



Faith & Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants & Canada up for Success

Case Study Report: Muslim Social Services, Waterloo
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Faith and Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants and Canada up for Success is a research partnership intended to explore partnerships between faith-based and government-funded settlement organizations in Ontario. This two-year project is led by the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) and funded by the **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)**. More information about this project can be found at:

www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/Faith_&SettlementPartnerships

The project used multiple methods. Case studies were held within the local study sites (Toronto, Peel, Waterloo Region, London). Other methods included a literature review and a cross-site organizational survey. Reports were written for each method.

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Executive Summary

Overall, this case study found that faith and settlement partnerships are perceived as being particularly promising for the integration of newcomers within Canadian society. These types of partnerships often fill certain essential gaps within the settlement process, and serve to improve the lived realities of many new Canadians. In accordance with the three major research areas of this project, key findings of the study include:

Vision: Perspectives of Partnerships

- **Cultural, spiritual, and linguistic needs:** Collaborations between Muslim Social Services and settlement agencies ensure that the cultural, spiritual, and linguistic needs of newcomers are being met.
- **Culturally and spiritually sensitive counselling:** Partnerships between Muslim Social Services and settlement sector agencies provide newcomers with access to spiritually and culturally sensitive counselling, the necessity of which is becoming increasingly recognized by community stakeholders.
- **Meeting a variety of needs:** Partnering agencies perceive Muslim Social Services as being able to meet a variety of needs for a variety of clients, including offering programming specifically tailored to newcomers. Muslim Social Service's resourcefulness, networking capabilities, and ability to find creative solutions to problems is often cited as being integral to their ability to fill in a broad range of service gaps.
- **Training and education:** Partnering agencies see themselves as benefiting greatly from the intercultural competency training Muslim Social Services offers, as this allows them to better address the needs of their immigrant and refugee clients.

Structure: Types of Partnerships

- **The bridge role:** Within most of the partnerships that currently exist between Muslim Social Services and settlement-sector agencies, Muslim Social Services acts as a bridge between newcomers and mainstream service providers, mediating between the two and helping immigrants navigate the Canadian system.
- **Inequitable partnerships:** The types of partnerships that currently exist between Muslim Social Services and settlement-sector agencies are informal and therefore often inequitable. The most promising partnerships are those that include ongoing and open communication.
- **Challenges:** Many challenges exist within faith and settlement partnerships, namely a lack of funds within the settlement sector that leads to mistrust between organizations.
- **Knowledge gaps:** Ill-informed assumptions about Muslim Social Services at times leads to unrealistic expectations, as well as ideological barriers that prevent successful collaborations and ultimately can negatively affect newcomer settlement.

Process: Recommendations

- **Client central collaborations:** Going forward, the most important improvement that should be made is for faith and settlement partnerships to take a more client-centred approach, wherein service provisions are based on the real identified needs of the client, rather than being based on organizational politics or competition. This change would involve developing a model for intentionally listening to the newcomer, and understanding that immigrant and refugee needs often go beyond the standard understanding of "settlement."

- **Formalized partnerships:** While informal partnerships are useful in responding to immediate needs, formal partnerships are needed to ensure equitable and sustainable collaborations that will be able to provide newcomers with ongoing assistance.
- **Acknowledgement of work and recognition of capacity:** Going forward, partnerships must include a recognition of organizational capacity in so that expectations of provisions are realistic. Additionally, all organizations involved in the partnership must be justly recognized for their work in order to avoid a loss of trust and breakdown of collaboration.
- **Ongoing communication:** In order for faith and settlement partnerships to be successful, ongoing and open communication between organizations is necessary, wherein the newcomer client is at the core of the discussions.
- **Third party involvement:** It is crucial that a neutral third party organization is able to connect faith and settlement agencies, and foster better, more equitable and cooperative partnerships. This third party role could be filled by Local Immigration Partnerships, who could be extremely effective in creating a database of expertise that would help with volunteer coordination, program and service development, training, and would lead to a more effective use of resources.
- **Investment in education and awareness:** In a more general sense, without increased education and awareness, fostering a sense of belonging for newcomers will be impossible. Immigration Partnerships could prove crucial in developing educational materials for both organizations and the wider community to foster an in-depth understanding of marginalized groups. Faith-based organizations should be included in the development of these materials in order to collaboratively ensure spiritual and cultural needs are being addressed.
- **Appreciation for spiritually and culturally sensitive services:** There must be increased recognition within the settlement sector for the value of spiritually and culturally sensitive services, both in terms of how they can be crucial to newcomer integration, and the ways in which faith and settlement partnerships may prove effective beyond the immediate settlement of newcomers to be helpful in building larger community connections.

Through this case study it becomes clear that faith and settlement partnerships are immensely promising endeavours for the benefit of both new and long-established Canadians, however, there are certain conditions that must first be implemented for these collaborations to be maximally beneficial.

Context

Immigration in Waterloo

In 2015, it was estimated that 38.1% of Canada's new immigrants settled in Ontario, an 8% increase from 2014 (from 95, 775 to 103, 560) (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration 2016). Though many of these newcomers reside in the province's larger cities, such as Ottawa and Toronto, a significant portion of them have settled in the Waterloo Region. The Waterloo Region is comprised of three cities, Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, and is home to over 575, 000 people. Over the past 15 years, the region's population has grown by an estimated average of 1.58% per year, much of which can be attributed to immigration (Region of Waterloo 2017). Almost 25% of the region's residents are immigrants, coming from over 15 different countries and speaking over 100 different languages (Immigration Waterloo Region 2016). A report regarding demographic trends within the Waterloo Region estimates the projected growth of visible minorities from 2011 to 2031 to increase by 200%, therefore expecting visible minorities to make up 30% of the population by 2031 (Norris 2015). Though Waterloo's newcomers originate from a vast number of countries, the recent Syrian refugee influx has been particularly determinant in shaping the region's population. In light of the crisis in Syria, the Canadian Government committed to taking in 25, 000 of the over four million Syrians, and the Waterloo Region has been projected to receive over 1, 000 of them.

Though to the western world, it may seem as though secularization is on the rise, within the global context this is not the case. Indeed, for immigrants coming to Canada, it is much more likely that they will be religious than not, with 81% of newcomers claiming some religious affiliation (Stats Canada 2011). Though Christianity remains the dominant faith tradition among immigrants, a growing number of new Canadians are Muslim, approximately 17% in 2011 (ibid). Considering that 87% of the Syrian population are practitioners of Islam, this number has likely escalated since (Population Profile 2015). The role of faith cannot be underestimated when providing assistance to refugees and immigrants. While faith-based groups and religious congregations have assisted newcomers with the settlement process for decades, most of the settlement sector is currently comprised of secular government-funded agencies (Thompson 2010, Crisp 2014). Yet despite the dominance of secular organizations, many immigrants first turn to religious groups for initial support upon arrival, rather than these designated settlement agencies (Lowen and Friesen 2009).

Literature on the subject demonstrates that faith-based groups provide significant assistance to newcomers in a variety of areas, from advocacy to practical assistance, and act not only as a means of spiritual support, but provide a sense of community and familiarity as well (Reimer and Wilkinson 2010). Faith-based organizations are also often able to fill in gaps left by settlement agencies, and provide complementary services to those of mainstream organizations. Yet while faith-based groups often express a willingness to participate in partnerships with settlement agencies, these partnerships are largely underdeveloped and informal (Stobbe and Janzen 2014). Research on faith and settlement partnerships is in its infancy, and information on these types of collaborations within the Waterloo Region is notably lacking. The overarching project *Faith and Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants and Canada Up For Success* is a two-year study that aims to collaboratively study partnerships among faith-based groups and government-funded settlement organizations in order to determine how these partnerships can lead to better settlement outcomes for newcomers, and ultimately benefit Canadian society. The project was led by the Centre for Community Based Research, and is composed of six individual case studies conducted throughout the Greater Toronto Area. This particular project makes up one of these case studies, focusing on the Waterloo Region-based organization Muslim Social Services of Kitchener Waterloo (MSS) and their various collaborations and partnerships with settlement-sector agencies. Waterloo is an area particularly well-known for immigrant and refugee settlement, and MSS is often an integral element within these settlement journeys. Though many government-funded settlement agencies in the area already make use

of the organization's services, often becoming reliant on their spiritually and culturally sensitive provisions, this study aims to demonstrate how more formal partnerships between MSS and these various settlement agencies could stand to greatly benefit all those involved. Long-term goals of the study therefore include policy changes allowing for such formal partnerships, which would positively impact organizations' abilities to meet their clients' needs.

