

RESETTLER SOCIETY: MAKING AND REMAKING CITIZENSHIP THROUGH PRIVATE REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP

Audrey Macklin*

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It is a melancholy honour to be invited to deliver the third Sarah van Walsum lecture. I hope to pay tribute to Sarah's legacy as scholar, as mentor, as colleague and, above all, as a really fine person. Sarah's research explored the refraction of nation, state, market and above all, family, through the lens of migration law. Through her scholarship, she showed us how history lives in the present and how law is a space of constraint as well as imaginative possibility. One of the many wonderful aspects of Sarah's work about migration law and family is that she did not seek to simplify, to tidy up the messiness, to shear off the inconvenient parts of the story in the service of delivering definitive accounts, much less solutions. She embraced the complexity, the indeterminacy and the uncertainty as resources for creativity, for generating dialogue and relationship, and as a repellent against academic arrogance.

In my lecture today, I will describe a new research project about private sponsorship of refugees. the overarching question driving the inquiry is this: how does making refugees into citizens remake the the citizenship of sponosrs? The project has many facets, but I will steer today's lecture in the direction of those aspects that touch on the confluence of family and state. Although my project is in its early stages, I know that Sarah's work has already shaped my own thinking.

INTRODUCTION

On a Wednesday night in March, 2016, over three hundred people gathered in a Toronto church hall for an evening meeting with a federal Member of Parliament. Those in attendance were mainly middle-aged, middle-class, and disgruntled. Some of them even heckled the MP when he tried to speak. Such meetings are not uncommon. Communities often gather to voice their grievances to elected officials on issues ranging from zoning, to school closure, to immigration. Indeed, the people in attendance were agitated about refugees. More specifically, they complained that the federal government was not doing enough to expedite

* Director, Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal Studies, and Chair in Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto. Audrey.macklin@utoronto.ca

the screening, processing and transport of Syrian refugees to Canada. The participants were among the thousands of Canadians engaged in private sponsorship of refugees. Beginning in 2015, they had joined groups, raised money, completed tediously complicated forms, submitted applications and been assigned a Syrian refugee family needing resettlement from Turkey, Lebanon or Jordan. Some had even rented apartments, now lying vacant. They were prepared. Now they were clamouring for the Canadian government to do its job so they could begin doing theirs.

Months later, after many (but not all) privately sponsored refugees had arrived, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made his first address to the UN General Assembly. He informed his audience that Canada welcomes resettled Syrian refugees ‘not as burdens, but as neighbours and friends. As new Canadians’ He concluded his speech to the international body by distilling the Canadian ethos into the maple-syrupy slogan ‘We are Canadian. We are here to help’ (Macleans, 2016).

The Prime Minister’s speech evoked citizenship¹ in two ways: first, by describing resettlement as incorporation of refugees into the citizenry, and not simply as provision of temporary protection; secondly, by inviting his audience to draw a link between Canadian citizenship and humanitarian commitment. I want to pick up on these references to citizenship (and the underlying appeal to national identity) and spin them into an inquiry that explores private refugee sponsorship from the perspective of Canadian sponsors. I do not pursue the important question of how refugee resettlement transforms refugees into citizens. Instead, I ask ‘*How does – or can -- refugee resettlement remake the citizenship of Canadian sponsors?*’

One might recoil at the outset from this inquiry as a digression away from refugees themselves, who warrant primary attention. But apart from intellectual curiosity, there are good reasons to explore private sponsorship from the perspective of the sponsors. Global

¹ Unless otherwise noted, references to Canadians, citizens and citizenship is used in the non-technical sense and is not limited to those possessing legal citizenship status.

resettlement matters as one of three durable solutions. Last year, around 115,000 refugees were resettled. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reckons that almost 1.2 million refugees will need resettlement in 2017 (UNHCR 2016). While thirty-seven countries participate in resettlement, commitments are mostly nominal. Even before the United States recently resiled from its 2017 commitments, there was no prospect of meeting more than 10-15% of that target.

Cast against that backdrop, expansion of private refugee sponsorship offers the possibility of increasing settlement spaces. A more ambitious aspiration is that by bringing refugees and citizens of wealthy states into relationship, the latter might repel and even shift the resurgent xenophobic, anti-Muslim and anti-refugee narratives that political leaders both pander to and stoke. Countering grassroots populist nativism is a precondition to meaningful political change in respect of refugees at local, national and supranational levels. The potential ripple effects of politicizing sponsors in support of refugees thus exceeds the impact on those refugees resettled at any given moment.

