precarious immigration status. All participants were

racialized - whether from Black, Asian, Latinx or other communities. Although many participants were tied to Seneca College, participants were also involved with York University, Humber College and George Brown College. To protect the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms have been used for this report, and all identifying information has been removed.

Once the focus groups and interviews were conducted and transcribed, the research team identified and coded the information into five prevalent and inter-related themes. These themes include: 1) the misunderstanding and dichotomization of status; 2) barriers to accessing timely and accurate information; 3) consequent trajectoral rifts for individual students; 4) impacts on mental health; and 5) resilience and resistance. It is our intention that this exploration of key themes will lead to identifying tangible recommendations that can be implemented to better support precarious migrant students.

Theme 1: (Mis)Understanding Status & Dichotomizing Status

The misinterpretation of the various immigration statuses held by participants (refugee claimants, convention refugees, international students, non-status, etc.) was a prevalent theme of this research, resulting in several challenges. Participants identified a stark dichotomization of students between those deemed "domestic" and those deemed "international" – which could also be read as the divide between citizen and Other. As Tayo, pointed out:

> *It's not just international students only! They're all type of people with different types of statuses which they need to consider. And, like, open doors for us instead of just seeing us as 'international' and you pay this, or you pay that.*

These sentiments were echoed by several other participants who felt they were misgrouped by gatekeepers who failed to understand the diverse range of immigration statuses held by prospective students. As Tayo went on to say, "I think all colleges and universities have two categories of students: International and local. It's all black and white. They don't have shades of grey in between." Other participants spoke of being "put into little cocoons" or being wrongfully put into "narrow categories" throughout their application and admission processes.

This misgrouping and stark dichotomization of students holds several challenges. As another participant, Amanuel spoke about his endeavour to apply for post-secondary education as a rejected refugee claimant, waiting for the decision on his Humanitarian and Compassionate Application, "I would have been treated as an international student, without any chance of paying domestic fees." This is echoed by Helen who shared "I didn't have my status yet, so to apply I would have to be registered as an international

student. But you have to pay a lot of money, so I decided to push it back and wait a year." As Amanuel and Helen explain, their categorization as Other, with the associated higher tuition fees, prevented them from applying to post-secondary education (PSE). Many participants went on to describe how things quickly changed the moment when they received their permanent residence, reaffirming for them that permanency equates access and stability.

Participants also felt that their murky immigration statuses were a prime marker in delays and complications with their application processes when they did attempt to apply. Another participant, Mustafa shared that he applied to an Ontario college as a convention refugee, but felt that his application was delayed because it was being processed as an international student.

He said that he was told by a school administrator, "it's still going to be processed as an international student [...], and when your status is clear, we can transfer you back to a domestic student." Mustafa, like many other participants was wrongfully deterred from pursuing post-secondary education because of their immigration status, despite their legal entitlement - as convention refugees are entitled to domestic fees (York University, 2012). However, it is important to acknowledge, that institutions needing to navigate bureaucracy laid out by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) are required to process refugee claimants through their international admissions departments, even though they will have their fees changed to domestic[1]. Unfortunately, and perhaps reflective of the complicated and ever-evolving landscape of the Canadian immigration system, this information is not being accurately received and understood by students such as Mustafa. Another participant, Benny, detailed his experiences:

> *Seneca wouldn't accept me. Ah, actually they wouldn't process my application as a domestic student. They would process it as an international student, because they said I'm a convention refugee.*

Luca, echoed this as he described his own application process:

> *I don't think they understand what [my status] is. Because when I was, like, trying to apply for... for this stuff, I kept emailing them and everything. I had to go to the main campus and physically give them stuff because they kept putting my name on as an international student. I keep telling them, 'I'm not international anymore. I have my acceptance.'*

Although the institutions have to process convention refugees as international students, it is evident in these examples that the individuals did not understand the nuanced reasons behind these actions, and felt that they were wrongfully labelled as international students. Moreover, participants highlighted that information provided to international students did not always respond to their needs as convention refugees. Multiple participants shared that they were outright told that "if you're not a permanent resident, you're an international student," and had to engage in greater self-advocacy, as they themselves had a sound understanding of the implications of their immigration status and their resulting rights. Other participants shared similar experiences and pondered what would become of prospective students who had a more limited understanding of their own statuses, and their resulting eligibility to apply. One young woman, Farah, pointed out

> *At the time, I had protected refugee status. I went to Seneca, and this lady at the reception was like 'oh, with that [status] you cannot apply.' But I knew I could apply, because my sister had already passed that stage and she was the same status as me. And I'm thinking, 'okay, if it's somebody else who is not aware they can apply with whatever status they have, they could miss like that whole year. They could... If they're not aware of this, then I feel bad for whoever she told them they can't apply.*

1 https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/study-permits/refugees-protected-persons.html

Thus, this misinterpretation of status holds several negative impacts, which will be detailed further in subsequent sections of this report.

Finally, several participants felt that their diverse identities were reduced to that of their arbitrary immigration status, which overrode all other deciding factors in being admitted to post-secondary institutions. Several participants shared sentiments of being "seen as nothing but our statuses" or "all they see is an immigrant". As Helen highlighted, "not everyone fits into their specific categories that they put. They should look at the individual or at the things that they do, or their potential or other stuff... there must be other things they could look at." Several participants, whether international students, convention refugees, refugee claimants, or non-status, felt that there was a stark hierarchization of immigration statuses, and some statuses were favoured over others. Grace shares her feelings on hierarchizing of students stating, "I think Seneca gives priority to permanent residents and citizens." She went on to describe how students who are not permanent residents or citizens are valued less. Other participants echoed similar experiences at various post-secondary institutions, and went on to share that they felt they were looked down upon by various actors through these processes. One young woman who had lived in Canada without status for a long time, wondered, "And if people weren't so stuck on this status/non-status thing, then like they think because we're non-status that we don't want to do anything with our lives." She went on to share, "Because we DO want to do something with our lives. I mean we're not lazy people." Other participants shared similar experiences of feeling second-class because of their immigration status. One participant, Noah, shares his own trajectory,

> *My status in Canada, well I've been here in Canada since 2000. I've been a kid here. I grew up here. But I really don't know the whole immigration process because I was a kid until now. It's been a difficult journey and it takes... it takes a while.*

Noah, despite having lived in Canada for nearly two decades, and having attended elementary and secondary school here, was still denied the same basic human rights as his Canadian-born counterparts. In Noah's mind, the only difference between himself and his peers who went on to higher education, was an arbitrary piece of paper.

