"Now What?": Exploring Newcomer Youth's Transition from High School to Postsecondary Education
« Et maintenant? » : exploration de la transition du secondaire au postsecondaire chez les jeunes étudiants nouveaux arrivants

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ABSTRACT

For newcomer youth (i.e., those who have recently migrated to Canada with their families), high school integration has a marked influence on postsecondary preparation. This descriptive phenomenological study aimed to answer the following research question: How do newcomer youth's experiences in high school impact their transition to postsecondary education? In total, 10 participants, ages 18 through 24, completed in-depth qualitative interviews. Data analysis revealed 5 structures: 3 related to decision-making processes (i.e., high school influence, personal ambitions, and family factors), and 2 centred on experiences in postsecondary education (i.e., areas of growth and postsecondary challenges). Results point to the need for increased support for newcomer youth both in high school and university.

RÉSUMÉ

Chez les jeunes nouveaux arrivants (c.-à-d. celles et ceux qui ont récemment immigré au Canada avec leur famille), l'intégration à l'école secondaire a une incidence marquée sur la préparation aux études postsecondaires. Cette étude phénoménologique descriptive visait à répondre à la question de recherche suivante : De quelle manière les expériences vécues par les jeunes nouveaux arrivants à l'école secondaire influencent-elles leur transition vers les études postsecondaires? En tout, 10 participants âgés de 18 à 24 ans se sont prêtés à des entrevues qualitatives en profondeur. L'analyse des données révéla 5 structures : 3 en lien avec les processus de prise de décisions (c.-à-d. l'influence de l'école secondaire, les ambitions personnelles et les facteurs familiaux) et 2 portaient plus particulièrement sur les expériences vécues au postsecondaire (c.-à-d. les domaines d'épanouissement et les défis du postsecondaire). Les résultats semblent indiquer qu'il y a lieu d'accroître le soutien auprès des jeunes nouveaux arrivants aussi bien à l'école secondaire qu'au niveau universitaire.

Currently, there are over 1.6 million newcomers (i.e., immigrants) between the ages of 15 and 24 living in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016), who play a vital role in the social fabric and future success of Canadian society. For most newcomer youth entry into the school system typically represents their first point of contact with the host culture. Schools provide a primary avenue for linguistic, social, emotional, and academic transitions (Anisef, Brown, Phythian, Sweet, & Walters,

2010; Li, 2010; Naraghi, 2013), directly impacting the future educational and occupational trajectories of the majority of newcomer youth (Areepattamannil & Freeman, 2008; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Salehi, 2010).

Education is thus a key factor in the integration process, and in recent years, the phenomenon of *school integration* has been used to study migration. Defined broadly, school integration captures the adjustment of newcomer youth across all aspects of student life, both inside and outside the school context. It includes English language learning, academic performance, classroom behaviour, social networking, emotional well-being, involvement in school life and community (e.g., after-school clubs, events), and understanding of the school system (Kassan, Tkachuk, & Gallucci, n.d.).

Newcomer students face numerous barriers within the school system, including inappropriate grade placement, social isolation, and learning English as a second language ([ESL]; Anisef et al., 2010; Deckers & Zinga, 2012; Suárez-Orozco, Bang, & Onaga, 2010). Further, discrimination and prejudice within a school environment perpetuate the challenges newcomer students may face (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). If left unaddressed the accumulation of these difficulties can lead to mental health concerns, school dropout, and criminal and gang involvement (Ellis, Miller, Baldwin, & Abdi, 2011; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Stermac, Elgie, Clarke, & Dunlap, 2012). Despite such potential challenges, newcomer youth opt for postsecondary education more than their native-born peers (Sweet, Anisef, Brown, Walters, & Phythian, 2010) as their families often prioritize continued schooling and academic achievements (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Deckers & Zinga, 2012; Teranishi, Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). However, they continue to encounter obstacles accessing, attending, and succeeding in postsecondary education as they struggle with socioeconomic, academic, and linguistic barriers (Finnie, Childs, & Wismer, 2011; Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2011; Marks, 2010; Sweet et al., 2010).