Muslim Social Services of Kitchener Waterloo

Muslim Social Services of Kitchener Waterloo (MSS) is a charitable organization integral to many people in the community. MSS was first established in 2007 as a purely volunteer group in response to the need for spiritually and culturally sensitive services in the changing Kitchener Waterloo community. In 2016, MSS was evaluated and accredited as an Imagine Canada Charitable Organization, joining a very high-ranking elite group of charitable organizations in Canada. MSS's core mission is "serving the community," and their primary goal as an organization is to foster a healthy, inclusive environment, providing various opportunities for learning and growth by means of education, support, and community outreach.¹ Having always worked from the model of partnering with counselling centres, mainstream services, and other faith groups in order to provide holistic services to clients, MSS strives to meet the needs of a broad community. Deriving its core values from Islamic teachings of peace, compassion and social justice, MSS offers a variety of multi-lingual resources and programming to Muslims and non-Muslims in the Region of Waterloo.

In 2011, MSS incorporated as a not-for-profit agency, and in 2012, received a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to develop organizational capacity – a grant it stretched to last over the course of four years. MSS provides much needed supports for the community, from seminal educational awareness to cultural sensitivity training and outreach work. Community outreach extends through offering meals at the St John's Kitchen, Habitat for Humanity, House of Friendship and more, supporting local food hampers, food assistance programs, and the annual Ramadan and Eid Food Drives.

Though MSS had only one part-time employee at the time of this study, it has had over 70 volunteers since the organization's inception, and this network continues to grow. Since 2013, the number of programs and workshops has more than doubled, and continue to be met with great success. By 2016 MSS had almost tripled their number of program participants since 2013, going from around 150 to over 450, and this number is still growing. Programs range from youth to adult centred, and include initiatives such as Healing Through Arts, the phenomenally successful play *I Am Rohingya*, conversation circles for women and men, parenting classes, and the Safer Families Project, an initiative aimed at alleviating domestic violence in the community.

Unpacking "Faith-Based"

Though the name "Muslim Social Services" may be misleading to some, creating the misconception that MSS is only accessible to followers of Islam, this is far from the case. MSS does not only provide services to Muslims, but rather strives to serve the whole community, promoting inclusivity regardless of people's background or religious identity. While MSS qualifies as a "faith-based" organization, what the term actually signifies, and the extent of its usefulness, remains a subject of debate (Hugen and Venema 2009). Though there is no one definition of a faith-based organization, for the purposes of this report, a faith-based group can be defined as a social service agency that explicitly identifies with a religious tradition or is auspiced by a religious organization (Crisp 2014). MSS provides inclusive and culturally and spiritually sensitive services to the community without any attempt at altering religious beliefs or proselytization. At the same time, it is the only social service organization where

¹ See Appendix B for MSS's Strategic Plan

Muslims can seek help and be valued for their lived experience, with due sensitivity to and understanding of their culture or faith.

Clark's (2008) continuum of the four ways faith operates within an organization is a helpful model for understanding the different types of faith-based agencies. For organizations in which religion plays a passive role, faith is secondary to humanitarian considerations. For those in which religion takes an active role, faith is an important and explicit motivation for social action in the community, yet there is no overt discrimination against non-believers. When religion assumes a persuasive role, the goals of the organization are primarily to convert people, and to advance the interests of the religion, and finally, when faith-based organizations are exclusive, religion is the primary motivation for action, yet often becomes militant or violent. Because Clark sets up these different modes of faith within organizations as fluid rather than dichotomous, it can be said that MSS's "faith" aspect is situated between passive and active. While Islamic teachings of peace, social justice, and respect are primary motivators for the organization, the mission of "serving the community" demonstrates that humanitarian services are placed above all else. Anyone associated with MSS is required to abide by a code of conduct that outlines the basic principles for treating everyone with respect and true inclusivity. For MSS, the "faith" aspect can be seen to operate on a number of levels:

1. To validate people's lived experiences, including their faith and culture
2. To provide individuals and families with a culturally and spiritually sensitive avenue for seeking help
3. To involve the Muslim community in giving back through social services

In that MSS's motivations and values are underlined by an ethic of community service, and not religious conversion, it is not restricted by religious affiliations, but broadened by them. Despite various attempts at defining what "faith-based" is, the term remains both complicated and loaded (Ferris 2011), especially in an atmosphere of rising Islamophobia. As a result, there are many misconceptions about MSS. Indeed, it is a significant challenge for organizations like MSS to balance taking ownership of a religious identity and informing the wider community of its breadth. This challenge has presented itself as a common theme throughout this research, as many community partners lack a comprehensive understanding of MSS's goals and values, as well as an understanding of faith-based organizations in general.

Unpacking "Settlement"

Though MSS is not a settlement agency in the traditional sense, it emphasizes inclusive and culturally sensitive integration of newcomers into the community. MSS partners with settlement agencies and other organizations in the settlement sector to provide a variety of supports for belonging, including community outreach, intercultural competency training, programming for men, women and children, and spiritually and culturally sensitive counselling support. MSS often acts as a link between newcomer Muslim clients and mainstream agencies, helping individuals and families navigate the system, and helping mainstream service providers better understand newcomer needs. The major growing need is within the domain of counselling and trauma support, and MSS is often the agency of choice for those who seek spiritually and culturally sensitive multilingual counselling services. MSS has offered hundreds of hours of counselling to community members free of cost, and has provided counselling support to clients of numerous partnering agencies. Refugee support and integration has been a major goal of MSS since inception. With the recent Syrian refugee influx, MSS has been working hard to provide assistance to the newest members of the community. Their program Welcome to Canada has been a great help for the integration of newcomer families, and language and training courses for both newcomers and sponsors have been quite successful.

Much like MSS, some of the organizations involved in this study are not strictly “settlement” agencies in the sense that this is not their only role in the community. For the purposes of this study, “settlement” is taken as a broader term, referring to the integration of newcomers that extends beyond immediate needs such as housing and employment, and considers other aspects such as counseling, social interactions, family services, etc. as well. Thus, while some of the service providers included in this study, including MSS, do not identify as “settlement agencies,” they are often integral in the larger process of integration and belonging.

Methodology

The three general objectives of the overarching project are:

1. To conduct a series of research projects that empirically explore ways in which faith-based and settlement organizations currently collaborate, and could better collaborate, to improve settlement outcomes of newcomers to the benefit of Canadian society (insight).
2. To pursue a series of knowledge mobilization activities that will inform effective faith/settlement partnerships within policy and practice (connection).
3. To develop a network of researchers (including students and emerging scholars) as well as faith and settlement leaders that will maximize their synergy in promoting effective faith/settlement partnerships (partnership development).