It is important to note that several participants took time during the interview process to highlight that they did not wish to be seen as any more deserving of education than citizens and permanent residents; however, they did wish for greater consciousness of and sensitivity to their unique plights as precarious migrants. As Dawit requested in one of the focus groups, "you must say when you're writing that I never said we are begging to be privileged by the colleges [...], we are just saying that you put into consideration the situations that we are going through." Other participants echoed this and offered more detail:

> *They are expecting us, even if we're from high school, to produce the same grades. I'm working full-time, I'm going to school full-time, and we also have our own mental issues from the past – traumas and all of that. [...] We understand that there are people who go to work and go to school, but what a lot of people don't understand is the jobs that we have to do are VERY gruelling on your body and on your mental health. Like other people can work at McDonald's and we have to go to factories.*

In addition to the differential experiences touched on here, newcomer students often need to navigate additional bureaucratic immigration processes – with their associated fees – weighing heavily on their mental health and further exacerbating existing stress. Therefore, there is a lot of invisible weight carried by immigration status that goes unacknowledged by school administrators, guidance counsellors, peers and other actors that devalues the experiences and identities of precarious migrant students.

One student, who was accepted into the York project, described his status as "a York student" which highlights the multilayered value of education for these young people. For this student, broader interpretations of immigration status are not as important as the identity construction of being a University or College student. And it is important to remember that several of the participants continue to be excluded from post-secondary participation, despite their aspirations. Robbie articulates this well, "I think that status is the biggest problem. And that if you're going to school they shouldn't be getting upset. It doesn't matter if you're a refugee, non-status or whatever, give people a chance."

The stark dichotomization of prospective and current students based on their various statuses, reflects broader ideologies that permeate the experiences of migrant populations in Canada. Moreover, it is important to note that throughout these processes, migrant bodies are further differentiated along gender, race and class lines, as unique identity constructs often determine power imbalances and the way that people are treated and perceived. Therefore, it is important that post-secondary institutions stray from producing additional barriers for migrant students. Instead they should work to better understand the spectrum of immigration statuses, counter inequities that are produced through these statuses, and recognize the uniqueness of each student to meet them where they are at.

Theme 2: The Fog of Misunderstanding and the "Pinball Effect"

There are several barriers that prevent prospective students from receiving up-to-date, timely and accurate information, as well as several resulting impacts. We feel it is important to acknowledge that there are multiple factors fuelling this fog of misinformation, including an ever-evolving immigration system, which presents challenges for administrators and decision makers in fully understanding the spectrum of immigration statuses.

A direct impact of the misunderstanding of status is what we refer to as a "pinball effect", where students are sent from one gatekeeper to another, while trying to get the information they need to move forward with their application processes. As Theo, an international student, pointed out,

> *Every time I go somewhere - some department - they say something like 'this is not our department, you should go there' and then the other department says 'it's not from ours, you should go back!' It was really confusing and even because I didn't speak English at the time and I didn't listen properly. So, I was really nervous and anxious, and I really wanted to actually give up at the time.*

This is echoed by Emily who shared,

> *When I came to the international student centre, they sent me to somewhere else. So, I went there, and they told me I needed to go to registration. So, I went there, and they said 'no, you need to go to the international student centre. Like back and forth.*

Many participants identified the lack of access to consistent information as a deterrent, adding to existing frustrations and stressors for prospective students.

International students who participated in this research project had a unique experience with a similar phenomenon. These students felt that they had a sufficient amount of support initially, but it fizzled out. One international student, Georgina spoke about the usefulness of the orientation she received when she first arrived, and continued: "I also think that they should do it more frequently. Not only for the first day of class because people just forget it. People forget the information." She went on

to posit: "I feel they could have more information sessions during the semester or during the year to be even more helpful." Another international student, Zoe, spoke about the need to have more robust settlement and integration information and support, beyond just registering for school:

> *And the thing is, that kind of information could have been useful before coming, you know? Even though the college wasn't able to place you in a certain house, but you could still search all those options here, you know? Be aware of possible scams or maybe that information is useful. Especially for housing.*

Although Zoe's insight is focused on one area of settlement, other participants echoed a need for more robust and accessible information for international students - including housing, immigration support, social connections, as well as day-to-day needs such as food, weather and navigating public transportation.

As mentioned above, some international students felt they had to engage in a greater amount of self-advocacy to affirm their rights and eligibility; others felt that in addition to receiving wrong information, or being pinballed from one department to another, they were met with a lack of sensitivity on the part of administrators. Participants felt that this happened in a couple of different ways. On the one hand, participants felt that they were overlooked or neglected by gatekeepers, as Jennifer shared,

> *I found the most stressful part of it was getting into contact with the services here. If I was to send an email, it would take someone a long time to get back to me. Most of the applications were done on my own.*