Research centring on the postsecondary experiences of newcomer youth has primarily focused on attendance and academic success, based on varying demographics such as socioeconomic circumstances (Childs, Finnie, & Mueller, 2017; Sweet et al., 2010), ethnic background (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Childs et al., 2017), generational status (Sweet et al., 2010), as well as motivation and self-efficacy (Soria, & Stebleton, 2013). Although research has examined the adjustment of newcomer youth in high school and postsecondary education, these experiences have been studied as separate entities from one another. Moreover, the literature is mostly sparse and segmented, quantitative, and often confounded with data on international students (Deckers & Zinga, 2012; Salehi, 2010; Sinacore & Lerner, 2013; Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). Thus, migration research has yet to explore how newcomer youths' experiences in high school influence their transition to postsecondary education. This study aims to bridge the gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of newcomer students who had successfully graduated from high school in Canada and subsequently transitioned into postsecondary education, with *postsecondary transition* conceptualized as the process of deciding to apply to postsecondary education and subsequently attending a postsecondary institution.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR NEWCOMER YOUTH

In today's economy, high school diplomas may no longer be sufficient to secure employment, making postsecondary education increasingly relevant for long-term success (Suárez-Orozco, Onaga, & de Lardemelle, 2010). Despite the challenges newcomer youth face when migrating to a new country, they often prioritize academic achievements and aspire to enroll in postsecondary education (Deckers & Zinga, 2012; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Tordorva, 2008). Within Canada, it has become well established that first and second-generation newcomers participate in postsecondary education at higher rates when compared to children of Canadian-born parents (Childs et al., 2017; Sweet et al., 2010). These goals may be associated with the belief that through academic success they can demonstrate respect for the sacrifices that their parents made (Perreira, Fuligni, & Potochnick, 2010). Additionally, it may also represent the commonly held idea by many newcomers that only through postsecondary education can one gain social and economic mobility (Sweet et al., 2010).

Postsecondary engagement has been shown to be mediated by parental education levels, socioeconomic status, and region-of-origin (Childs et al., 2017; Finnie et al., 2011; Sweet et al., 2010). Research has consistently found that first- and second-generation newcomers with university-educated parents were twice as likely to obtain postsecondary degrees over those whose parents held a high school diploma (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Childs et al., 2017). It has also been suggested that parents with higher education have additional financial and non-monetary resources to invest in their children's future, compared to parents of lower educational levels (Finnie et al., 2011). Further, newcomer youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to perform poorer academically and attend under-resourced schools that lack the supports necessary to meet their complex needs (Gonzalez, Stein, & Huq, 2013; Marks, 2010; Sattin-Bajaj, 2015).

There also appears to be discrepancies in postsecondary attendance based on region-of-origin. For example, a large-scale qualitative report in Ontario found that individuals who migrated from Eastern Asia confirmed postsecondary attendance at higher rates than any other group (Sweet et al., 2010). As with many migration studies, such results are often confounded with additional factors, such as means and access to education and resources. Moreover, it is critical to remember that every cultural group is heterogeneous and there is significant variability in students' academic success (Odo, D'Silva, & Gunderson, 2012), yet most research on migration tends to be group-specific (Sinacore, Kassan, & Lerner, 2015).

Studies exploring the experiences of newcomer students in postsecondary education have found that not only are they more likely to attend postsecondary education, but they also complete their programs at higher rates than their native-born peers (Bailey & Weininger, 2002). Despite this persistence, newcomer students continue to face specific obstacles and stressors including lagging English proficiency, weaker study skills, limited financial support, a lack of resources and knowledge of the educational system, and perceived racism (Jaffe-Walter & Lee,

2011; Soria & Stebleton, 2013; Teranishi et al., 2011). Further, many newcomer students have reported regretting their postsecondary educational choices, sacrificing their interests for that of their parents, and experiencing concern and anxiety about parental career expectations (Li, 2010; Taylor & Krahn, 2013).

<div align="center">SUPPORTING NEWCOMER YOUTH TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION</div>

Research exploring the transition from high school to postsecondary education among newcomer students is sparse. However, counsellors and education programs have been said to play a critical role in supporting newcomer students given the potential challenges encountered throughout integration into high school and postsecondary. A longitudinal study with ESL students demonstrated that they were more likely to pursue postsecondary education when they perceived their counsellor had high expectations for their postsecondary success (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011). According to Suárez-Orozco, Onaga et al. (2010) school counsellors should connect with newcomer students by getting to know their cultural histories and origins. By doing so they can begin to develop strategies to help them negotiate the potential systemic barriers that may prevent them from entering postsecondary education.

Ideally, school counsellors must have knowledge of newcomer communities, incorporate a culturally responsive approach to career development, and engage in school-family partnerships to increase students' social support (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). Unfortunately, research has shown that newcomer youth often feel uncomfortable seeking out school counsellors (Gallucci, 2016) and as such may be missing out on critical information regarding their postsecondary ambitions. At the same time, Soria and Stebleton (2013) reported that newcomer students in postsecondary education are more likely to incur mental health concerns.