Congruent with these larger objectives, the more specific aims of this particular case study include:

1. To what extent are faith and settlement partnerships viewed positively? (Vision)
2. What types of partnerships presently exist and how could they be improved? (structures)
3. How can effective partnerships be better facilitated? (processes)

In order to fulfill these main objectives, the research method for this project was to take a triangulated approach, synthesising various forms of data collection and analysis. To achieve this, in-depth interviews with participants were combined with various instances of participant observation, as well as a review of secondary materials. Semi-structured interviews make up most of the research, and include conversations with both internal (I) and external (E) participants, meaning MSS personnel and representatives from external partnering agencies respectively. A total of four interviews with internal participants were conducted, and 11 external interviews. Interviews were primarily done in person or over the phone, though in some cases where this was not possible, participants filled out brief questionnaires. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Though the main focus of the larger study is on partnerships between faith-based groups and government-funded settlement agencies, not all external participants fall into this latter category. Some of the respondents are from other types of organizations who nonetheless have a stake within the settlement sector, and who were selected for participation in the study due to previous collaborations with MSS in assisting newcomers in the community. These organizations include family service providers, counselling agencies, health care professionals, and other groups that work largely with Kitchener Waterloo's newcomer population. By speaking with these other organizations, a more holistic perspective on newcomer settlement in the region is achieved, extending beyond the lens of government-funded settlement agencies.

In addition to semi-structured interviews, two primary instances of participant observation were used to gain a first-hand experience of faith and settlement partnerships within the KW community. The first instance involved observing the MSS initiated Healthy Families Program, wherein newcomers within the area were introduced to various community service providers as well as to various Canadian systems in a non-threatening, clearly explained manner. The Healthy Families Program explains to newcomers how various agencies within the community are there to help them throughout the settlement process, and functions to alleviate much fear and apprehension with regard to these service providers. The second instance of participant observation involved sitting in on a Local Immigration Partnership meeting for the Belonging steering group. The meeting included discussions surrounding new ways of reaching out to newcomer communities, and next steps for the partnership.

The review of secondary materials within the scope of this project was twofold, including both a review of materials specific to MSS, as well as a review of secondary academic sources surrounding the topic of faith and settlement partnerships in general. MSS organizational materials included a review of their mission, core values, and strategic goals to determine whether information gathered regarding

partnerships with MSS were indeed a reflection of these elements. Throughout the research and analysis process, MSS mission, values, and goals were kept in mind, with the question of whether the organization's partnership aided the realization of these intentions.² In addition, previous evaluations of the organization were included as a secondary resource in the report, namely MSS's Capacity Canada Report completed in 2016. The document consists of a summary and evaluation of the organization's capacity, and an assessment of the progress made with regards to their Strategic Plan.³ The report provides a substantial overview of the organization and its growth over the years, analysing multiple areas, such as human and physical resources, grants volunteerism, media presence, and community partnerships. The report therefore provides an excellent foundation for this research to draw from, as it comprises a basic understanding of the impact of MSS's various partnerships.

Furthermore, a second report reviewing MSS's Safer Families Program, an initiative aimed at alleviating domestic violence within the community, is also incorporated as an aspect of the secondary research. The report comprises an assessment of the program considering the recent Syrian refugee influx by highlighting the steps the organization has taken to accommodate for these newcomers. It includes interviews with community stakeholders regarding the efficacy of the program and the growing need for assistance for newcomers, particularly concerning issues of domestic violence. Finally, the review of secondary materials also includes a literature review, drawing from a variety of sources on faith groups and newcomers, as well as from what information there is specifically on faith and settlement partnerships. The review of external secondary sources within this report draws largely from the overarching project's literature review, compiled and analyzed by Chris Brnjas.⁴ Within the scope of this case study, the secondary materials have been compared and synthesised with primary data obtained from in-depth interviews and instances of participant observation in order to develop a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the ways in which MSS's various community partnerships operate to serve newcomers, and ultimately benefit the larger society.

² See Appendix B for organizational mission, values, and goals

³ See Appendix B for MSS's Strategic Plan

⁴ The project's summary of the literature review can be found here:

<http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/resources/694/Lit%20Review%20Summary%20May%2019,%202017.pdf>

Vision: To What Extent Are Faith and Settlement Partnerships Viewed Positively?

Partnerships between MSS and settlement agencies are largely viewed as positive by community stakeholders. Though these collaborations involve multiple barriers, including misunderstandings between organizations and unequal resources, these partnerships are generally encouraged within the settlement sector. Four main themes can be identified within this section:

1. MSS is able to **meet the spiritual, cultural, and language-based needs** of many newcomers in ways that mainstream organizations on their own are not.
2. Settlement-sector organizations often refer their newcomer clients to MSS for **culturally and spiritually sensitive counselling**, the necessity and value of which is becoming increasingly recognized within the community.
3. MSS is able to **meet a variety of needs for diverse populations**, paying close attention to the specific requirements of individual newcomers, rather than making assumptions about the community as a whole. Their large variety of **programs and supports** are integral to meeting these needs.
4. MSS provides settlement-sector service providers with **ongoing intercultural competency training**, which has proved to be extremely beneficial for helping other, more mainstream organizations meet the needs of newcomers in culturally and spiritually appropriate ways.

Meeting Cultural and Language-Based Needs

One of the greatest strengths of Muslim Social Services is that it can accommodate and address cultural and language needs of newcomer clients for which mainstream and settlement agencies may not be as well-equipped. As an ethno-cultural organization with employees and volunteers who themselves come from a diverse range of backgrounds, it can understand newcomer needs from a cultural perspective. Informants from external partnering organizations often commented on the fact that MSS can provide the cultural knowledge and depth of understanding that they are not able to offer, typically due to a lack of diversity within these mainstream organizations. As one external informant put it,

Is a counsellor from a white Ministry background able to understand where they come from? Religious-wise, culture-wise, history-wise, what's happening right now politically in their country... We need to have appropriate services with appropriate perspectives. So that means we have to have diverse families and diverse workers. That's what our agency is lacking, unfortunately. (E6)

Various external organizations who participated in the research commented that MSS fills the “culture gap” within their services to better engage and provide for families. Though these organizations noted that they are working towards improving diversity within their agencies, this is a work-in-progress that does not yet reflect the needs of the Kitchener-Waterloo community.

For instance, MSS’s culturally-informed approach to family conflicts was cited by participants from partnering agencies as an especially important facet within the community. Many immigrants from South Asian and Middle Eastern countries live within joint family systems and adhere to certain cultural norms and expectations that differ significantly from Canadian perspectives. Problems that arise from family dynamics and disciplining children must be understood within their cultural and religious contexts, and not simply from a western point of view. When dealing with issues of newcomer family violence, service

providers must be aware of the complexities of the problems, and understand that typical western intervention approaches will not suffice in most instances.

Multiple participants from external organizations noted that preventing and addressing domestic violence within newcomer communities is one of the areas MSS excels in, and that they often rely on them to help their clients with family issues including both domestic violence and approaches to disciplining children. One participant who previously worked with MSS noted that the Syrian refugee influx led to a notable increase in referrals regarding the supervision and discipline of children, as well as domestic violence. MSS is typically approached by external agencies in such situations to provide the insight that will allow newcomers to get the culturally and spiritually-sensitive assistance they may not otherwise get from settlement and mainstream agencies on their own. While the general consensus from participants was that settlement and other community services that assist newcomers certainly understand the importance of cultural sensitivity and knowledge, they often rely on MSS to assist them in this area, referring clients to MSS as a means of addressing the cultural context.

Furthermore, language is one particularly pertinent aspect of the culture piece that MSS addresses. In another study done on MSS's Safer Families Project, community stakeholders stated that translation and interpretation were the most prevalent barriers in servicing non-English speaking newcomers. Indeed, mainstream services such as hospitals and schools do not always have their own translators available, which keeps newcomers from being able to engage fully with these critical sectors of society. It was noted, for instance, that there are times doctors will not have translators, which compromises communication and could prevent newcomers from seeking medical assistance when they need it. Though at times newcomer adults will have their children translate for them, as they will have often learned more English at school, in certain stressful or traumatic situations this is not always possible. The use of children for translation is problematic in many respects, particularly as they may not always be reliable in the transmission of information, and may misuse the privilege of this position by not providing accurate information. In such cases, as well as other instances where translation is needed, MSS is always available and willing to help.