Many other participants were met with the rhetoric of "go ahead and apply!" despite being unready or ineligible to do so. This incurred several consequences, including unnecessary fees and being increasingly dispossessed and derailed from their chosen path. On the other side of this spectrum, participants felt that certain administrators behaved insensitively and even aggressively towards them. Alejandra for instance spoke about how she felt "manipulated" by her school's registration office, and was continually faced with a response of "you should have known better!" when she faced challenges throughout her settlement processes. She articulated her experiences, "I don't have an expectation to know everything about the system, but I do have an expectation that when I'm having a question, you're not going to give me a heart attack with your answer." Other participants expressed similar reactions, and spoke of being brought to tears by administrators who were "rude" and "uncaring". Finally, an additional layer to this phenomenon is that some administrators were seen as akin to law enforcement or Canadian Border Services Agency in their authoritative approach, exemplifying the "shadow state". Vulnerabilities were increased and exploited for some participants who needed to disclose intimate details of their trauma and migration stories when navigating admissions processes or

applying for financial aid. As Thomas shared when speaking about applying for OSAP:

> *And then… personally it gets too intimate and it's like 'why didn't you put your parents information? Where are they? What are they doing? Why are they not with you?' And I'm like: 'if a person is going through something that is… little things like that are triggering for them.' We don't know everyone's situation, but those questions can trigger a lot of people.*

This reinforces the manifestation of the "shadow state" in post-secondary institutions, as newcomer students continue to encounter borders through invasive and status-based questions as they attempt to move forward along their professional and academic paths.

Thus, many participants in the research project highlighted challenges with gaining up-to-date and correct information in a timely manner. In their attempts, students could not get in contact with the appropriate staff, or were pinballed between offices (often at different locations and campuses), making it difficult for them to obtain answers to their questions. Staff did not listen to them when they tried to clarify their immigration status, and made minimal efforts to understand their status. In this way, these participants, and their applications, were treated like they were insignificant and easily disposable. Again, this reflects broader ideologies that impact the daily experiences of diverse populations of newcomer students. Not only are these communities continuing to encounter the re-bordering effect along these paths, but concurrently need to navigate discriminatory experiences at systemic and interpersonal levels.

Theme 3: Trajectoral Rifts

The planned paths, or trajectories, of many newcomers are significantly impacted by barriers to post-secondary education. Many participants described how their initial plans changed significantly due to delays and narrowing possibilities – leading to several deleterious impacts. For example, Anna talked about how she felt like she was living in limbo while awaiting the decision on her refugee claim. During this time, Anna was encouraged to apply to post-secondary institutions by a high school counselor and a teacher. Anna was also given information about the application process by the admissions department at a post-secondary institution. Unfortunately, no one told her that her status as a refugee claimant would impact her application, making her ineligible at the time for domestic fees. When Anna finally found out that she would have to pay international student fees, she realized he could not attend and had to "drop the…spot for college." Once that happened, she explained her experience in limbo felt:

> *pretty daunting. […] I was stuck. I was not moving forward, I was not moving backward, I was just waiting for something to happen, so that was like frustrating. It was frustrating cause I kept also seeing my friends doing things. Like planning 'oh I'm gonna go to this college', 'I'm gonna go to that college,' 'I have to apply to this scholarship', 'I have to apply to that scholarship' and I was like 'ughh okay'*

In this case immigration status and citizenship privilege were barriers as many school officials never considered how immigration status would impact Anna's ability to attend post-secondary school. The impacts for Anna were hard felt, and the disparities between herself and her Canadian-born peers were reified.

Citizenship privilege exists in other ways in post-secondary institutions as well, further impacting precarious

status students' trajectories. Stories, such as those from Benny and Grace, again reveal that there was a lack of understanding about their immigration status by post-secondary employees. Even though they were convention refugees and able to apply as domestic students, the post-secondary institution treated them as international applicants. Each of these participants believe that this is why their applications were "withdrawn" (Grace) or "shoved to the side" (Benny). Specifically, Benny believed his application was discarded because the school knew he would not be able to pay the international fees, as he was a refugee claimant. In these cases, the misinterpretation of status by decision makers prevented their applications from being considered fairly.

There is a deep connection between these barriers and shifts in the planned trajectories of newcomer students. For example, Grace's plans to attend post-secondary education were delayed significantly. Her first application to post-secondary school was in 2006. She then re-applied to the college multiple times eleven years later in 2017. Similarly, Helen talked about her plans being significantly delayed, noting:

> *I was in high school and I received letters from universities and colleges because I took university courses, so like I had a letter from the Ontario Universities that you need to apply on all that but I didn't have my status yet, and so to apply I would have to be registered as an international student but you have to pay a lot of money so I decided to push it back and I waited a year and I finished High School since last year so I waited a year... LONG... until I had my immigration stuff sorted.*

Helen, like many participants, was forced to push her plans back by a year, reaffirming feelings of being in limbo.

Another factor that feeds the life in limbo for prospective students with precarious immigration status is the financial barriers. Newcomer students, particularly those deemed eligible for study permits (including refugee claimants and international students) are often faced with exorbitant fees, much higher than their Canadian-born counterparts. For example, Noah talked about how George Brown College still had not accepted him on domestic fees, even though he had been accepted on Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds, and was thus eligible. When asked about what will happen if the school accepts him on international fees, Noah responded by saying:

> *...it'd be a little more difficult for me to go to school because I really don't have the funds or, or anything to pay that, so that would make it difficult and I would have to pull of another year, save a little bit more money just to pay those tuition fees.*

Noah's response reveals that his plans to attend school would be delayed by international fees, when in reality he should be paying significantly less because his status entitles him to domestic fee rates. For many participants, money is a deciding factor in accessing PSE; however, the hard-felt financial challenges are glossed over by administrators and other decision makers, reducing their severity and longer-term impacts.