This study investigated the phenomenon of postsecondary transition among newcomer students to better understand the impact that integration into high school has on the transition to postsecondary education. More specifically, this study focused on newcomer youth who migrated to Canada with their families (under the *skilled worker* or *family reunification* category), successfully graduated from high school, and subsequently transitioned to postsecondary education. The central research question guiding this study was, "How do newcomer youths' experiences in high school impact their transition to postsecondary education?"

<div align="center">METHODOLOGY</div>

Research Design

A descriptive psychological phenomenology was employed to address the central research question. Descriptive phenomenology is the oldest and most established form of phenomenology inspired by Edmund Husserl (Finlay, 2009).

In this manner, the research aims to describe the phenomenon of postsecondary transition among newcomer youth and is centred on describing their shared lived experiences. Descriptive psychological phenomenology emphasizes the importance of returning to subject matter from an open attitude to evoke detailed descriptions that capture the richness and complexity of life as it is lived through first-person experiences (Wertz, 2005). The intention is to reveal general meaning structures of a phenomenon, staying close to what is provided by the participants, regarding both richness and complexity, without applying an interpretation to the information (Giorgi, 2010). This study occurred as part of a larger research project investigating the experiences of school integration at both the high school and postsecondary levels.

Procedures

Upon obtaining ethical approval, participants were recruited through a variety of social media outlets, listserves within the university, direct recruitment in classrooms, and snowball sampling (i.e., the process of utilizing initial respondents to recruit additional participants; Schwandt, 2015). To take part in the study, interested participants had to meet the following criteria: (a) first-generation immigrants to Canada (i.e., not born in the country); (b) attended high school in Canada; (c) current or graduated postsecondary student; (d) over 18 years of age; and (e) minimum English language proficiency so as to complete a qualitative interview.

Upon meeting eligibility for the study, a participation meeting was scheduled with a graduate-level research assistant. The initial step was to obtain informed consent from each participant. Participants were provided with a hard copy of the consent form, and each section was diligently reviewed to ensure full understanding of the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits of participation, and how personal information would be handled. Participants were reminded that participation was completely voluntary, and they could cease the interview, or refuse to answer any questions, without penalty. Following the completion of consent, the participants filled out a demographics form that collected information about their personal and educational backgrounds.

Next, participants completed an in-person, semi-structured, qualitative interview that lasted between 75 to 90 minutes. The protocol was systematically designed based on the relevant literature about youth migration. These topics included, but were not limited to, the following areas: (a) open-ended warm-up questions; (b) participant background; (c) the experience of high school integration, including pre-migration experience, introduction to schooling in Canada, curriculum, linguistic transition, social support, family life, and community involvement; (d) life after high school, including newcomer students' needs as they integrated into postsecondary education; and (e) process questions. To ensure the confidentiality and privacy of all participants, interviews were held in private meeting rooms at the university. As compensation for their participation, all individuals received a $20 gift card.

Participants

Ten individuals who were first generation newcomers to Canada, representing newcomer youth between the ages of 18 and 24 (*M* =20.0), volunteered to participate in this study. These individuals migrated to Canada between the ages of 5 and 17 (*M* =12.7), all representing first generation immigrants who grew up in newcomer families and communities for a significant part of their life. Six participants self-identified as female and four as male. Eight participants self-identified as heterosexual, one as lesbian, and one did not label a sexual orientation. Countries of origin included Pakistan (3), Algeria (1), China (1), Iran (1), Kazakhstan (1), Korea (1), Philippines (1), and Ukraine (1).

All participants self-identified as middle class and represented permanent residents within Canada. None of the participants entered the country with refugee status. Of the 10 participants, 5 reported having high language proficiency in English before migration and 5 reported having minimal language proficiency, with 6 individuals receiving some English language support during their integration into high school in Canada. All but one participant reported speaking two or more languages. All participants graduated from high school in Canada between the years of 2009 and 2014 and transitioned directly into postsecondary education. In postsecondary education, participants pursued degrees within the fields of Biology, Neuroscience, Sociology, Forensic Chemistry, Nursing, and Engineering.

Data Analysis

Once a professional transcriptionist transcribed the qualitative interviews, data analysis was adapted from the systematic steps proposed by Giorgi (2009, 2012). The process began with reading each transcript as a whole. The transcript was then re-read and broken into meaning units, which are distinct parts within the text. The raw meaning units were then transformed into psychologically-sensitive expressions. Through this process the essential structures were reviewed and written into generalized descriptions to capture the essence of the experience. At this stage, peer auditing and debriefing were employed to aid in developing the psychologically sensitive descriptions (Schwandt, 2015). After auditing each transcript, individual structural descriptions were formulated into a two-page account chronicling the participant's experiences (Langdridge, 2007). Seven of the 10 participants verified their summaries, and 4 made minor changes in authentication of personal details. Finally, the participant's individual psychologically sensitive expression was compared and contrasted, revealing trends and patterns that emerged as the final primary structures and constituents.