Surprisingly little is known about who sponsors, why they sponsor and how they evaluate the experience. Yet, if private refugee sponsorship is worth sustaining and promoting, it is crucial that it benefit not only refugees, but sponsors too. Otherwise, people will not sponsor, will not sponsor again, and will not encourage others to do it.

Refugees arrive in Canada on their own initiative as asylum seekers, or through resettlement. An asylum seeker who reaches Canada's borders and meets the definition of a refugee is entitled as of right to protection against *refoulement*. As one of 146 signatories to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Canada legally bound itself not to return a person who qualifies as a refugee to their country of nationality.

The Refugee Convention creates no comparable legal obligation to resettle refugees from abroad. Thus, resettlement is a matter of state discretion. Canada is one of thirty-seven states that resettle refugees, and it resettles more refugees than any country except the United States.

Canada typically ranks first or second on a per capita basis (UNHCR 2016). Resettlement is publicly financed in each state that does it, but in 1978, Canada embarked on a unique experiment by legislating a parallel system of private sponsorship. Individual Canadians form groups for the purpose of sponsoring refugees as individuals or families. The sponsorship group undertakes to provide the equivalent of one year's income assistance along with practical settlement support. The annual proportion of privately resettled refugees hovers between 40-50% of the total; if private sponsors in Canada formed a nation, it would rank fourth in the world in annual resettlement. The Canadian government recently announced a joint project with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Soros Foundation to export its unique model of private refugee sponsorship to interested states. In the United States, the Niskanen Foundation is adapting and promoting private refugee sponsorship to its distinctively US notion of 'progressive libertarianism'. In the UK, Refugees Welcome is advocating for a private sponsorship model as well.

Settler societies like Canada and the United have a long history of integrating immigrants, and of incorporating immigration into the nation-building narrative. (That narrative, of course, is often sanitized to obscure the stains of racism, anti-Semitism, and Indigenous dispossession). Historians of Canadian immigration settlement recount that from the nineteenth century onwards, local settlement societies, mainly organized along ethnic, religious, or national lines, furnished settlement support to newcomers (Kelley and Trebilcock 2006). Before refugees existed in law, individual Canadians organized to aid their persecuted familial, ethnic or national kin to seek safety, refuge and a new home in Canada, and sometimes bargained with the Canadian government by providing a written guarantee of material support for any immigrant admitted. This was the original (though unnamed) scheme of private refugee resettlement. In Depression era leading up to the Second World War, Canada retreated into nativist policies that escalated deportations and restricted immigration. Canada's notorious refusal to admit Jewish refugees prior to the War – captured in a civil

servant's declaration about Jews that 'none is too many' – is one of the many shameful episodes that belies Canada's reputation as an ever-open and generous country of immigration.

After WWII, the federal government also embarked on *ad hoc* admission of refugees as a public undertaking. Over the next three decades, Jewish Holocaust survivors, Hungarians (1956), Czech (1968), South Asians expelled from Uganda (1973), and Chileans (1975) benefited from government resettlement, even as the Canadian government waited until 1969 to ratify the UN Refugee Convention². During the same period, the federal government gradually assumed public responsibility for immigration resettlement, sometimes through direct provision of services, but more often by funding non-governmental settlement organizations. Many of the large scale refugee resettlements also relied on the assistance of diasporic communities already in Canada, as well as faith-based organizations.

The modern era of refugee resettlement in Canada commenced in 1978 when the *Immigration Act* legislated public and private resettlement into permanent institutional existence. Both were deployed almost immediately and in roughly equal proportion to achieve the unprecedented resettlement of over 60,000 Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians between 1979-81 as Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) or Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs). The legacy of the Indochinese resettlement was a permanent legal architecture for public and private resettlement with the following features: First, the absence of any particularized connection of ethnicity, religion or nationality between sponsors and refugees in the vast majority of cases; secondly, a rough parity in the distribution between public and private resettlement numbers; third, a cadre of civil society actors – mainly faith-based

² Despite its general embrace of immigration, Canada did not rush to sign the Refugee Convention in 1951. It resisted this self-imposed limit on its power to exclude and, in particular, to deport non-citizens. It signed the 1967 Optional Protocol in 1969 and it took several more years to operationalize it through an inland refugee determination system. Then, as now, discretionary resettlement does not challenge the equation of sovereignty with absolute border control.

organizations -- who entrenched and sustained an institutional commitment to ongoing private refugee sponsorship.