Noah's response reflects a theme common among many newcomer groups. When their plans to attend school were delayed or when they could not go to school at all, many participants had to accept part-time, precarious and/or dangerous work. Before Noah was accepted on Humanitarian and Compassionate grounds, he knew that he could not attend school because of the international fees; as such, he,

> *just went into working (...) So I just went into working and as the years went by I dunno I just started like liking the money and started doing my own thing and but eventually like I been in the workforce and I don't want to be a construction worker my whole life so now I want to go back into school but now I'm getting hit with this dilemma now.*

Valeria was on a temporary resident permit and did not qualify for OSAP. As such, Valeria could not go to Seneca. Similarly, Valeria noted:

> *after a while I started doing precarious jobs – I was trying to survive. Once you get that 'no' you have to kind of put yourself into survival mode and if you're not able to go to school then you need to do something. So, I started to do work to try to keep myself occupied and a lot of the jobs that I was doing was not paying enough and I was putting myself in dangerous situations. But it was the only way that for myself to be in peace with myself and be able to see my friends than going to school and trying to achieve something and me just working in order to survive and in order to not feel like I was just wasting my time….*

Zankang, a refugee claimant, said that he "struggled to get into school for five years," as he could not afford to pay the international student fees. Because school was really important to him, he did not want to accept a permanent, well-paying job in case he was able to go to school. He said:

> *It was just a level of being not able to make firm decisions because I didn't know what was going to happen. There were so many things that I was just jogging around and hoping for some other thing to materialize. For another thing to happen… there was just so much that I had to do at the time… just in terms of finances. Just planning… Pretty much… Planning… planning. It was just very, very tough – which obviously impacted me… I couldn't plan.*

Zankang, like many participants struggled to pay bills and save money as he survived on precarious, piecemeal and contract jobs. Financial challenges for participants like Zankang not only furthered the distance to achieve their academic goals, but also received little attention from administrators and other supporters.

Similarly, some international student participants also felt that their financial challenges were often ignored. Alejandra's story allows us to deepen our analysis in this respect. When attending a post-secondary institution as an international student, she felt uninformed about course credits and the associated fees. Unfortunately, Alejandra did poorly in one of her courses, and was required to retake it. The course was $9000 – a price too high for Alejandra at the time as she was already struggling to make ends meet. When she went to speak to a staff member about these challenges, she described feeling judged and seen as a failure. Her concerns were overlooked, as staff told her to simply pay and retake the course. Alejandra felt like they were "belittling the financial aspect of it."

Alejandra's story reveals that no one took the time to explain to her how the credit system works at that particular institution and that she was treated like she was at fault for not knowing. As a result of being ill-informed, she was surprised when she found out the cost of the course. The post-secondary employee she spoke with seemed to have little understanding of why paying such a fee would difficult for her, reflecting their citizenship privilege while emboldening the myth that international students are financially wealthy. According to Alejandra, fees were emphasized only after she arrived here and started school. Prior to that, the post-secondary institution placed the emphasis on resources that she would receive, such as mentors. Alejandra says she was unable to contact her mentor even after trying three times. As such, Alejandra felt very manipulated, describing school as very "business oriented."

This had significant consequences for Alejandra. She stated: "I just felt like maybe I'm not made for big school environments. So, I was like maybe I should switch to like a smaller environment, because this feels very foreign to me." Her remarks reveal that her experience impacted her mental health, as she began to internalize negative thoughts about herself and her potential. As such, her trajectory changed and she switched to college. Alejandra's

experience reflects having to settle for something that was not her first option, a theme common among many of the newcomers that we spoke with.

For many precarious migrant students, financial implications fostered a greater distance from attending school, which was particularly significant because school represented a brighter future for many of them. For example, Noah noted that,

> *post-secondary education would mean a different life from what the rest of my family has being a farm worker, being a construction worker, just being a straight labourer. My sisters the first person in our whole family that's actually finished university and done what she wants to do and I want to do the same thing. So that's what it means: [...] help out my family just get a better paying job, get them the life they deserve. They brought me here to make a better life, to do something with myself and that's what I want to do.*

Noah continued by saying:

> *I'm looking forward to, I dunno being in school again it's you know something different, I don't have to wake up at 5am no more. Um I don't have to wear construction boots, um meeting new people, wanna get to meet new people...*

Other participants echoed similar sentiments, placing post-secondary education in an extremely positive and necessary light. Participants like Zankang shared that they felt ill-equipped to pursue their chosen careers without proper certification, despite having a long history of experience in their chosen field. Zankang shared that without his degree, "I wouldn't be able to make the kind of change that I want to." Building on Zankang's arguments, Anna described several factors that motivated her to pursue post-secondary education:

> *when I first started thinking that I had to go to secondary it was mostly cause I, my mom like wanted me to go. But now I just think it's an opportunity to let myself grow, both like in education and in experience. And it's just something I, it's like halfway like something I wanted to do and something my family wanted me to do. So it's like that halfway point of like I want to do this cause I think it's important, it's going to help me in my future. And I want to do this to I was like, make my mom see that we have, we can move forward in this country...*

Most participants in this research revealed strong aspirations to pursue higher education and promoted its importance in shaping a successful future. It is important to reiterate that promoting greater access to education not only impacts the individual students, but can bring about incredibly positive change to the institutions themselves, as well as the wider society.

Theme 4: Mental Health Impacts

The above themes and resulting impacts all weigh significantly on the mental health and overall well-being of participants. Since school was held with such importance for participants, the drastic shift in their planned trajectories had a marked impact on their mental health in several regards. For example, Valeria described feeling much anxiety around achieving her dreams, worrying that it would take a long time to accomplish everything that she wanted. Valeria said that she worried about giving up on herself, or that her advancing age would quickly become an obstacle to achieving her goals. Robbie and Dawit said that "it feels bad" and "it's a big blow" that they are unable to attend post-secondary because of their status. Robbie elaborated by saying, "your heart crushes; you have your mind set on something you really want to do, then it's just like a stumbling block after a stumbling block after a stumbling block, so you just want to give up." James echoed similar sentiments:

> *it's, like, very difficult because when you don't get what you want it gives you so many things to talk about and so many things to think about, and you actually feel like somehow your goals are not being achieved. When I actually started thinking about that, I got myself into a depression state – which I actually sought help from my counselor and my doctors.*