For certain partnering agencies, this willingness to step in is a relief. As one participant noted, knowing that MSS is always just a phone call away, especially in case of an emergency, is a major comfort:

For us, it's just wonderful to know as a community that there's an agency like MSS that we can refer people to. Because we can't begin to duplicate what they can offer in terms of expertise like language facilities... (E3)

Both language expertise and a general understanding of cultural needs means that MSS is a key resource for certain mainstream and settlement agencies when it comes to providing assistance for newcomers. Though these services are certainly beneficial to external agencies, given MSS's limited resources and staff, it can be an extremely difficult burden to provide these services, particularly considering that MSS receives no funding to do so. Thus, it is challenging for MSS to balance provision of necessary services with the acquisition of resources to do so, and to continue to meet the expectations of partners.

Spiritually and Culturally Sensitive Counselling

Many of the participants interviewed acknowledged that Kitchener Waterloo's population changing significantly with incoming immigrants and refugees, and acknowledge that this means the faith community is increasing as well. Participants stated that they recognize a need for more diverse services to connect with these newcomers, and realize that non-Westerners often need a different approach to wellbeing that incorporates faith and spirituality. MSS has certainly recognized the need for faith and culturally sensitive services, especially within the framework of mental health and counselling. Unlike

mainstream counselling services, MSS's counselling services attend to the cultural and spiritual aspects of their clients' needs, as well as providing direct counselling in multiple languages, thereby avoiding any indirect issues that may ensure form translation during counselling. Almost all these services are provided for free, even when other agencies that are paid for this work refer their clients to MSS.

Many participants commented that the counselling services MSS provides for newcomers are of utmost importance, especially because they are offered completely free of charge. All funding for these counselling services is provided via community donations. Though in the short term, this model of service seems to be working, the long-term sustainability of free professional counselling is an issue that MSS is struggling with. Even a sliding scale model of payment has not worked very well so far. This problem is further complicated by the fact that because MSS is an organization rooted in faith, some clients believe that the help provided should be free.

Furthermore, MSS recognizes the importance of a holistic approach to counselling where faith, culture, gender etc., all intersect and play an important role. Clients who seek counselling from MSS know that their lived experiences will be validated as whole person, which also includes incorporating clients' spiritual needs as a part of the counselling process, should the client so desire. The benefits of incorporating faith in counselling for newcomers is becoming increasingly recognized in both the academic and psychotherapy practice. Pargament (2007) has written on the important role of spirituality within people's lives, and the impact it can have when integrated with psychotherapy. A study by Ager et al. (2015) for instance found that the role of faith in coping with mental health issues can be crucial for helping some newcomers with integration. They posit that religious beliefs can have immense therapeutic potential, and can help spiritual people find solutions to their problems that other methods would not be as effective in determining. MSS, while not a religious congregation, does provide newcomers who are spiritual with a safe space to explore and engage in faith-based conversations and counselling. When asked about the importance of faith in the lives of newcomers, one member of the MSS team replied that religious belief and commitment helps by

giving them hope and encouraging them to draw on their strengths. And just to believe that something better will happen to them. It's mostly helping them see hope and to motivate them to keep moving forward and trusting that things happen for a reason... and accepting what happens to them as a part of their life. (I2)

Of course, religious perspectives are not pushed onto clients because that model does not work for everyone. Muslims come from a variety of religious practices and with numerous cultural variations. There is also a recognition that religion for some clients may be a deterrent as some people's experiences with religion can also be negative, especially if religion has been used to oppress. MSS counselors first obtain a comprehensive understanding of the individuals or families they are assisting, including the ways in which they relate to religion, before proceeding with implementing it as a basis or support for counselling. However, when faith is an important aspect of clients' lives, MSS is equipped to understand what the intersection of culture and mental health, and to provide services accordingly. As a faith-based organization, MSS can deeply engage with the spiritual aspect of newcomers' lives, providing them with support and advice that is unique in its ability to impact emotional and mental well-being (Connor 2010).

Moreover, the counselling that MSS provides clients is not only spiritually recognisant, but culturally and linguistically competent as well. Indeed, the fact that MSS provides counselling in a variety of languages, including Arabic, Urdu, Pashto, and Punjabi, sets it apart from other counselling agencies that require the use of translators. Partnering agencies therefore will often refer non-English speaking clients to MSS to ensure they receive the most effective assistance in their own language. Though other agencies use translators when providing mental health services for newcomers, as some of the

participants noted, the presence of a translator often negatively affects the counselling session, and decreases the effectiveness of the support. Reasons for this decrease in effectiveness include loss of meaning through translation, lack of trust for translators, and a fear that speaking of certain issues may result in them being spread around the community.

Mainstream service providers have recognized that there are cost issues with having interpreters present, as ideally these interpreters should be certified counselors as well. While some participants have therefore recognized that sending newcomers directly to MSS for counselling as a means of eliminating the need for an interpreter altogether, other agencies continue to use MSS personnel as translators only, despite the fact that MSS's workers are in fact certified counselors themselves. From the perspective of MSS, the cost of multilingual counsellors is very high. Most of the counsellors associated with MSS often sacrifice their personal time and offer help for free. An effective model of partnership that could make this type of counselling model a success would be a vibrant resource sharing partnership with mainstream agencies.

Additionally, one of the most significant challenges in providing counselling to newcomers seems to be that mainstream services lack cultural competency, and therefore the ability to fully comprehend and address immigrant and refugee experiences of domestic violence. One particularly important finding of this research shows that newcomers, upon entering a counselling session, do not wish to spend much time explaining their cultural background and the reasoning behind their actions and emotions. In this sense, an in-depth understanding of culture is necessary when it comes to alleviating newcomer trauma. Ignorance only increases hardship, and makes integration even more difficult. In addition, interviews with various counsellors, both inside and outside of MSS revealed that many newcomers do not have any concept of counselling at all upon arrival, and thus require explanations before they can even begin to reach out for help. Many mainstream counselling services do not understand that within many non-Western cultures, asking for external help can be extremely stigmatizing, often deterring immigrants from seeking counselling or other forms of assistance.

As was previously mentioned, trust is another significant issue in terms of providing counselling services for newcomers. Interviews with MSS personnel revealed that often newcomers are more likely to trust MSS rather than mainstream services, largely because they are better equipped to comprehend the immigrant and refugee situation, their experience of displacement, culture shock, and adapting to a whole new way of life. As immigrants themselves, most MSS personnel can relate to newcomers on a personal level, having shared many of the same experiences and hardships. Having first-hand insight into the cultures of newcomers, MSS counselors can develop solutions to certain issues and methods of moving forward that take culture, spirituality, and the difficulties of migration into account.

Though some participants acknowledged that they did turn to MSS for this culturally sensitive counselling, MSS personnel commented that they wished more external agencies would direct their clients towards these services, rather than simply utilizing them as translators. It appears that many collaborating organizations within the settlement sector have yet to recognize the importance of spiritually and culturally sensitive approaches to counseling, despite evidence affirming their effectiveness.