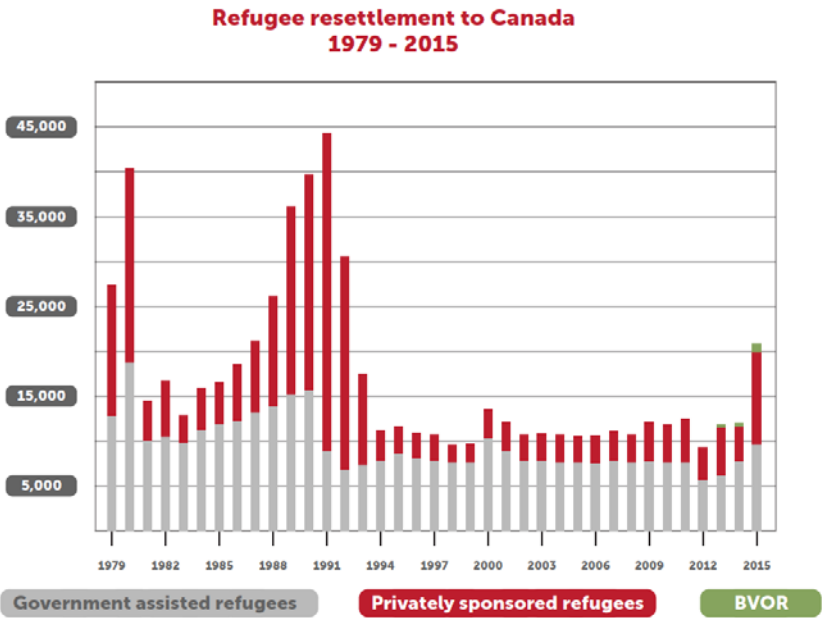
Over the course of four decades, private sponsorship stabilized into a permanent component of immigration policy. Large faith-based and diasporic and community organizations entered into framework agreements on the basis of their routine, ongoing participation and, as Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) continue to play a vital role in the maintenance and continuation of the private sponsorship regime. There are over 100 of these Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) in English Canada (Quebec operates its own system), and about 70% are faith based. The basic elements of private refugee sponsorship are as follows: Private sponsors come together in groups of five or more persons. They may operate independently, or through a SAH. The sponsorship group nominates one or more refugees from abroad to resettle, or seek a referral of refugees from the Canadian government or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The sponsorship group must possess sufficient funds to financially support the sponsored refugee(s) for their first year in Canada, and commit the time and energy required to aid in the refugees' economic, educational, social and cultural integration into Canadian society during that period. A relatively new and small program (Blended Visa Office Referral) allocates the living expenses between the government and the sponsors on a 50/50 basis.

By way of comparison, Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) receive income support directly from government, and settlement assistance from publicly-funded settlement organizations. At present, GARs tend to be selected from among refugees with higher needs (larger families, lower education, single female headed households, significant medical issues etc.) than PSRs.

The Syrian refugee exodus re-ignited interest in private sponsorship among thousands of Canadians with little or no prior experience with refugees. Since November 2015, Canada has

resettled over 40,000 Syrian refugees, about 40% of whom are privately sponsored³ (IRCC 2016). Almost 45,000 refugees have been matched with private sponsors and await resettlement. Unfortunately, the Canadian government has not kept the window open for future private refugee sponsorships, and has restored very strict quotas for new private sponsorship applications going forward.

Table 1: Canadian Council for Refugees,
http://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/infographic_refugee_resettlement_pdf.pdf



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I am embarking on empirical research to explore private refugee sponsorship from the perspective of sponsors, using a combination of surveys, focus groups and interviews. The research will draw on three theoretical resources for conceptualizing private refugee sponsorship: cosmopolitanism as motive, privatization as mode, and active citizenship as

³ This figure includes Blended Visa Officer Referrals, which the financial undertaking is split 50/50 between private sponsors and the government.

effect. These are necessarily provisional, and remain subject to the evidence revealed by the empirical inquiry.

Cosmopolitanism: Why Sponsor Refugees?