This example shows how the far-reaching consequences of a life-in-limbo may be experienced by precarious migrant students, requiring some to seek help from medical and mental health professionals. Mustafa articulated similar feelings of being othered through his inability to access post-secondary studies:

> *it was like a dream crusher because, like, you have your whole dream and everything. ... I had a status and it was like I was going to get my permanent residence, but it's like they're crushing your dreams because, like, you've been through the system so long. You've been through the whole high school system, and it's, like, now your hopes and dreams are, like, crushed because, like, you're not considered 'one of us.' You're out - You're out of the box, you know?*

As seen in these examples, precarious migrant students are continually pitted against their peers who possess a wide range of citizenship privilege. In this exercise, precarious migrant students are consistently devalued, and made to feel unworthy of post-secondary success. As participants internalize these experiences, their isolation, depression and anxiety can easily be exacerbated. For example, Amanuel talked about feeling discouraged and noted how this impacted his behaviour,

> *I felt pretty discouraged from just about any kind of school before I got my PR card. I was basically, like, like, throughout high school, like, my behaviour was not one that I, uh - it was worse than it is now and, um, I was always kind of getting into trouble. [...] I was just kind of passing all, like, my courses and then I got my PR card and then what do you know? My grades go up 20%, I can be, like, friendlier with people and then it would kind of stop bothering me when people, like, try to get a reaction out of me and everything just kind of got better.*

It is apparent here that once status was stabilized for Amanuel, the positive impacts were manifold. The mental health implications of precarious status are reified in examples like these, highlighting the weight of immigration status as a prime marker of acceptance and

inclusion into various facets of Canadian society (including PSE). Participants spoke at length about how their daily experiences felt a far-cry from their Canadian born peers. For example, several participants noted how the precarious jobs they had to accept impacted their mental health. As previously noted, Danielle said that instead of getting a job at McDonald's, some newcomers have to go to factories where the work environment is rough. Danielle said that that kind of environment "sucks the life out of you." Other participants shared that their jobs involved long hours without flexibility around their study schedules, causing them to miss class, or be unable to operate at their full potential. Precarious employment and resulting responsibilities add layers to the deleterious mental health experiences of precarious migrant students.

Within post-secondary institutions, there also seems to be a lack of consideration of the unique plight of newcomer students, which may negatively impact their mental health. Grace and Alejandra both referred to the pressure of having to navigate the Canadian job market as newcomers and go to school simultaneously, but felt that this was not fully understood by school staff. Grace, for example, said she works 40 hours a week and ensures that she does not miss a class at school. She went on to say that she must take care of her sick mother, all without the support of family here in Canada; however, these needs were dismissed by an academic advisor, leaving her feeling "heartbroken". The systemic pressures experienced by newcomer students impact their academic lives in myriad ways, which are not often well understood or appreciated by faculty. Thus, immigration status creates a unique constellation of stress for participants, not only as a result of the disparities described above, but also because their stability and future in Canada hang in the balance while their status remains impermanent. These students have to navigate the traditional stressors associated with the threshold of PSE, but with the added consequences of potential deportation and detention hanging over their heads.

Additional mental health challenges emerged for international students who participated in the study. Theo, an international student, said that he, as well as his peers, believed that "nobody cares about international students," noting that there is a lot that international students have to do by themselves. As such, he spoke about it being difficult to find someone who could provide him with the correct information as he transitioned to Seneca, often being pinballed back and forth between departments. He noted that this impacted his course load and affected his mental health. Specifically, he noted that courses for the main program would be registered automatically, but this may not be the case for general education, explaining,

> *And then maybe it's the end of the semester and you're going to notice that you had to register your course, unless you are not going to graduate. I've seen a few of my friends have had that problem. Some of them had to take two general courses in the same one semester. So, they really had pressure and were burnt out."*

Newcomer youth may not have access to the imformation they need when making their schedules and may be unfamiliar with the education system in Ontario. As a result, some participants indicated that they had to take more courses in one semester than they originally planned. An intensified course load can significantly impact students' mental health because, as noted by Theo, they can feel burned out from the additional pressure.

Theo's story reflects a common theme among newcomer students. As previously noted, many participants shared that they found it hard to get in contact with someone in a timely manner, were pinballed between departments, or were simply given the wrong information. These themes were connected to poor mental health by participants who described feeling like it was hard to trust anyone, or that they simply wanted to "give up". Speaking of the misinformation that would have kept her out of school

because of her precarious status, Farah asked, "how do you trust them [the administrators] if they don't know about these status things?" Valeria echoed this experience, stating,

> *To be 100% honest, it's quite stressful because every time I think about it and I sit with someone and that, I don't fully believe what they tell me. Even though now I'm a PR, I just feel like something is going to come up and maybe I'm going to get the wrong information... Like, it's always there... I know I have to let it go, but I feel like I don't fully trust whoever is talking to me. Like, I have to double check and check with people that I really trust in order for me to make that step and to do it...because before everybody told me "yes, you'll be able to do it, and go ahead and apply..." and my dreams and my life were planned based on whatever those "educated" or teachers were telling me. And now that I have to deal with it again and I have to ask people, it's the same thing. It goes back to: how do I know that they're telling me the right information? How do I know that I'm going to do all of this and then we're going back again like before and something... like a paper, something that I'm going to need, is going to be missing?*

As seen in the examples provided by Farah and Valeria, both the pinball effect and being wrongfully excluded from necessary information and services fuel a spirit of mistrust. This mistrust becomes a contributing factor to the mental health challenges faced by individuals, adding more distance between themselves and necessary supports.

In conducting interviews with precarious status students, it became clear their mental health was impacted in different ways based on their unique situations. As mentioned previously, questions raised in OSAP applications can be particularly triggering. Thomas, a convention refugee, said that he has experienced friends being asked questions about their parents in applications and they hesitated to disclose that information because it was part of their refugee case. Thus, this part of the application process replicates parts of the immigration hearing, which, as Bajwa et al., (2017) note, is re-traumatizing in itself. Thomas described that having to recount that information may induce post-traumatic stress for them. In this part of the application process, there is clearly limited consideration given to the traumatic experiences that a refugee may have experienced. This post-traumatic stress may deter youth from even completing their application to college or university.

