Exploring the Use of a Trauma-Informed Approach to the Resettlement of Immigrants and Refugees

Kimberley Moriarity

Research Puzzle

1. Intersection between current immigrant and refugee resettlement government policy and its implications on newcomers' experiences while resettling.

2. Different stakeholders involved, including immigrants and refugees; government policy makers; current government policy; and advocacy groups.

3. What is the potential of a trauma-informed approach (Bowen & Murshid, 2016; Fallot & Harris, 2006) to be used in practice to encourage healing and reduce re-traumatization among newcomers?

Research Questions

- How do advocacy organizations engage in a trauma-informed approach during the resettlement journey of newcomers?

- What are the benefits of utilizing a trauma-informed approach?

- Are there any obstacles that can potentially act as a roadblock to successfully implementing a trauma-informed approach?

Significance

- Contributes to the current knowledge relating to the immigrant and refugee journey, as well as to the broader literature surrounding the use of a trauma-informed approach.

- Ongoing refugee crises across the world (Afghanistan, Ukraine, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan, Rohingya refugees and the Democratic Republic of Congo)

- The UNHCR Canada (2022) reported the highest level of human displacement with 26.4 million refugees, 48 million internally displaced people and 4.1 million asylum-seekers.

- Canada's history as a humanitarian state, current labour market policies and immigration level targets.

Research Design

- Qualitative methods using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

- Semi-structured interviews with (2) experts in the industry of resettlement policy development and program delivery to immigrants and refugees in Canada.

- Goal was to centre the meaning of lived experiences complemented by established concepts and theories within literature.

- Recruitment challenges due to COVID-19 and greater operational pressures facing advocacy organizations.

Grounded Theory

- Focus on the instances of human action and interaction – newcomers & service providers.

- Coding process: two separate stages – open and axial coding.

- Axial coding help determine the "where," "when," "who," "how," and "with what consequences" to reduce the data set.

- Importance of self-awareness and reflecting during the coding process.

- Participants knowledge was complemented with widely established understandings within literature.

Key Findings

- How empathy and historic empathy paths (Ruiz-Junco, 2017) can create the concept of an "ideal newcomer" and how this impacts racialized newcomers' resettlement journey.

- Structural barriers and its impact on newcomers' mental health – such as poverty, racism and discrimination within the preview of employment and housing.

- The process to receive foreign degree recognition in Canada puts many newcomers at risk of poverty, underemployment and downward social mobility. Overall waste of human resources.

- Newcomer women have difficulty securing affordable housing due to their lack of social networks. Living environment can pose a risk to re-traumatization.

Limitations and Future Directions for Research

- Opportunity to apply a feminist, gendered lens to a trauma-informed approach.

- Current need to apply an anti-racist lens to a trauma-informed approach.

- Anti-racist approach to policy and program development for the resettlement of newcomers in Canada.

References

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