Cosmopolitanism as a moral theory proceeds from the claim that we owe obligations to fellow humans beyond those who are kin or compatriots. Ronald Pierik summarizes the basic features succinctly: ‘cosmopolitanism emphasizes the *moral* worth of persons, the *equal* moral worth of all persons, and the existence of derivative *obligations to all* to preserve this equal moral worth of persons.’ (Pierik and Werner 2010, 3). The demands of cosmopolitanism, taken seriously, are potentially insatiable even if we adopt Anthony Appiah’s proviso that, ‘to say that we have obligations to strangers isn’t to demand that they have the same grip on our sympathies as our nearest and dearest. We’d better start with the recognition that they don’t (p. 158).

So what was it that awoke in many Canadians a sense of ethical responsibility toward Syrian refugees half a world away? Some might sum it up in a name: Alan Kurdi. That photo of him, washed up a Turkish beach stunned and horrified people around the world. Within a day or 2, it emerged that Alan had a Canadian aunt, and that prior to Alan’s parents’ desperate act of loading their family onto a rickety boat, she had entreated the Canadian government (to no avail) to admit her relatives to Canada.

Until then, the human tragedy unfolding before us was depicted as a middle-eastern humanitarian crisis, or a European refugee crisis. Tragic but also remote, geographically and morally. No more. Alan Kurdi shrunk the moral distance between us, and the plight of Syrian refugees to the length of his lifeless body.

We are all aware of the power of children to awaken our moral sensibilities. Their incontestable innocence is an important element. And the markers of culture, ethnicity and even race – those markers that get used to interpose strangeness between us and another are read as less conspicuous on children than adults. However variable the cultural norms and

practices of child-rearing, the love of parent for child, and the bottomless grief at the loss of a child, are universal. These are all just ways of putting a cosmopolitan twist on what is obvious: the children often compel us to recognize our shared humanity.

We are equally aware of how images of children are instrumentalized – often reluctantly – by refugee advocates and NGOs in order to attract desperately needed funding. The markers of culture, ethnicity and even race – those markers that get used to interpose strangeness between us and another are read as less conspicuous on children than adults. Appealing to the incontestable innocence of children often entails depoliticizing and decontextualizing the causes of conflict and forced migration, and it feeds the paternalism that underwrites campaigns predicated on humanitarianism rather than justice.

Still, there was nothing pre-ordained about what happened in Canada. Alan Kurdi's connection to Canada is surely a random and contingent fact. So many other children who drowned in the Mediterranean had no such link. So was the fact that the tragedy of his death erupted in the middle of a bitter federal election campaign. The Conservative government of Stephen Harper insisted that the best response was to step up military assaults on Syria to terminate the conflict that caused people to flee. Many people urged channeling more humanitarian relief for Syrian refugees to Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. And it is surely undeniable that money spent on humanitarian relief in the region would assist exponentially greater numbers of people than the same money spent on resettlement.

Beyond difficult questions about how best to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis, one might validly query whether or why this issue makes a superior claim on our attention and concern than many other tragedies, injustices or crises in this country or in our world. Even among those selected for refugee resettlement, processing of Syrians took priority over Africans, many of whom had been waiting for several years. For Canadians, the legacy of settler colonialism for Indigenous people in Canada is a profound, historic and ongoing injustice. We are collectively responsible for it, complicit in its maintenance, and continue to

benefit from it. Resettling individual Syrian families demands less of us morally and practically than does reconciliation with Indigenous people: Sometimes, reaching out to the distant stranger is easier than reaching across to the proximate Other. Shifting to the US, it would not be apparent why Syrian refugees would exert stronger demands than, say, Guatemalans, Hondurans and Salvadorans fleeing the horrific violence and political chaos of the Northern Triangle and seeking protection in the United States.

Reconciling the potentially boundless moral demands of universalism with the particularistic attachments we actually experience is a preoccupation of theorists. Building on Appiah, Will Kymlicka and Kathryn Walker invoke ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’, whereby they source the cosmopolitan impulse toward the Other in the ethical demands generated by particular attachments. By way of illustration, Kymlicka and Walker (2012: 4) propose that ‘people become good citizens of the world because this is part of what it means to be a good Canadian: being Canadian motivates being or becoming cosmopolitan.’ Leaving aside whether rooted cosmopolitanism is theoretically stable, we can ask whether and to what extent those who sponsor refugees understand themselves to be acting ‘as Canadians’.