Managing Researcher Subjectivity

The research team consisted of five women, including a university professor, three graduate students in psychology, and a university graduate. All members of the team received thorough training in qualitative research, particularly concerning the phenomenological tradition of inquiry. They were explicitly asked to identify their subjective stance by engaging in the process of reflexivity, bracketing, and

peer debriefing throughout. Specifically, careful consideration was given to why the research was being conducted, what role each team member had with the topic being investigated, how each person felt about the work, and how one's subjective stance may influence the results (Finlay, 2014; Langdridge, 2007). Throughout the data collection and analysis process a reflective journal was used to keep an ongoing record of the experiences, reactions, and emerging awareness of any assumptions or biases (Morrow, 2005).

Rigour and Trustworthiness

In line with Morrow's (2005) recommendations, researchers took several steps to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study. Credibility (i.e., defensibility and plausibility of research) was achieved through member-checking and peer debriefing (Spencer & Ritchie, 2012). Transferability (i.e., the applicability of results to a broader context) was ensured by proving detailed descriptions of the context of the research, its procedures, and the participants themselves (Morrow, 2005). Dependability (i.e., responsible, logical, traceable, and documented process of inquiry) was met by keeping an audit trail of research activities, influences on emerging data, developing themes and categories, and analytic memos (Morrow, 2005; Schwandt, 2015). Confirmability (i.e., findings and interpretations linked to the data) was discerned through a clear audit trail, the management of subjectivity, and careful documentation of the researchers' orientations, roles, and impacts (Spencer & Ritchie, 2012).

RESULTS

Following Giorgi's (2009, 2012) methodological steps for phenomenological research, this study uncovered five predominate structures concerning the phenomenon of interest (i.e., postsecondary transition). As outlined in Table 1, these structures answer the central research question (i.e., How do newcomer youth experience the transition from high school to postsecondary education in Canada?) and clustered around two contexts. The first three structures are associated with the factors that impacted the newcomer students' decisions to attend postsecondary education, including (a) high school influences, (b) personal ambition, and (c) family factors. The last two structures centre on the experiences of participants once they entered postsecondary education, involving areas of growth and challenges they faced.

High School Influences

All participants discussed the factors within high school that directly played a role in their decision-making process to attend postsecondary education. These factors were described as the academic opportunities and supports they received (or did not receive) in high school regarding postsecondary and career options. The participants' experiences emerged through three constituents within this structure: coursework, positive influence of teachers and counsellors, and missing support in high school.

Coursework. For 7 participants, the courses they took while attending high school in Canada helped them solidify their postsecondary goals, as they gave them the opportunity to clarify their areas of strength and weakness. Being conscious of the courses they excelled in, the participants described pursuing postsecondary degrees that would lead to a natural transition in those areas. The participants also felt that courses specifically focused on career decision-making were very impactful, aiding them in creating academic resumes and cover letters. Further, career fairs and mentorship work programs provided the participants with first-hand experience to discover new career opportunities. Irina, a 24-year-old female from Kazakhstan, described her positive experience as follows:

> I think that [career portfolio] was very useful cause they made us make cover letters, resumes, and when I went to university, when I looked for my first job, that was essential for me. They made me go to like do a job shadowing, and like I would never do that by myself… So I think that that taught me a lot for sure.

Positive impact of teachers and counsellors. Four participants remained unsure about what to do following high school. Teachers and counsellors were seen as additional supports and mentors, and were credited in taking the time to help the students narrow down the most suitable degrees to pursue based on their ambitions and interests. Additionally, they aided the students in making sure they took the appropriate courses in high school to meet their program's entrance requirements. Misbah, an 18-year-old female from Pakistan, detailed:

> Like right before applications were due for [name of university] I had no idea, so we had narrowed it down to like 10 different combinations of different majors,

Table 1
Overview of Results

Structures	Constituents
High School Influences	Course work
	Positive impact of teachers and counsellors
	Missing support in high school
Personal Ambition	Life-long goal
	Prestigious and meaningful careers
Family Factors	Family expectations
	Family experiences
	Family struggles
Areas of Growth	Academic preparation
	Personal growth
	Social engagement
Postsecondary Challenges	Feeling unprepared
	Increased academic pressure
	Loss of supports

so I'd go back and she'd [counsellor] be like, "Oh, think about it for another week, come back next week," and we'd narrowed it down and narrowed it down until we got to like two degrees and then I picked history.