Meeting a Variety of Needs

MSS responds to a range of needs for a range of people, and through their resourcefulness and networking capabilities can support Kitchener Waterloo's settlement sector in a variety of ways. Unlike some newer groups that have developed in response to certain newcomer influxes, such as organizations focused solely on helping Syrian refugees, MSS offers assistance to the whole community, not limiting themselves to any one population. Though the Syrian refugee crisis is undoubtedly of immediate and significant concern, they offer services to newcomers outside of this context as well, and are dedicated to

meeting the needs of many different communities, something that many organizations are unable to do. For instance, one participant commented that:

We don't have diverse people in our organization, very few people and we need more staff who understands and come from diverse backgrounds so we can provide service to the community needs. We don't have that, and Muslim Social Services are providing that gap because MSS covers diverse, very vast, diverse communities covered under this umbrella. It's not just one particular culture or country or language, it covers many other cultures, many languages, many diverse families are involved in this. (E6)

Newcomers coming from a variety of backgrounds and situations can benefit from the services MSS provides. Some participants from partnering agencies commented on this broad-based approach to servicing the community, noting that it allows them to be responsive to a range of issues, and to perceive these issues from a wider lens. However, though most participants who addressed this range stated that it was beneficial for the community, it was also noted that this makes finding a particular niche or focus difficult for MSS. In response, MSS personnel commented that it was important to note that their approach to being a faith-based organization means providing services beyond one population. Indeed, inclusivity is one of the fundamental aspects of MSS's values model, and therefore requires a readiness to address multiple needs of multiple populations.

As a result of addressing the needs of a wide range of newcomers, the types of assistance that MSS provides is also very broad, covering a variety of areas of integration and daily living. Coming from a culturally and ethnically diverse perspective, MSS can take a culturally-competent perspective in addressing these community needs via multiple avenues. As one community stakeholder noted,

With a diverse population in the Waterloo Region, we need services which can assist people from different perspectives: faith, ethnicity, group, family, individual, educational opportunities like parenting class, etc. MSS is an important to meeting the needs of the many peoples who are now in our region. (E10)

Though MSS is a faith-based organization, it provides assistance to community members in many ways, only some of which are faith-related. Many of the benefits MSS's partnerships provides to newcomer clients include very practical services, such as transportation, accompaniment to various appointments and engagements, translation, advocacy, spiritual care, conflict resolution, etc. Partners also note that MSS has been especially helpful in providing newcomer clients with confidential legal help, especially in culturally-sensitive situations as some newcomers may be afraid to use translators in such sensitive situations.

MSS also provides employment and education-related assistance, helping newcomers with practical aspects such as writing resumes and applying for jobs, and offers homework help for youth. In partnering with other organizations, MSS has been able to provide language classes and computer literacy courses, and assistance with seemingly menial tasks such as doing taxes. This provisioning of practical assistance for newcomers concurs with a study by Janzen et al. (2016) that found that like MSS, religious congregations often provide a broad range of support for newcomers, from practical needs to help with navigating settlement services, to providing new social opportunities. Similarly, Connor (2014) notes that religious groups can provide immigrants with opportunities to develop social networks wherein they can share information and learn more about employment leads, obtain job referrals, and learn about bureaucratic processes.

One community stakeholder stressed the importance of MSS as an organization that actively works to meet the needs of the community, rather than simply speaking about addressing these needs:

There are a lot of other organizations – but most of the time they will just give you lip service. They will just say, ‘okay, we’ll do it, okay we’ll look into it...’ But in reality, I need the work itself. And nobody is there. I don’t want to name names... But you don’t do anything. You don’t do the things that I need. Just telling me something, just giving me a book to go and read, that doesn’t mean anything to me. I need real people to sit down, do things together – that’s what I need. So MSS was doing all of this. What MSS does is not just the lip-service, just saying things. They go there physically to their house, and they provide clothing, food, or bus tickets. Sometimes groceries, and they ask ‘what is your issue? What are you having problems with? What are the barriers?’ They physically go and assess the situation. I don’t think there is another organization doing like this. (E11)

Multiple informants commented on the fact that MSS seems to be doing what no other community organizations are, largely in terms of providing newcomers with much needed practical assistance that can be immediately beneficial to them. A community partner who himself had been touched by MSS’s outreach services once commented that MSS personnel go out of their way to make people feel welcome in the community, and help them develop a sense of belonging. Indeed, as Tse (2011) writes, “religious spaces in transnational migration contexts serve as sites where immigrants can find an alternative sense of familyhood, belonging, and home” (757). Likewise, Connor (2014) agrees that Religious organizations can offer a spiritual and emotional refuge for immigrants – “offering them an ethnic community that reminds them of home and makes them feel comfortable in the chaos happening in their lives” (71). Certain partnering agencies see MSS as putting their heart into their work, a dedication that can be seen in particular people, as well as the organization as a whole. For instance, in offering Arabic classes as well as English classes, and in raising money for Ramadan and other cultural and religious events, MSS attempts to make newcomers feel comfortable and welcome, letting them know that their culture and language is valued and celebrated here. For many, the personal touch MSS offers is not something that can be found within larger mainstream organizations.

Programs

MSS offers a variety of programming for men, women, youth and families. These programs are open to everyone, and meet a range of needs for both newcomers and long-term residents. Participants often commented on the value of MSS programs, and the positive effects they can be seen to have in the lives of new Canadians. MSS offers a variety of programming for women and men, such as parenting classes, the Safer Families program, conversation circles, and supports for integration and adapting to life in Canada, among many others. Programs provide a safe space for socialization, speaking out about certain issues and asking important questions, and can help to relieve anxieties about living in an unfamiliar country.

The programs most often mentioned by partners in the study were those directed at newcomer youth. The Art Therapy Program, for instance, was highlighted as being extremely beneficial for children, and an outstanding example of a collaboration between agencies. In teaching kids how to express themselves through art, the program transcended language barriers and allowed for children to work through some of their trauma in a creative manner. Perhaps even more notable however was a series of youth empowerment workshops for the refugee youth of the most persecuted Rohingya community, resulting in a creative play. The play, *I Am Rohingya*, was a result of MSS’s collaboration with the City of

Kitchener and the Rohingya community. Written and performed by the Rohingya Youth telling their own personal stories of war, loss, and trauma, the play was met with incredible success, selling out auditoriums and raising extraordinary amounts of funds for a relief agency that builds clinics in refugee camps in Rakhine state. Most importantly, the play opened many doors for the children involved, inspiring self-confidence, inner peace, and incredible motivation.

MSS's youth programs are unlike those of other agencies in the sense that they offer customized programs, specifically tailored to meet the needs of different communities. MSS understands that newcomer youth often require culturally-specific programs, as they are sometimes unable or unwilling to participate in more mainstream, generalized youth initiatives:

[Other organizations] they say 'oh we have a youth program here, youth program there,' and it was difficult to customize something with your need. It was broader sort of things. A lot of the time the kids get lost... like 'oh this is not what I want.' So if it is youth programs, it should be based on the culture and community. It will take time for these kids to learn a generalization of things. At the beginning stage, or maybe for many years, they need things exclusively designed for them. (E11)

For this key informant, the *I Am Rohingya* play was so successful because it provided the space for the youth to select what they wanted to do and what they were interested in. Participants commented that it gave them a degree of freedom and independence, and allowed them to explore their own needs, desires and modes of learning in a way that was fun and creative. This the perceived benefit of MSS youth programs is that they are customized to meet the specific needs of specific people, and recognize the importance of culture. Overall, perceptions of MSS youth programs are very positive, and continue to foster much success in the lives of newcomers and in the community.

Intercultural Competency and Trauma Training

MSS offers a variety of training workshops and classes, including cultural sensitivity training for mainstream and settlement organizations. Cultural and spiritual sensitivity training is one of the primary reasons external agencies reach out to MSS, and has at time been crucial for providing services to newcomers. There is often a general lack of knowledge in terms of cultural diversity, and many mainstream service providers are unfamiliar with non-western cultures. Many of the participants interviewed acknowledged that "the reality is, we have things to learn too" (E3), and are open and willing to engaging in the training MSS offers. Overall, participants from partnering agencies noted that MSS workshops for employees have been extremely beneficial for working with refugees and other immigrants.