I hasten to add that despite the international media’s current infatuation with Canada and Justin Trudeau, Canada is not so special: Almost all national narratives supply the discursive resources for people to imagine refugee admission as an expression of their best national selves. And by the same token, virtually identical anti-refugee scripts are readily available everywhere. Embracing Syrian refugee resettlement as nation building is neither inevitable nor irreversible. The United States is a settler society; Germany is not. German Chancellor Angela Merkel, with substantial initial support from Germans, bravely cast the reception of a million Syrian refugees as feasible, as beneficial, as a “German” thing to do. We know that did not and is not happening in the United States. And even though Prime Minister Harper grudgingly announced in 2014 that 1,200 Syrian and Iraqi refugees would be resettled to Canada within a year, no one could find them, and the government’s responses to inquiries

were evasive. It seemed that only a handful had arrived. It later emerged that the Prime Minister's Office secretly halted refugee resettlement from Syria and Iraq at the peak of the humanitarian maritime catastrophe unfolding in the Mediterranean. Had the Conservative government been reelected in Canada in 2015, Canada's response to Syrian refugees might well have echoed its own disgraceful record toward Jewish refugees in the years leading up to WWII. The lesson of this is that there is nothing inevitable or irreversible about the combination of factors that create the conditions that precipitate action.

How is the cosmopolitan impulse operationalized? From thinkers in the Western tradition ranging from Immanuel Kant to Jacques Derrida to Seyla Benhabib, hospitality toward the necessitous stranger is presented as the instantiation of cosmopolitan duty. Here, it seems important to observe that private resettlement sits at the nexus of a moral cosmopolitanism that focuses on the individual as the actor, and institutionalized forms that take the state (or international institutions) as the cosmopolitan agent for the citizenry (or humanity). While public refugee resettlement might plausibly qualify as an example of the latter, private sponsorship conforms more closely to the former, with a twist: Individuals can enact their will to reach beyond borders to fulfill an ethical obligation toward the Other, but the process is enabled and mediated by the state. It requires a convergence of collective public will alongside individual private commitment. Indeed, the extent to which the existing legal framework reserves considerable latitude for the government to facilitate, expedite, obstruct or suppress private sponsorship underscores that political will is crucial to the program.

Hospitality also resonates deeply in sacred texts of several religions that enjoin us to 'welcome the stranger'. Indeed, the relationship between secular and spiritual iterations of hospitality is particularly salient in resettlement because of the crucial role played by faith-based organizations in sustaining private refugee sponsorship in Canada. Interestingly, the main faith-based organizations that have been the pillars of private sponsorship do not seek or prefer refugees of the same faith, and disavow any intention to proselytize. The manner in

which they mediate their spiritual commitment to resettlement with the secular institutional structure of the program has been the subject of limited but revealing scholarly inquiry (Bramadat 2014).

Hospitality seems attractive as a model for private sponsorship because the latter is about as close to a literal exercise of hospitality toward the Other as one is likely to encounter. In the course of ‘welcoming’ newcomers to Canada, sponsors engage in behavior that is recognizable as typical of individual and personal hospitality.

Refugee resettlement as a process of enrolling refugees into citizenship also gestures towards a novel version of the hospitality, one that seeks to obviate itself. Kant was careful to specify that the duty of hospitality is temporary in duration. But the end to which private sponsorship aspires is that the stranger will become a member. However one specifies the duties that members owe to one another, it is not expressed as hospitality.

Having said that, the concept of hospitality also invites critical attention to unexplored facets. In earlier writing about the history of Canadian immigration and citizenship policy, I acknowledged that ‘the story of Canada as a nation of immigrants can only be recounted with pride, as it always is, if immigration is understood as a process of extending hospitality and membership by those entitled to do so’ (Macklin: 2011). The act of offering hospitality presupposes that the host’s claim to be ‘at home’ is legitimate. The romantic settler society narrative of welcoming immigrants into the nation building project must reckon with the other half of that narrative – mass immigration as the vehicle for displacing and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Recognizing the unfinished (perhaps un-commenced) task of reconciliation destabilizes the presumed ‘right to be here’ of settler societies that underwrites practices of hospitality.