Missing support in high school. In contrast to the previously described experiences, 6 participants felt that the high school they attended in Canada did not aid them in their decision to attend postsecondary education. From their perspective, teachers and counsellors in their high school did not spend enough time helping them clarify their areas of interests or provide adequate support to understand the postsecondary system. Further, they felt they were not privileged to information regarding pre-requisites and scholarships, which their Canadian-born peers could access. Tania, a 19-year-old female from Pakistan, relayed her frustration in the following example:

You picked your courses, and like I said, if I was given the option not to take physics, and I didn't take physics, and now I'm regretting it because it's one of the options for my postsecondary, so there was that kind of thing that I had to pan out my way through, that was more of like the recent immigrant experience.

Personal Ambition

All participants relayed that regardless of their experience integrating into high school in Canada, they always had a personal goal of attending postsecondary education to obtain meaningful and purposeful careers. Personal ambition was described as the internal motivation and drive to attend a postsecondary institution. The participants' experiences centred around two constituents: life-long goal, and prestigious and meaningful careers.

Life-long goal. All participants disclosed that they always wanted to attend postsecondary education. They chose degrees that aligned with their interests and the dreams they had since they were children. In this manner, they never questioned their paths in university, as they had a clear idea of what they wanted to do. Relatedly, Jameel, a 19-year-old male from Algeria, described:

But from a junior high perspective, I always had college in mind, I always had university in mind, so I wanted to do well… I always wanted to do medicine but um, yeah, so like I think it was just I pushed myself.

Prestigious and meaningful careers. All participants described their aspiration for meaningful and prestigious careers. Their postsecondary choices were determined by their desire for high paying, admirable, and important careers. They also sought degrees that would provide them with the highest opportunity to obtain sustainable employment. Nicole, an 18-year-old female from the Philippines, recalled:

Careers like nursing or like engineering and stuff like that, um, that have like good employment outcomes. Because her degree [mother] in soil science was very difficult for her to find a job.

Family Factors

All participants detailed how their families played a pivotal role in their post-secondary choices. These factors were discussed as the standards and expectations set by parents, siblings, and extended family members, related to participants' postsecondary decision-making. Most of the participants described that the choices they made were directly related to meeting the academic expectations set out by their families. Further, parental employment before and after migration also impacted the decisions they made as they witnessed both their struggles and successes. As such, three constituents emerged: family expectations, family experiences, and family struggles.

Family expectations. Nine of the participants communicated that "success" for their parents was defined as the attainment of high paying, admirable employment, typically within the fields of medicine, engineering, and law. The participants detailed that their parents set high standards for themselves, with almost all of them holding postsecondary or graduate level degrees from their country of origin. Given the expectations set out by their parents, participants detailed how they sought advice from them when making decisions about their future. Gi, a 19-year-old male from Korea, recounted:

> Actually, I didn't know what to do. Yeah, and my parents and I were going through majors and thinking about future job opportunities… and most things that Asian people go into is like business, engineering, biological sciences and yeah and my parents thought these three will provide me with great job opportunities.

Family experiences. Seven participants also relayed that the postsecondary experiences of their siblings and extended family members impacted their decisions. Having older siblings and relatives who already navigated the university system made it easier for some of the participants as they relied on them for assistance during their transition. In contrast, 2 participants who were the first to attend university in Canada experienced a harder transition out of high school as they were unfamiliar with the postsecondary system. Such an example is illustrated by Tania, a 19-year-old from Pakistan, who explained:

> [Being an] immigrant I wasn't really aware of how university goes about because back home, because my sister went to university and you know you learn from your siblings as experiences or older people's experiences, my sister went through university [in home country] and everything was planned out for her… over here it wasn't the same.

Family struggles. Eight participants described how their postsecondary ambitions were also related to repaying their parents for the sacrifices they made. They witnessed how their parents gave up their own career goals, worked multiple jobs, separated from their families, and endured financial strains. According to participants, such sacrifices were made to provide their children with greater op-

portunities. The financial strain on some families acted as a barrier, prevented other family members from attending postsecondary education. Therefore, these participants felt that succeeding academically was their responsibility, as it would allow them to increase their family's financial security. Ashar, an 18-year-old male from Pakistan, exemplified this by stating:

> I understand, like I'm grateful for what I have and you gotta learn to, I wanna show him like that I'm grateful, but, and by that I think I can do that by studying and stuff like that, doing well in school, like becoming a doctor.