Partners stated that one of the most important aspects of the Intercultural Competency training that MSS offers is the education regarding differences within immigrant communities:

Islam is not one stream. Its many streams. So we learned about the variations, the Alevites. We learned about the different kinds of Sunni Muslims. And the tension between different groups. I think we could have done better about learning that earlier... It just heightened my awareness immediately that we've got to staff from as diverse a perspective as possible, to accommodate the different streams... we hired from the pool that was there, we looked for the competencies that were needed, but we were reminded that it's important to staff from a broad-base of Islamic folks" (E2)

Thus, MSS is seen as a resource for increasing diversity within other organizations in order to better account for a variety of newcomer backgrounds and traditions. They remind mainstream settlement sector organizations that immigrant identities are complex and varied, that there is no “one size fits all” approach. One member of the MSS team highlighted this fact:

You can't expect people who are coming from the Middle East to act or to be the same as people who are coming from Africa or from Asia, West Asia, East Asia, what. So we do our best to explain that religion is something universal and it's mixed with tradition and culture, and controlled by the geographic area they are coming from. So the main practices are very similar, but the other practices or the implementation of the practices is totally different. (11)

Though settlement agencies are increasingly recognizing the fact that they cannot successfully take a one-dimensional approach to immigrant integration, MSS's cultural diversity training is nonetheless important for many service providers.

In addition to Cultural Competency training, MSS also offers trauma training because it is crucial for mainstream organizations to learn more about the trauma refugees and other immigrants have gone through. Workshops such as Trauma and the Refugee have been met with significant success among settlement sector organizations, and participants noted that this is one of the gaps they see MSS filling in their agencies and within the broader community. MSS also provides volunteer training addressing issues that can stem from trauma for community members interested in engaging with refugee populations. Again, this training is regarded by participants as being highly useful, and has helped individuals and organizations become more sensitive to the vast range of hardships newcomers encounter.

Structure: What Types of Partnerships Currently Exist and How Could They Be Improved?

Generally, partnerships that currently exist between MSS and settlement-sector agencies are informal, wherein mainstream organizations rely on MSS to act as a mediator between them and the newcomer clients. Though these types of partnerships can be effective for addressing immediate needs, they prove challenging for long-term collaboration and offering newcomers sustainable help. The four key themes identified in this section include:

1. **Informal partnerships that are largely inequitable**, as a lack of written agreements and formalized roles means that power dynamics are often unbalanced within collaborations.
2. MSS often plays a **bridging role**, acting as the go-between for newcomers and settlement agencies and helping newcomers navigate the system.
3. Many **challenges** arise within faith and settlement partnerships, often due to a lack of funding, however MSS responds with creativity and resourceful solutions when faced with such challenges.
4. There is a general **lack of knowledge** with regards to MSS and to faith-based groups in general, as well as certain **ideological barriers** that prevent successful partnerships.

Types of Partnerships

The types of partnerships that currently exist between Muslim Social Services and government-funded settlement agencies are mostly informal, with no memorandums of understanding or written agreements. Partnerships between MSS and other agencies include making referrals to one another, sharing resources, providing employees and volunteers with various forms of training and support, and joint programming for newcomers and other community members. However, because of the informal nature of collaborations, and the unequal balance of funds and resources, MSS is often at a disadvantage compared to larger, government-funded organizations. Though MSS has no regular funding, the organization's understanding is that many collaborating agencies do not recognize this, and therefore often expect more from MSS than it is able to provide. Though some informants from partnering organizations recognized this inequality in funding, and the challenges MSS faces as a NGO, others are not as cognizant of it. Indeed, MSS personnel often feel as though partnering organizations expect too much from them, as if MSS were government funded. These expectations put a tremendous amount of stress on MSS, as limited part time staff, and dependence on volunteers, and very limited resources often leaves them unable to meet unrealistic service demands.

However, even though MSS has significantly less funding and personnel than many government-funded settlement organizations, it works hard to fill the gaps in these services, providing newcomers with the assistance that settlement organizations cannot. As one MSS team member noted, "if somebody is looking for something and our partner is not providing it, we will consider starting something that responds to this need" (I1). For instance, the Computer Literacy Program, established in collaboration with The Working Centre, was initiated in response to a community need for newcomer refugees learning about computer technology and use, especially preparing high school students preparing to enter a new school system. Informants commented that MSS fills various gaps where other organizations do not, especially in terms of practical needs of social and food assistance, spiritually and culturally sensitive counselling, advocacy on behalf of the newcomers etc.:

The pieces are being picked up by Muslim Social Services. They go pick them up and they try to help support them, and navigate the system for the families. (E6)

MSS recognizes the challenges settlement agencies face with limited amount of contact with newcomers which leaves them struggling beyond that specific time of service. MSS steps in as a resource for them, continuing to support them throughout their journey. Whereas many settlement organizations are only able to help newcomers initially for a short-term period, MSS is able to pick up where they left off, and provide support for immigrants and refugees as long as it is required.

What Would be Missing?

When participants were asked what would be missing from their organization and the wider community if MSS did not exist, many people claimed that there would undoubtedly be a significant absence of service. For one community stakeholder, MSS provides real action in order to truly meet the needs of the community in ways that other organizations are not able to alone:

My community, it doesn't matter what sort of lip-service you provide, it will not be helpful at all. You have to go there and hold their hand, and then go one step at a time. I don't know about other communities, but this would be missing if MSS ceased to exist. (E11)

MSS supplements the work other organizations do by providing more than “lip-service” to newcomer communities and individuals. They do the work no one else is doing, and walk alongside immigrants throughout their settlement process. Similarly, for certain agencies, especially those that lack diversity in staff, having MSS to help guide newcomers through organizational processes is crucial. In such agencies, MSS also provides critical support to the staff through cultural sensitivity training and interpretation help, not merely translation, but a real clarification of the needs of the clients so they can get appropriate help from that particular agency.

In terms of the wider community, culture and identity were identified by partners as elements that would be missing from newcomer lives. Spiritually and culturally sensitive services at MSS provide newcomers with a basis for re-shaping identities and finding a sense of grounding in the new Canadian landscape. Multiple participants from partner organizations commented that MSS has become essential for helping newcomers establish a stronger sense of self upon arrival in their new country. As one participant put it, “in many ways, it’s helping the newcomers find themselves” (E6). By celebrating culture and tradition rather than attempting to downplay it, and by emphasizing integration rather than assimilation, MSS provides newcomers with a space for belonging, regardless of their background. Though some new Canadians prefer to move away from their culture and religion as a strategy for assimilation into Canadian culture, for many newcomers these elements are an integral part of their identity (Handy and Greenspan 2009).

Cadge et al. (2013) notes that religion can help refugees and other immigrants develop a strong sense of self during times of transition and uncertainty. Similarly, Connor (2014) posits that participation within faith-based groups can help immigrants find solace and stability in this transitional period – a time that could otherwise cause much anxiety and depression. MSS helps the newcomers beyond the identifiable ways of settlement. MSS provides them a way of integrating in the society by learning about the new system of life—the rules and regulations that govern the Canada, the systems that protect the citizens, especially children, the rights and freedoms that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms accords its citizens, and the difference in cultural approaches to family safety and health, to name just a few. The goal is to truly help the newcomers belong in their new and different environment and to help ease their mind when the differences in various aspects of life become challenging.

Culture was also put forward as one of the key aspects that would be missing from the community if MSS did not partner with other agencies. As one participant put it, “Muslim Social Services helps people

keep their story alive” (E1). MSS celebrates and values culture and cultural differences, emphasising integration rather than assimilation. As Tse (2011) notes, ethnic religious communities at once connect newcomers with their home countries, while also helping them establish a sense of belonging in their new country. In much the same vein, MSS seeks to establish a balance between encouraging newcomers to become a part of Canadian society, and assisting them in keeping their spiritual and cultural traditions as well. In doing so, MSS helps ensure newcomers feel welcome and valued in the community, no matter what their background may be.