Ultimately, throughout this research, we saw that when immigration status was a barrier to post-secondary education, it became a stark identity marker that impacted newcomer students discursively. Noah understood that he was viewed as an 'illegal' because of his immigration status. As such, he felt that he was not a 'regular' kid. Georgina talked about having to let professors know that she was an international student for additional support, but noted that she did not want to seem like the 'victim.' Grace said that she began to feel like she was not meant to be in school. These comments reveal that newcomer students internalize negative attitudes towards immigrants. When status is a barrier to school and when post-secondary schools uphold the bifurcation of international and domestic students, they are simultaneously reinforcing these negative attitudes, which is then clearly internalized by students in different ways.

While it is clear that the mental health of newcomer students can be negatively impacted in multiple ways, it is also clear that mental health resources on campus are not adequately meeting their needs. For example, Jennifer, and international student at Seneca, did not realize that the college had counseling services at its York campus, believing that she would have to travel to Newnham campus for support. Her story highlights a need for this department to engage in more outreach, particularly to newcomers. In another example, when asked if he had tried accessing counseling on campus, Theo said that:

> *I went to counselling support one time, but I didn't feel that it was really good. Because my main reason was depression from my language problem, and when I went there I had to speak English... Even it's kind of like another contradiction right? I didn't even know how to say properly in English... I can only say "I feel bad"... I cannot elaborate my feeling, right? In terms of counselling it is important to express how you feel elaboratively. But, if you don't have much vocabulary, it's going to be difficult, so I feel like I was really stuck. So, I just stopped showing up there.*

Theo's response reveals a need for a further exploration of existing service gaps, and how we can collaboratively foster greater supports for students. Understanding the myriad ways that barriers to PSE impact the mental health of newcomer students is an important first step to developing appropriate interventions and mechanisms for response.

Theme 5: Resilience and Resistance

Despite the numerous, and often negative, impacts experienced by precarious migrant students when navigating post-secondary education, it is important to acknowledge and celebrate their resilience, while identifying possibilities for resistance. To begin, we would like to posit that emerging research around resilience has placed more weight on contextual and cultural factors, rather than simply understanding resiliency as a personality trait (Simich & Roche, 2012). Thus, one's individual resiliency, or ability to bounce-back from experiences of hardship and trauma, can be deeply personal – shaped by personal attributes, experiences and histories, or external – informed by perceptions and experiences of the social world (Simich & Roche, 2012). Moreover, trauma becomes an important factor to consider in this discussion, as it carries the ability to generate strengths, coping mechanisms and sources of resiliency (Goodman et al, 2017). And as our resiliency takes shape and evolves, it directly informs our capacity to resist existing power structures and multiple forms of oppression. Baaz et al (2017), point out that although resistance is often associated with destructiveness, and being violent and reactionary, it can also be productive, fluid, multi-dimensional, and can be integrated into our everyday lives. "Resistance holds the potential to constructively transform societies and change histories. (Baaz et al, 2017, p. 2). Therefore, after having looked at the myriad ways in which newcomer students are marginalized and excluded while navigating the threshold of post-secondary education, and the toll these processes take on their mental health, it is important to also understand their agency through these processes, and how despite everything, they persisted.

At the forefront of this discussion, we want to acknowledge the extent to which these students persevered in the face of adversity, and developed their own range of coping mechanisms to do this effectively. Many of the youth acknowledged that they were equipped with the knowledge

and self-awareness necessary to navigate these processes despite the barriers. As evidenced previously in this report, many participants in the research project needed to inform administrators and other key players of their rights, and that their immigration statuses were being misunderstood. Thomas added to this conversation as he stated,

> *All I want [...] is to do something better for Canada, but I can't. And it sucks because you have such great people with so much great potential who can do amazing things for this country... but they can't. They face a huge wall.*

Another participant, Donna, added to this by asking, "So, give us the chance to actually show that we can be great and that we are destined for greatness just like anybody who was born into this country. Because our country doesn't define who we are." The majority of participants similarly revealed heightened levels of self-awareness and self-advocacy. They continually challenged the arbitrariness of the bureaucratic processes that they needed to endure, and questioned power relations throughout. These participants, although just a sample of the newcomer population of Ontario, revealed a sound understanding of immigration policy, their resulting eligibility, and the inequalities present in existing systems. Thus, based on their own dynamic identities, and previous experiences with adversity and trauma, a strong capacity to overcome emerges.

In addition to this inherent resiliency, the ability to overcome for these students was supported by external influencers, or what Simich and Roche (2017) refer to as "tactical enablers". These enablers took multiple forms, depending on the unique contexts of each participant. For example, many international students involved in this study, spoke about using "agents" in their home countries to facilitate visa and immigration processes, which allowed the processes to happen much more smoothly. However, once in Canada, and needing to navigate various settlement processes and seek answers to their various queries, the absence of these agents was hard-felt, and questions often went unanswered. Other participants, like Mustafa, spoke of having multiple forms of external support in Canada:

> *For me, I had a very strong support system around me. So I had my vice-principal from my old high school that was very supportive of me. Then I was at a shelter and the shelter was trying to support me and see what scholarships are there. And then having FCJ Refugee Centre stepping in and also backing me up and kind of explaining what are the different processes, what are the different levels – you know, the support system helped me out a lot, a lot, a lot.*

Other participants echoed the importance of external support, and spoke of receiving help from peers, college faculty members, high-school teachers, and community workers. There was an overarching sentiment among participants that community-based support was invaluable in receiving client-centred, trauma-informed, up-to-date information. This was a challenge for international students, as they often felt excluded from community supports because of their immigration status, but felt neglected and overlooked within their institutions. Georgina, for example, shared,

> *When I got here it was just me. It was like 30 other people [in the class] and I was the only international student. After, like, two months I started meeting more international students in my program... and in general I had my boyfriend as a support and other friends that were international students to talk about, like, share some of the challenges we were facing.*

Theo shares a similar experiencing in engaging with the international student community: "We kind of understand each other because we had the same problem." An added piece of resilience for this community, is their ability

to connect, and work collaboratively to fill in existing support gaps.