Areas of Growth

Nine participants spoke to the academic, personal, and social growth they experienced during their postsecondary education. The participants felt that their high school sufficiently prepared them for the academic work and pressure of postsecondary education. They also described gaining perspectives through self-discovery and found peers with similar interests and values. Given these experiences, three constituents emerged within the structure, including academic preparation, personal growth, and social engagement.

Academic preparation. Four individuals felt that the curriculum, structure, and teacher support within high school sufficiently prepared them for postsecondary education. They described that high school not only provided them with the fundamental course requirements, but it also gave them a sense of the workload and expectations upheld in postsecondary education. They found the individualized nature of their high school in Canada set them up with the skills necessary to be internally motivated, which helped them navigate the freedom associated with being a university student. An, a 21-year-old female from China reinforced:

> Yeah like university pace, I thought it would be even harder but it wasn't, it really wasn't… like my parents and my school, told me a lot because a lot of people go to university right, they've prepared for university, like I had a lot of preparation.

Personal growth. Seven participants felt that in comparison to high school they achieved greater levels of personal growth in postsecondary education. They detailed that the general atmosphere in university was more liberal and tolerant of individual differences, which allowed them to discover their true interests, passions, and thoughts. Through the process of self-reflection, participants described "gaining perspective" from the struggles they faced during their integration into high school in Canada, which enhanced their level of understanding and empathy towards others. Nicole, an 18-year-old female from the Philippines, shared such an experience in the following quote:

> It's interesting, I haven't thought about my high school experience for a while. It's like taking a step back, so like now that I'm done my first year of university it's nice to see even though I struggled it actually helped me in the long run.

Social engagement. Six participants disclosed that, compared to the social isolation they experienced in high school, university provided them with access to peers with similar interests and values. They described feeling more comfortable and confident in their friendships as they accessed like-minded peers through a diverse network of clubs and extracurricular opportunities. The participants also attributed their social growth to no longer feeling the need to "fit in" with peers, as they did in high school. Misbah, an 18-year-old female from Pakistan, explained:

> Ah yeah, a bit, university is way more, ah, individual right so you don't have to like conform that much cause there's nothing to conform to… you do everything by yourself right so you don't really feel that much of a need to conform.

Postsecondary Challenges

In contrast to the positive changes previously described, participants also discussed the challenges they faced once they transitioned to postsecondary education. All participants disclosed struggling with feeling unprepared to meet the demands of postsecondary education. Some participants also contended with increased pressure and stress as well as a lack of adequate support. These experiences lead to three constituents within this structure, centring on the following: feeling unprepared, increased academic pressure, and loss of supports.

Feeling unprepared. Six participants felt that high school did not prepare them "at all" for postsecondary education. One of the aspects that they described was feeling like high school did not aid them in choosing the most appropriate degree for their future. These participants spoke about choosing their majors based on their parents, high school teachers, and counsellors' expectations, as well as the pressure to make a timely decision. Thus, they struggled academically when they first entered university because they did not enjoy the courses they were taking, which led them to switch their degrees eventually. Irina, a 24-year-old female from Kazakhstan recalled:

> Like high school did not prepare me to decide on what I wanted to do… Yeah um… but yeah so in terms of like requirements they prepared me but in terms of what I wanted to do I had no idea, and I'm pretty sure I'm not alone.

Increased academic pressure. The increased level of academic pressure that participants suddenly faced when they transitioned into university perpetuated their confusion. Six participants felt the relaxed nature of their high school curriculum made them "complacent and lazy," leaving them ill-prepared for the demands of postsecondary education. As such, they experienced heightened levels of stress, confusion, and frustration as they were challenged academically for the first time since their migration. They attested that their first semester at university was the hardest, as they went from the safety of high school to the heightened demands of postsecondary education. Ashar, an 18-year-old male from Pakistan illuminated this struggle in the following example:

I'd say it doesn't prepare you that much because sure you have like your basic knowledge but they don't go too much in depth and just the speed of… there's a big difference in speed with teaching… so like first semester I got 3.4 and that was my GPA and I was kind of sad about that cause like high school I didn't, I ended up doing pretty well, but like second semester I picked it up.

Loss of supports. Six participants also found that the individual nature of university was like going from being "treated like a child to being treated like a grown adult." The participants described a loss of free time as they began working, volunteering, and trying to get involved in extra-curricular activities to enhance their resumes. This loss of free time also meant less opportunity to employ coping strategies that previously aided them in high school. Therefore, the participants found that as they attempted to navigate these challenges, they did not have the same support from teachers, peers, and external networks like they did in high school. Misbah, an 18-year-old female from Pakistan, exemplified this notion in the following example:

Also, just with being busy as well, less support systems, you don't have like that closeness… so you get busier and you need more support but you don't have it anymore because you're not part of that like super close community anymore. I don't have time to go to [the] mosque so I've lost like, I've lost that as well.