Cultural cosmopolitans focus on cosmopolitanism’s openness to, and celebration of, engagement across differences of culture, religion, ethnicity, etc. Many accounts and versions of this engagement exist, but for purposes of exploring the relationship between sponsors and

refugees, Kwame Anthony Appiah's idea of 'cosmopolitan conversation' provides a fruitful resource. Appiah means conversation in the literal sense, but also as 'a metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others'. Properly conducted, these encounters are intrinsically valuable. They need not lead to specific results, much less fundamental consensus on deeply held beliefs or values: 'it's enough that it helps people get used to one another'. (Appiah 2006: 85). The personal, quotidian and often prosaic interactions between sponsors and refugees seems an especially apt platform for 'cosmopolitan conversation'. One cannot, of course, overlook the effects of unequal power relations between sponsor and refugee along several axes, as well as counterforces of securitization, anti-Muslim sentiment and racialization. How do these currents influence initial decisions to sponsor, and how do they inflect expectations and interactions between sponsors and refugees? One can only answer these questions through empirical investigation.

Privatization as Mode

Privatisation, understood as a mode of governance, offers critical tools for understanding the evolution of private sponsorship in historical context; this history, in turn, problematizes a simple narrative of private refugee sponsorship as the downloading of traditionally public functions to the private sector. For present purposes the private sphere encompasses private charity rather than public expenditure as the vehicle for service provision, and the family rather than the state as the locus of redistribution and support.

An obvious critique of private refugee sponsorship is that it transfers to the private sphere a quintessentially public responsibility, namely the admission of foreigners and their transformation into citizens. The historical chronology of immigration settlement complicates this reading. Immigration settlement began as a charitable initiative and only gradually evolved into a public undertaking. Even today, the state continues to devolve many functions to community non-profit organizations via contract or 'partnership'. (This is especially apparent in the US model of government resettlement). It would thus be inaccurate to depict

private refugee sponsorship as displacing a prior, preexisting public model. Though not by design, the Indochinese refugee initiative resulted in rough parity between GARs and PSRs resettled, and this distribution stabilized into a default assumption. Organizations involved in private resettlement, alert to the perils of privatization, firmly insist on a principle they dub ‘additionality’: private sponsorship must supplement and not supplant public commitment to resettlement. This becomes operationalized as maintenance of parity in the allocation of resettlement spaces, and opposition to any decline in resettlement numbers. It must be conceded, however, that this parity is perennially fragile and subject to erosion (CCR 2017).

Family figures into private refugee sponsorship in two ways. First, the structure of private refugee resettlement reproduces certain features of the regulation of family reunification under Canadian immigration law. In particular, the financial undertaking to support sponsored refugees resembles the undertaking that requires sponsors to support members of the family members (or reimburse any social assistance paid by that family member) (Macklin 2002). At a deeper level, the institution of private refugee sponsorship anticipates a relationship between private sponsors and refugees that is personal, immediate, and characterized by the affect and partiality that we associate with kinship. Settlement professionals must adopt a posture of impartiality and equal commitment toward all the GARs they serve. Private sponsors are expected to feel a unique commitment to the refugees they sponsor. Private sponsors are avowedly partial. They expend their considerable social capital in assisting ‘their’ family in locating housing, health care, education and employment, and in acculturating to Canada. It is this personal relationship, accompanied by the transfer of social capital from sponsors to refugees, that is credited with the relatively successful integration outcomes of PSRs compared to GARs, as described in a recent report by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2016)⁴.

⁴ The actual evidence comparing integration outcomes of GARs and PSRs is relatively sparse. In addition, it is important to note that in recent years, GARs have tended to be ‘higher needs’

Of course, as feminist scholars have long observed, the family is not only a site of nurturing, protection and support. It is also a sphere where patriarchal and unequal power relations are enacted, often insulated from public scrutiny or intercession. In the case of refugee sponsorship, many private sponsors casually use the possessive ‘our family’ in reference to the refugees they sponsor. The risks of ‘sponsor knows best’ parentalism, as applied to refugees who are neither family nor children, are evident. There is also no public oversight or monitoring of private sponsorships. Experienced Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) may develop protocols for dealing with sponsorships that encounter problems or break down, but these are entirely *ad hoc*, internal to the SAH, and would not apply to sponsorships that do not go through SAHs. Much like familial relationships, the state does not get involved in the ‘private’ domain of the private sponsorship.