Finally, there were a few existing programs that allowed participants to overcome some of the disparities that they experienced through these processes. Multiple participants spoke of their involvement with the FCJ Refugee Centre, and how they knew they could rely on this community organization to answer their questions and advocate if necessary. Valeria spoke very highly of HYPE (Helping Youth Pursue Education) at Centennial College, as she was able to participate in this program despite her precarious status at the time. Speaking of this program she shared,

> *And in a way I saw that I was not... I had not wasted my time. But I also saw that I could do it... if they are doing it because now is the time for them, then maybe it was my time too! And then maybe me going to Centennial was able to help me in the future.*

Other participants spoke similarly about the York Project, as it provided an unparalleled opportunity for them to bridge into a Canadian University and not have to worry about paying international fees. The positive impacts of such programs were manifold for participants, as they valued their academic worth, but also greatly reduced the experiences of limbo, isolation and exclusion. These programs were paramount in getting young people with precarious status back on track. And with these programs housed at post-secondary institutions in Ontario, it is evident that resistance is possible, and newcomer students can be supported regardless of their immigration status.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Thus, this research project has unearthed the varying ways that diverse populations of precarious migrant students are continually marginalized, excluded and Othered as they navigate the terrain of post-secondary education in Ontario. As evidenced throughout this report, many students have learned to identify and tap into invaluable mechanisms to cope and resist the challenges they face within these processes. Aligned with the emerging focus on the internationalization of post-secondary institutions in Ontario, it is paramount that these students are better supported throughout these processes, to allow them to reach their full socio-academic potentials – in turn greatly benefitting the individual institutions and wider Canadian society.

Moving forward, it is important to reiterate that there are several contributing factors to the manifold barriers experienced by newcomer students who participated in this study. Often, these barriers result from, or are reinforced by, broader systemic issues that will require time, will, collaboration and commitment to offset. In this vein, we have identified some initial recommendations that we hope will lead to not only a reduction in stress and anxiety for these students, but a move towards greater inclusion and a more equitable participation in PSE for diverse newcomer populations. These recommendations may positively contribute to the strategic plans of various PSE institutions in Ontario, more robustly informing concepts of internalization and reflecting more inclusive and accessible campuses.

1. Cross disciplinary awareness raising promoting greater student satisfaction:

We recommend the establishment of an interdisciplinary committee of key players (newcomer students and students with precarious status, student federation members, international admissions staff, domestic admissions staff, registration, teaching and learning, academic council, faculty from relevant disciplines, etc.) to collaborate and develop a plan to improve access for newcomer students as well as the quality of student life. This plan can be informed

by the preliminary findings in this report, and work towards greater awareness raising, information sharing and the development of promising practices.

2. Teaching excellence and academic quality:

We recommend broadening existing definitions of "accessibility" to include systemic barriers faced by newcomer students. The multiple barriers detailed in this report are often underrepresented or fully invisibilized in existing policies, legislation and practice, and as such we push for a wider acknowledgement of these challenges as well as possibilities for response. These issues could be integrated into faculty professional development opportunities offered by post-secondary institutions. Additionally, a greater intersectional emphasis needs to be incorporated in existing trainings, specifically to include "immigration status" and "newcomer experience" as prime identity markers that impact the post-secondary trajectories of many post-secondary students.

3. Fostering innovative partnerships and paving pathways:

Much work has been initiated around many of these issues at the community level. Greater commitment needs to be made to meaningfully foster these partnerships and offer more supports for newcomer students – particularly those with precarious immigration status. For example, bringing external community partners on site in a structured, processed and consistent manner will help fill support and information gaps for international students. Additionally, collaborating with key players at other PSE institutions, including the York Project, will allow us to duplicate promising practices, and recreate meaningful ways to open up access at our own institutions. It is our hope that findings in this report will expand access across Ontario's post-secondary education system.

4. Opportunities for more education and research:

This work has been informed by previous community-driven research around access to education at multiple levels. However, more work needs to be done. Educational approaches are continually evolving, and exist within an ever-changing socio-political landscape. To truly foster and promote the greater access and inclusion of newcomer students at post-secondary levels, more research needs to happen. Moreover, this research needs to direct strategic action that will ignite positive change for marginalized newcomer populations.

The five overlapping themes outlined in this report draw attention to the need for greater collaboration and research. As detailed throughout this research, several residual and emerging issues continue to plague the academic experiences of a wide range of newcomer students, particularly at the intersection of their immigration status. Thus, we would like to finish this report by pushing for cross-sectoral and collaborative efforts to support current and prospective students regardless of their immigration status. We value education as a human right, and believe that the greater acknowledgment and meaningful inclusion of a diverse student body underlines this right.

References

Aberman, T. (2018). 'It actually made me feel like I didn't want to be here': Experiences of 'Voluntary Return' in a Sanctuary City. Dissertation for the Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies. York University, Toronto, Canada.

Aberman, T., & Ackerman, P. (2017). Isn't the Right to an Education a Human Right?. *In Youth as/in Crisis* (pp. 127-144). SensePublishers, Rotterdam.

Aberman, T., Rico-Martinez, F., & Ackerman, P. (2017). School Outside These Four Walls: Contesting Irregularization Through Alternatives to Education. *Studia Migracyjne-Przeglad Polonijny, 43*(3 (165)), 131-143.

Agnew, D. (2018, August 28). *All Employee Meeting Presentation.* Speech presented at All-employee meeting at Seneca Newnham Campus, Toronto, Canada.