<div align="center">DISCUSSION</div>

Results of this study highlight the complexity of the phenomenon of postsecondary transition among newcomer youth in Canada. That is, findings demonstrate how newcomer youths' experiences in high school can significantly impact their decision-making process and transition into postsecondary education. The predominant factors that influenced participants' decision-making included three distinct but interconnected structures: the specific domains within their high school that facilitated (or did not facilitate their decision), their motivation, and the influence of family members. Results also indicate that experiences in high school can foster academic success and personal growth in postsecondary education, but at the same time lead to new challenges. As such, these findings underscore the need to understand the postsecondary transition of newcomer youth in a holistic manner, and to facilitate the assessment of the numerous factors that can vary and impact their experiences in positive and negative ways.

Regardless of the risk factors associated with school integration for newcomer youth (Ellis et al., 2011; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Stermac et al., 2012), the participants noted that a key protective factor in their academic success was a steadfast desire to attend postsecondary education from a young age. Given that they had clearly defined goals as they integrated into high school in Canada, they concentrated on their academic strengths to aid them in fulfilling their passion. For those who remained unsure of their future ambitions, they described the benefits of taking courses focused explicitly on postsecondary and career decision-

making. These findings support the notion that educational programs directly relating to life-skills-training, career planning, job search skills, resume writing, and employment mentoring act as primary facilitators in supporting newcomer youth in making postsecondary choices (Shea, Ma, & Yeh, 2007; Shea, Ma, Yeh, Lee, & Pituc, 2009; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Therefore, it is critical that high schools and school counsellors provide newcomer youth with the opportunity to access culturally-appropriate resources to aid them in the decisions making process to support their postsecondary transition.

The participants also affirmed previous reports that teachers, mentors, and counsellors added to their postsecondary decision-making process and eventual transition (Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). Unfortunately, not all participants felt comfortable or confident seeking out additional support (Deckers & Zinga, 2012). The participants who did not form close relationships with teachers and counsellors were disappointed in their school's ability to disseminate information relating to postsecondary options and requirement standards, which they felt their Canadian born peers were simply privileged to (see Gonzalez et al., 2013). It appears that having a family member who attended postsecondary school in Canada may buffer this experience. Unfortunately, those who were the first in their family to pursue postsecondary education in Canada had to navigate the system independently, perpetuating their struggles and frustration (Vargas, 2004).

For some participants, the decision to attend postsecondary education had less to do with their experiences in high school in Canada but stemmed from a sense of family obligation. This finding substantiates the idea that one of the primary mechanisms by which newcomer youth demonstrate respect for their parents is through high academic success (Li, 2010; Perreira et al., 2010). Although parental expectations may heighten newcomer youth's aspirations, results support the notions that they can also lead newcomers to sacrifice their passion and heighten levels of stress and anxiety (Taylor & Krahn, 2013).

Participants in this study also identified being motivated by the prospect of obtaining prestigious careers. Their desire for career security was heavily influenced by the financial hardship their families experienced throughout the process of migration. Research has shown that coming from a lower socioeconomic status is a risk factor for postsecondary attendance (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009), but participants in this study stated that it was a motivating factor to pursue high paying, sustainable careers. In this manner, their transitions to postsecondary appeared to be driven by the disadvantages they faced (see Childs et al., 2017). This finding may be attributed to the fact that most participants' parents held postsecondary degrees before migrating to Canada, and as such stressed the importance of education (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Sweet et al., 2010).

The participants who felt well prepared for university stated that they obtained the foundational skills necessary through the curriculum, structure, and teachers within their high schools. Similar to the general population, the participants found the individualized nature of university enhanced their personal development (Maunder, Cunliffe, Galvin, Mjali, & Rogers, 2013). Although Sinacore

and Lerner (2013) found that newcomer students between the ages of 18 and 28 felt increasingly isolated during their postsecondary transition, the participants in this study no longer experienced the social isolation they had in high school. This shift was credited to the more liberal atmosphere within university coupled with increased access to peers in diverse extracurricular opportunities. Interestingly, the participants also reported that after reflecting on their struggles throughout high school, they gained a perspective on their strength and resiliency.

In contrast, some participants in this research did not feel adequately prepared to transition into postsecondary education and experienced the process as quite drastic. These findings are consistent with reports from the general population that show that undergraduate students are often ill-equipped to pursue postsecondary education (Brinkworth, McCann, Matthews, & Nordström, 2009).