Bridging the Gap: Navigating the System

A significant part of what MSS does in many of its partnerships and collaborations is to act as a bridge between newcomers and settlement or mainstream services. Not only does MSS connect newcomers to proper settlement organizations and teach them about Canadian culture, but it often mediates the ways in which the organizations interact with newcomers themselves, providing them with various training workshops and informal advice for improving relationships. In a study by Forner and Alba (2008), they demonstrated that in the United States, religion and faith-based groups are understood largely as a bridging mechanism for connecting newcomers to their new society. Concurrently, this case study has shown that MSS is largely seen as a bridge by community partners – an essential agent in connecting newcomers to mainstream institutions and introducing them to the Canadian system.

Since MSS can create strong ties with newcomers and develop a certain amount of trust with them, in partnering with MSS settlement agencies are often able to reach more people in the community and gain more clients than they would have otherwise been able to do. As Janzen et al. (2016) posit, immigrant congregations have a natural bonding ability with immigrants that can be extremely helpful in helping with settlement and support. For one participant from a government-funded settlement organization,

It isn't about setting up separate little parallel systems, it's about making sure the translators are at the hospitals, and that they get to dentists, that Healthy Smiles is learned about, that dentists begin to know that they can be part of providing dental care and dental teaching, and that there's a system that they can plug these kids into, and get them on a government program. So what's the role of cooperation, of collaboration with Muslim Social Services? Well, it's immense. Because of the linkages of MSS to these people who are mostly Muslim. So there's an organic link that's immensely full of potential. (E2)

This “organic link” means that MSS is often able to connect with newcomers on a very immediate and sometimes personal basis, allowing them to gain a good understanding of their needs. Thus, for partnering organizations, MSS is able to pass on this knowledge, and instruct these organizations on ways in which they can become more accessible and approachable for newcomers. As the survey data shows, 50% of settlement organizations value faith-based groups for the referrals they make to the appropriate settlement services, demonstrating that they do see these groups as being important bridges between them and new Canadians.

Within many of their partnerships, MSS is seen as the intermediary or “go-between” for settlement services and newcomers. Referring to the connection between newcomers and settlement sector organizations, a MSS team member commented that

We are always giving advice, we are always doing these diversity or cultural competency workshops, explaining as much as we can. We try to bridge the differences between the two groups. (I1)

For mainstream service providers, the view of MSS as a bridge is also quite accurate, especially considering the ways in which MSS provides newcomers with ongoing education regarding Canadian culture and institutions:

One of the pieces is giving education and orientation. That is essential for newcomers and refugees who arrive: lack of knowledge, lack of access to services... so the first point is Muslim Social Services is providing the orientation, introduction to what's out there, helping the new refugees and immigrants to connect to those services, to appropriate services. They're doing a good job actually. We have several case conferences with counsellors on difficult cases, we get their support. We are well connected, they are well connected with that population. (E6)

MSS helps newcomers navigate the system, educating them on what services are available, how to access them, and what they are all about. Newcomer integration is certainly not just about service providers learning how to accommodate new Canadians, but also involves them learning about Canadian culture, and what it means to be a Canadian citizen.

One of the most successful examples of MSS's newcomer education is the eight-week workshop introducing immigrants to various community agencies and services. Multiple participants referred to this workshop series as being extremely valuable for both potential clients and the agencies that were introduced, as it alleviated some of the fear and confusion surrounding these organizations, and introduced newcomers to services they otherwise would not have been aware of. Newcomers were given a chance to voice their concerns about the various agencies that participated in the workshop, and ask questions. Representatives from organizations learned directly about newcomers' needs, receiving important feedback about how their services could be improved, and the newcomers were able to learn about services available to them.

Participant observation of a similar workshop available through MSS's Healthy Families program, wherein MSS introduced newcomers to a family service agency revealed that these programs are very valuable to both immigrants and service providers. The organization's representative and the MSS member worked together to provide newcomers with the information they needed, teaching them about what the organization was all about, including the structure of the agency, legalities involved, and a clear outline of the ways in which the agency operates. They made sure the participants were aware of their own rights as Canadian citizens and as families, and that family services are there to help protect those rights. They addressed the fear that many immigrants have of family services, and made it very clear that they are there to help, and they should never hesitate to call with questions or concerns.

Overall, the presentation was very well received from all those present, with participants asking many questions, voicing important concerns, and even exclaiming that everyone in the immigrant community should be made to attend these kinds of workshops. Discussions during and after the workshop demonstrated that refugees have a desire for parenting classes, and would like to see more of these. It is evident that these workshops and programs, collaborations with MSS that present partnering agencies to the immigrant community in ways that make sense for them, are an especially promising aspect of faith and settlement partnerships. They decrease the fear many newcomers have of these organizations, and give them "positive exposure" (E4) to the services available to them.

Bridging the Gap: Education and Awareness

More than educating the newcomers about Canadian systems and institutions, MSS also educates settlement and other mainstream organizations about the newcomers. MSS has been essential in diffusing and preventing certain situations that arose from misunderstandings between individuals or groups, and has been an important advocate for refugees and immigrants. By helping newcomers navigate the system, MSS also ensures that their voices are heard, making sure they are understood by other community agencies. Though cultural and language differences may often prevent clear communication between immigrants and service providers, leading to difficult or even harmful situations, MSS attempts to prevent this as much as possible. By acting as a mediator between newcomers and settlement or mainstream organizations, MSS creates a flow of communication and understanding that would not otherwise be possible.

What's working well is we are able to work very closely, providing workshops for families who are arriving, educate them, and connect them to services. At the same time we can have our staff being educated by MSS staff, and the programs they offer. So it's both ways. It's a two-way street, the communication, relationship building, and supporting families. And also we are consulting on a regular basis, when it's needed we just pick up the phone and call the social workers here and we get a consultation. And they do the same. (E6)

An example of this “two-way street” type of relationship building can be seen in MSS’s involvement with the public school system, supporting culturally diverse families and children. MSS has played an important role in helping equity office staff navigate difficult situations, often resulting from cultural differences. Specifically, in providing assistance to the Waterloo Regional District School Board (WRDSB), MSS drafted guidelines for interacting with Muslim parents and students within certain contexts identified by teachers and staff. In doing so, MSS involved various religious leaders of different denominations in the process and supported the school board by responding to the needs of teachers and students. This constant liaison with the WRDSB staff is one especially notable example of MSS’s bridge-building.

MSS’s most successful and promising partnerships are those that involve close collaboration, and mutual learning. These partnerships include regular consultations, evaluations, and joint workshops that make the well-being of newcomer families the top priority. When external agencies are open to receiving training and advice from MSS, collaborations are typically very successful, and certainly benefit the newcomers involved. However, unfortunately not all of MSS’s relationships with settlement sector organizations are structured in this manner, and there are many challenges. Resisting the acknowledgement of MSS’s support, funding issues, and ideological barriers are some of the main problems that keep partnerships from being able to flourish and grow, which unfortunately means that newcomers are not always receiving the best quality of service they could be.

Challenges

As for many small, non-government funded organizations, expenses and funding is the primary challenge for MSS, and for working in partnership with other agencies. The survey data also indicated that a lack of funds in the settlement sector prevents organizations and partnerships from reaching their full potential. As one participant put it, “if they had funds, I think they would be able to do wonders” (E4). Indeed, the consensus from most participants, both internal to the organization and external, is that MSS would be a very successful organization, and an even more important resource for the community, if they had more funding. Shields et al. (2016) note that while it is clear that ethno-specific organizations have

much to offer the immigrant and refugee community, filling various service gaps in the settlement process, the funding typically goes only to larger mainstream settlement agencies that have more resources and public funding. Similarly, the survey data reveals that it is difficult to evaluate the impact of small organizations on the community because funding for evaluation typically only goes to larger, more established agencies. Many mainstream services that work with MSS cannot fund them directly, which means that the help is always “at their expense” (E3).