Anzaldua, G. (1987). Borderlands: la frontera. San Francisco: Aunt Lute.

Baaz, M., Lilja, M., Schulz, M., & Vinthagen, S. (2016). Defining and Analyzing "Resistance" Possible Entrances to the Study of Subversive Practices. *Alternatives, 41*(3), 137-153.

Bajwa, K. J., et al. (2017). Refugees, higher education and informational barriers. Refuge, 33(2). Retrieved from https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/view/40442

Bannerji, H. (2005). *Building from Marx: Reflections on class and race*. Social Justice, 32(4 (102), 144-160.

Bauder, H. (2008). Dialectics of humanitarian immigration and national identity in Canadian public discourse. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees, 25*(1), 84-94. Retrieved from: https://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/issue/view/1270.

Bhuyan, R. (2012). *Negotiating citizenship on the frontlines: how the devolution of Canadian immigration policy shapes service delivery to women fleeing abuse*. Law & Policy, 34(2), 211-236.

Brown, W. (2010). Walled States, Waning Sovereignty. New York: Zone Books.

Carpenter, S. & Ackerman, P. (2017). The Agency of the Future and Resettlement Services: Implications for Adult Education. Presented at the *2017 Conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education* (CASAE). Ryerson University, Toronto, ON.

Creswell, W.J., & Poth, N. C. (2017). Qualtitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (fourth edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

De Genova, N. P. (2002). Migrant "illegality" and deportability in everyday life. *Annual review of anthropology, 31*(1), 419-447.

Forman, M. (2001). " Straight Outta Mogadishu": Prescribed Identities and Performative Practices among Somali Youth in North American High Schools (1). *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, (5).

Goldring, L., & Landolt, P. (2013). The conditionality of legal status and rights: Conceptualizing precarious non-citizenship in Canada. *Producing and negotiating non-citizenship: Precarious legal status in Canada*, 3-27.

Goodman, R. D., Vesely, C. K., Letiecq, B., & Cleaveland, C. L. (2017). Trauma and resilience among refugee and undocumented immigrant women. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 95*(3), 309-321.

Hossain, F. & Hiratsuka, H. (2017). *Strategizing Internalization at the University of Toronto*. https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/cihe/2017/01/30/strategizing_internationalization_uoft/

Huot, S., Bobadilla, A., Bailliard, A. and Laliberte Rudman, D. (2016), Constructing undesirables: A critical discourse analysis of 'othering' within the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act. Int Migr, 54: 131–143. doi:10.1111/imig.12210

Lawlor, A., & Tolley, E. (2017). Deciding Who's Legitimate: News Media Framing of Immigrants and Refugees. *International Journal of Communication, 11*(25), 967-991. doi: 1932–8036/20170005

Luibheid, E. (2002). Entry Denied: Controlling sexuality at the border. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Macklin, A. (2002). *Borderline Security* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. ID 294321). Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. Retreived from: https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=294321

Magalhaes, L., Carrasco, C., & Gastaldo, D. (2010). Undocumented migrants in Canada: a scope literature review on health, access to services, and working conditions. *Journal of immigrant and minority health, 12*(1), 132.

Marmolejo, F., Manley-Casimir, S., & Vincent-Lancrin, S. (2008). *Immigration Access to Tertiary Education: Integration or Marginalization?* In Higher Education to 2030, Volume 1, Demography, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing: Paris.

McIntosh, P. (1989). White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. Retrieved from http://www4.uwm.edu/ptb/africology250/whitepriviledge.pdf

Monahan, P. (2010). *Building a More Engaged University: Strategic Directions for York University 2010-2020*. White Paper Overview and Companion. http://vpap.info.yorku.ca/files/2012/09/White_Paper_Overview_April_15.pdf

Park, Y., & Bhuyan, R. (2012). Whom should we serve? A discourse analysis of social workers' commentary on undocumented immigrants. *Journal of Progressive Human Services, 23*(1), 18-40.

Razack, S. (1998). *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Seneca College. (2017). *Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022*. http://www.senecacollege.ca/about/reports/strategic-plan/

Sharma, N. R. (2000). Race, Class, Gender and the Making of Difference: The Social Organization of" Migrant Workers" in Canada. *ATLANTIS-HALIFAX CANADA-, 24*(2), 5-15.

Simich, L., Roche, B., & Ayton, L. (2012). *Defining resiliency, constructing equity*. Wellesley Institute.

Soberano, A., Ackerman, P., & Solorzano, R. (2018). Precarious Status: Youth Mental Health at the Intersections of Identity and Migration. In *Today's Youth and Mental Health* (pp. 21-36). Springer, Cham.

Villegas, P. E. (2014). 'I can't even buy a bed because I don't know if I'll have to leave tomorrow': temporal orientations among Mexican precarious status migrants in Toronto. *Citizenship Studies*, Vol. 18, Nos. 3-4, pp. 277-291.

Villegas, P. E. (2015). Fishing for Precarious Status Migrants: Surveillant Assemblages of Migrant Illegalization in Toronto, Canada. *Journal of Law and Society*. Vol. 42, Issue 2, pp. 230-252.

Villegas, P. E. & Aberman, T (*forthcoming*). A Double Punishment: The context of postsecondary access for racialized precarious status migrant students in Toronto, Canada. *Refuge*.

Wiens, M. (2018). York first Canadian university to give 'Dreamers' a chance at a degree. *CBC*. Retrieved from: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/canadian-dreamers-york-university-1.4488252

Wolch, J. R. (1989). *The shadow state: transformations in the voluntary sector* (pp. 197-221).

Wolch, J. R. (1990). *The shadow state: Government and voluntary sector in transition*. New York: Foundation Center.

York University (2012). Academic Tuition Fee Categories. *Student Financial Services*. Retrieved from: https://sfs.yorku.ca/fees/academic-tuition-fee-categories