In this study, the participants felt that their lack of preparation stemmed directly from their experiences as newcomers. One of the primary concerns they expressed had to do with the lax nature of the high school curriculum. That is, they felt that they never learned appropriate study techniques to meet the increasing academic demands of university (see Stermac et al., 2012). Uniquely, some participants reported that their academic struggles were directly related to choosing degrees based on the expectations of their teachers, counsellors, and families. Their lack of preparation, coupled with disinterests in their courses, led to heightened levels of stress and confusion. Unfortunately, during these struggles, the participants felt that they lacked access to appropriate supports within their postsecondary institutions.

The varying experiences that participants reported in high school may explain the differences they shared concerning the phenomenon of postsecondary transition. It is important to consider the numerous contextual and systemic issues that may have impacted the participants, with some individuals possibly being integrated into schools, homes, and/or communities with more privilege than others. It is also important to note that the participants who shared positive experiences of their postsecondary transition also reported greater personal motivation and support from teachers and counsellors, as well as involvement from parents and family members. The participants who disclosed more struggles seem to have been lacking some of these supportive factors. As such, it appears that a successful transition into postsecondary education depends on several interrelated factors.

Implications for Practice

Results of this study have important implications for practice when it comes to supporting newcomer youth in high school and postsecondary education. Findings indicate that a successful transition to postsecondary is more likely when supports are in place during the last years of high school as well as the start of university. At the high school level, career and counselling supports need to go beyond the individual modality for newcomer youth. While school counsellors may recognize the importance of parents and community in the postsecondary decision-making process and subsequent transition of newcomer youth (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009;

Suárez-Orozco, Onaga et al., 2010; Watkinson & Hersi, 2014), they often have little contact conferring with them (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). As such, it may be beneficial for counsellors to hold open-forum sessions for newcomer students, parents, and community members, directly related to postsecondary and career options within Canada. This type of support may be especially relevant as many newcomer students feel uncomfortable seeking out individual support from school counsellors (Gallucci, 2016).

When students feel prepared for their postsecondary transition they face fewer challenges. By bridging the connection with parents and community, it may break down barriers such as the stigma of accessing career and/or counselling support to better prepare newcomer youth for postsecondary transition. Further, newcomer students highlighted the need for counsellors to relay information related to funding opportunities, explore different career opportunities, and help clarify and solidify the most appropriate degrees to meet their individual (and family) goals.

Within postsecondary institutions, counsellors must be aware of the academic trajectory of their clients who are newcomer students. Counsellors should ensure that they take the time to explore the newcomer students' high school experiences to help understand their preparedness for postsecondary education. Although they may have attended high school in Canada, newcomer students may still require additional support navigating the university system and culture, learning strategies to manage academic demands, and balancing family expectations (Stebleton, Soria, Huesman, & Torres, 2014).

Strengths and Limitations

Through a phenomenological tradition of inquiry, the participants were given the space to describe their experience holistically and inclusively. Adhering to the rigorous guidelines associated with a descriptive psychological methodology, multiple measures were taken to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of this study. The diversity of demographic characteristics represented within the sample also helps confirm the universal nature of the structures. However, the participants in this study represented a more privileged subset of newcomers, with none reporting more serious risk factors associated with migration (i.e., refugee status, trauma history, gang involvement).

Additionally, all participants were university students, and as such embodied a highly motivated and academically successful group. It is likely they had different experiences than individuals who chose a different academic stream after high school (i.e., community college, trades school) or did not graduate. Further, some individuals migrated to Canada at young ages and as such may not have faced the same barriers as those migrating during adolescence. Finally, the participants discussed some of their experiences retrospectively (e.g., initial experiences of integrating into high school) and newcomer students currently attending high school may have different experiences.

CONCLUSION

Results of this study add depth to existing literature that conceptualizes the phenomenon of postsecondary transition along the domains of the cultural experiences as well as personal and social factors (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009; Childs et al., 2017; Sweet et al., 2010). Participants in this study reported that their experiences in high school in Canada following migration directly impacted their transition to postsecondary education. Moreover, their motivation, as well as the influence of their families, affected this transition. While transitioning into university some participants experienced greater academic, social, and personal growth, whereas others felt ill-prepared and lacked the necessary resources to thrive. With time, participants gained awareness of their resiliency as newcomers, leading them to be successful both educationally and occupationally, and develop greater empathy towards others. This variability of experiences may reflect the systemic privileges and barriers that different newcomers to Canada face, depending on when and where they integrate into high school. As such, increased support for newcomer youth seems critical both in high school and university.

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