Family plays a critical role in private sponsorship in another sense. An unanticipated but inevitable consequence of public and private resettlement ensues from the priority that newly arrived refugees attach to assisting kin left behind. This frequently translates into a request to sponsorship groups to nominate extended family for future sponsorship. This ‘echo effect’ shifted the character of privately sponsorship from the 1980s to the present toward extended family reunification. The recent arrival of thousands of Syrian refugees with no connections in Canada temporarily disrupted the ‘echo effect’ but anecdotal experience suggests it is already resuming, as newly arrived Syrian refugees, like others before them, struggle to rescue family left behind. The drift of private refugee sponsorship toward family reunification poses significant normative and policy dilemmas about prioritization in immigrant selection.

Private refugee sponsorship may also disrupt settled expectations about privatization’s depoliticizing effect. The concern is that privatization withdraws public issues from the

(less educated, more health issues, more single, female headed households) than PSRs, and these may contribute to poorer economic outcomes, especially in the first few years.

domain of public scrutiny, deliberation and contestation, and channels them into the domain of cooperative politics. Unlike advocates of sanctuary, or asylum seekers, or no-borders, private refugee sponsors do not challenge the sovereigntist conceit that entry is a matter of unilateral state discretion. After all, the UN Refugee Convention does not create a right to resettlement from abroad. So, private refugee sponsorship depends on collaboration with the state. The state still screens and transports PSRs, PSRs still access many settlement services and, in any event, the sponsorship undertaking only lasts one year. Private sponsorship cannot happen absent extensive public intervention, and it is probably most accurate to describe it as a kind of public-private partnership, with at least some of the neo-liberal baggage that entails.

At the same time, privatization also positions refugee sponsors to leverage their material investment in refugees into political claims on the state about the latter's responsibility toward refugees. This returns me to where I began, with the March 2016 meeting in a church hall in Toronto: Hundreds of private sponsors resolutely asserted an entitlement to make demands on government because, after all, the sponsors were putting up the money and doing the heavy lifting of resettlement. I doubt that the same demographic could have been mobilized to protest the low numbers of government-assisted refugees. The political subject position of these private sponsors emerged not in spite of privatization, but because of it. They were using their political voice to advance the interests of a constituency with no political currency anywhere.

Citizenship as Effect: Remaking the Citizenship of Sponsors

Practices of active citizenship draw on the ideals of civic republicanism (Dagger 2002). The citizen who participates in, and contributes to, the public life of the community exhibits the civic virtue of active (as opposed to passive) citizenship. Scholars of social cohesion and social capital contend that trust, empathy and solidarity are vital to sustaining a flourishing democracy in the context of highly diverse societies. These sentiments are fostered and

nurtured in turn by practices of civic engagement.

Importantly, the democratic benefits of civic engagement accrue independently of the benefits conferred by the project itself.⁵ When people come together to plan and implement a shared project of public value, they build community, and social solidarity. Historically, periods of crisis – war, natural disaster – unite the citizenry and incite them to pool their energies into acts of self-sacrifice and collective action. Private refugee sponsorship has mobilized thousands of Canadians to gather together, form groups, create networks, and to commit to a cooperative endeavor, not in the service of defeating the Other, but in the service of embracing the Other. Indeed, to the extent that some research suggests that ethnic and racial diversity can adversely affect levels of trust and social cohesion (Putnam 2007), it is pleasingly ironic that an undertaking directed at increasing diversity may have the opposite effect. So, the question becomes: How does performing the task of making the Other one of us activate and reconstitute sponsors' own citizenship?

Harry Boyte attends to the specific value of 'public work' as a mode of active citizenship. He defines it as 'self-organized efforts by a mix of people who solve common problems and create things, material or symbolic, of lasting civic value' (Boyte, 2011: 623-633). Following Boyte, we might say that a private sponsorship group is akin to a small non-profit organization formed to undertake a specific, time-limited public work of enduring value: the incorporation of new citizens. Little is currently known about the networks that generate – and are generated by – sponsorship groups. This includes how sponsorship groups form, how they govern themselves, how they are governed by the state, and how sponsors participate in the governance of refugees *qua* new Canadians.

Answering these question requires putting theoretical and empirical research about civic engagement into conversation with scholarship that critically assesses how such engagement

⁵ The objective of the endeavor is not irrelevant, of course; white supremacists may form dense, cooperative networks to advance a common cause that they believe to be in the public interest, but they do not social cohesion, trust or solidarity in the community as a whole.

unfolds among people with distinctly different socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and cultural background, both among sponsors and between sponsors and refugees.

As I noted earlier, private refugee sponsorship resembles a kind of public-private partnership, in which the private actor enters into a cooperative relationship with the state. In a similar vein, theoretical accounts of active citizenship tend to depict it as adopting a collaborative rather than oppositional posture toward government (Onyx 2012). Nevertheless, the possibility that sponsorship may tip participants into overt political engagement (as with the meeting I described) invites a more nuanced assessment of the rapport between collaborative and oppositional politics. It seems reasonable to suppose that many (perhaps most) first-time private refugee sponsors embark on sponsorship as an expression of ‘humanitarianism’ rather than as an explicitly ‘political’ undertaking. It bears emphasizing that refugee resettlement does not challenge border control as an unfettered exercised state sovereignty, and so does not draw sponsors into direct conflict with the state.

Having said that, it is still worth asking whether the experience of refugee sponsorship ‘politicizes’ some sponsors about domestic or international refugee policy, or the conflicts that generate refugees. An important area for empirical inquiry concerns the impact of sponsorship on the likelihood, shape and direction of future civic engagement (Isin 2008). Has sponsorship re-constituted the citizenship of sponsors and, if so, with what effects?

Answering these questions matters not only for the advancement of scholarly inquiry. Appreciating private refugee sponsorship’s resonance with the neoliberal project, attending to the hazards of a model that looks much like private charity, and noting the hazards of a relationship that draws on tropes and obligations associated with kinship, each and all counsel caution in celebrating privatized resettlement. At the same time, it is brutally obvious that there is little hope of arriving at a more just global regime for addressing the needs of refugees in the face of resurgent toxic discourses that popularize the dehumanization of asylum seekers and refugees, and the vilification of Muslims. Private refugee resettlement matters in the

short term because every life matters, but in the longer run because it has the potential to enlarge and activate the pool of so-called ordinary citizens who can use their democratic voice to change the narrative about refugees, and demand that their governments to do more and to do better, domestically and internationally, to protect them. That is the normative aspiration that lies behind my interest in private refugee sponsorship.

Conclusion

In January 2017, President Trump issues three Executive Orders touching on immigration, refugees, and border control. The Executive Order known as the Muslim Ban attracted the most attention, but two others also affected non-citizens. Within a month, news reports began to surface about asylum seekers in the United States crossing into Canada at unmarked border posts across frozen terrain in ferocious cold. Some lost limbs for their efforts. The basis of their apprehension about seeking refugee protection in the United States is apparent. Their reason for avoiding official border posts in their attempt to enter Canada is that Canada and the United States are party to the Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA), which requires asylum seekers to make their claim in the first country of arrival (as between Canada and the United States). It is the North American equivalent of the EU's Dublin Regulation. For logistical reasons, the STCA only applies at designated ports of entry along the territorial border, not at inland immigration offices, marine ports, or airports. The STCA exists as a mechanism for Canada to reduce the number of asylum seekers who reach Canada. Prior to the signing the STCA in 2004, about 40% of refugee claimants in Canada arrived via the US border.

Throughout 2017, thousands of people crossed the border into Canada on foot at various points between designated border posts, but mostly in Quebec. For all the warmth of the welcome directed at Syrians, these recent border crossers have encountered not only frostbite but also an ambivalent public response. The Canadian government has not mobilized border enforcement to repel them by force. But neither has it exercised its authority to

temporarily suspend the STCA in order to spare them the hazards of crossing irregularly by enabling them to approach a designated border post, as they could have done prior to 2005. These border crossing asylum seekers are, by their allegedly illegal entry⁶, presented in media accounts as threatening Canadian sovereignty in a way that resettled refugees do not, yet the reasons for their flight (from countries of origin and the US) as recounted in the media, seem no less compelling. How do private sponsors view these asylum seekers? How would they have viewed them prior to becoming sponsors, or in comparison to non-sponsors? The answers to these questions might provide clues to the larger impact of private refugee sponsorship.

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⁶ Entering through irregular means is not an offence under Canadian immigration law as long as one proceeds 'without delay' to a designated port of entry. In any event, a breach of immigration law is not punishable if the person is subsequently determined to be a refugee, consistent with Article 31 of the Refugee Convention. This means that there is a temporal and epistemological gap between entry and its character as 'illegal' that is indeterminable at the moment of entry.

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