Yet despite this lack of funding, some organizations continue to seek unrealistic help from MSS, not realizing that without a financial boost, they are unable to provide all of the services and programming that are asked of them. As an MSS worker noted, “every year is different than the other year, and people expect us to help them out, and then they get really disappointed if we cannot help them in the same way” (I3). This statement goes to show that while some partnering agencies understand that MSS does not have consistent funding, others are largely unaware of this fact, and therefore their expectations are too high. Funding through yearly contracts limits the ability of organizations to plan long-term and significantly decreases sustainability (Mukhtar et al. 2016).

Though Mukhtar et al. suggest that limitations on funding often mean that these organizations are “unable to target or modify programming to meet the diverse needs of newcomers” (398), this is not the case for MSS because programming for newcomers is a priority, and it ensures services meet the needs. This has been made possible through student internships, expert volunteer involvement of professionals with specialization in social work, psychotherapy as well as academics and researchers with the lived experience of being newcomers. Thus, by making the individual central in the settlement process, MSS is able to utilize creative networking and resourcefulness to meet its short term and long-term needs. MSS will do everything it can to find the necessary resources and connect with those who have the necessary expertise to make the settlement experience a positive one. Though funding is always an issue for MSS, by truly understanding the challenges the newcomers face, this organization can find creative solutions to problems despite a lack of resources.

A lack of funding within the settlement sector leads to immense competition among organizations aimed at helping newcomers. There are multiple agencies and groups involved in the settlement business, and all are drawing from the same pot of finances. Though MSS was one of the initial, foundational organizations that provided the grounding for many of the newer groups that have since emerged, it often does not receive sufficient financial leverage because of this growing number of similar organizations. Competition leads to organizations attempting to prove that they are the only ones providing certain services for newcomers, working in silos or parallel systems, which inevitably leads to a lack of referrals between agencies (Mukhtar et al. 2016). Thus, many organizations will not tell their clients about potentially beneficial programs being run elsewhere, a competitive spirit that deprives newcomers of services from which they could be benefiting immensely. Though there is a common goal of helping newcomers within the settlement sector, competition for funds and recognition prevents organizations from working together to best attain these goals. Furthermore, the competition often leads to a distrust between smaller ethno-cultural or faith-based organizations and larger settlement agencies, increasing the service gaps for newcomers, rather than closing them (Mukhtar et al. 2016).

Because MSS offers culturally and spiritually competent services, and can understand newcomer experiences and backgrounds from a first-hand perspective, MSS is seen as somewhat of a threat to certain settlement agencies. One MSS associate illustrated this point:

Imagine that when you have an organization that is providing the service in a culturally, spiritually appropriate model – they are a big competition for you! If they are from the same background as their clients, they are more approachable for them, they will be happier to listen to them, better than the mainstream agencies.

Besides, sometimes you can feel the difference when you are planning a program, if you are from this group or for that group. For us, we take into consideration all traditions, all cultures, what may be appropriate for them, even in timing the programs, what time works better for them, which day is better than the other day. Because we know their reaction. (I1)

In giving more culturally acceptable and culturally resonate advice to newcomers than mainstream organizations may be able, MSS becomes a threat. Instead of partnering with MSS to learn from them and collaborate with them to provide the best services possible to newcomers, such organizations tend to use MSS for their knowledge, and then neglect to give them any credit or recognition. Many settlement organizations, ones that MSS staff identified as the ones that use their services most, were hesitant to speak to the researchers for this study, either ignoring requests to speak about their collaborations with MSS, or avoiding certain topics or direct references to MSS in the interviews. Though these agencies did not explicitly state why they wished not to participate in the project, it can be inferred that it is at least partially to do with the fact they are very hesitant to recognize the work MSS has done for their organizations, and their part in collaborations. A recurring theme in the interviews with MSS personnel was the sentiment that mainstream and settlement agencies take advantage of MSS, exploiting their knowledge and resources, and then refusing to acknowledge their contributions.

In the past, MSS has been excluded from formal partnerships for which it has put much time and effort into laying the foundation; experiences that have unfortunately made the organization hesitant to engage in future partnerships with certain agencies. Yet after excluding MSS, these organizations have continued to seek their expertise and advice in terms of delivering culturally and spiritually sensitive services, and in engaging with newcomers. Despite leaving MSS out of formalized partnerships, it is still needed for instruction on how to deliver models, set up workshops, cultural appropriateness, recruitment and translation.

Both internal and some external informants recognize that organizations within the settlement sector can become territorial, and therefore will not acknowledge the work being done by others to support newcomers in the community. An MSS associate commented that “they want to partner with us, they want to share in any benefit from our expertise, or our experience... without acknowledging our contribution.” (I1). As Shields et al. (2016) note, the competition for funds within the settlement sector discourages larger settlement agencies from working with smaller, ethno-cultural agencies, or to reduce such collaborations to “junior partnerships” that do not receive as much credit (20).

Knowledge Gaps and Ideological Barriers

In addition to a lack of recognition, there is also a general lack of knowledge about MSS and their values and goals among community partners. Just as Janzen et al. (2016) note that there is a lack of awareness in the community regarding what churches are doing to support newcomers, there is a lack of awareness regarding what faith-based organizations like MSS are doing. The interview data reveals that there may only be one or two people within any given settlement agency who are aware of MSS, and even then, there will typically be misconceptions regarding the kinds of services provided. For instance, many of the informants assumed that MSS only helps Muslims, and therefore will only refer clients who have a strong sense of Muslim faith to MSS. There is a general misconception that MSS only provides spiritual-based counseling, and will perhaps attempt to force that on clients. As the interviews with MSS and a review of their materials reveal, however, this is far from the case. Thus, a lack of understanding regarding the breadth of MSS’s services, as well as the lack of willingness to look past the name leads to clients not being referred to MSS, preventing them from benefiting from the services offered.

Furthermore, the research demonstrates that ideological barriers are a key challenge in the establishment of partnerships between MSS and mainstream organizations. Though ideological barriers are an issue for many faith-based groups working with settlement agencies (Ager and Ager 2011), these challenges are increased for Muslim groups, especially within the context of growing Islamophobia. Given that MSS is very engaged in issues of social justice and speaking out about racism and Islamophobia, other organizations may be hesitant to engage in collaboration. As one external informant noted, MSS's strident opposition to social inequalities may "turn off" other organizations who are less inclined to become involved in such issues. MSS's outspoken position regarding Islamophobia may lead to misguided judgements surrounding religious ideologies, and may cause mainstream organizations to avoid association with them. One MSS informant commented that these ill-informed judgements can lead to MSS's exclusion from partnerships:

There is always this hidden discrimination or stereotype considerations or something like that, when somebody is afraid to partner with us or to join us or something like that – they don't come out directly and tell you this is the reason, or 'we don't want to partner with the Muslim group' – but you can feel it when they give any lame excuses or something you can't accept. (I1)

Partnerships with settlement agencies may therefore be hindered by misguided assumptions about proselytization (Bramadat 2014), and fears around how working with a Muslim-based group might reflect poorly on their own organization. However, proselytization is a non-issue for MSS, as its organizational values and goals include non-discriminatory practices and providing assistance to the whole community, regardless of religion. Moreover, MSS personnel also commented that partnerships with the government are rejected for the same reason, due to underlying Islamophobia or an unwillingness to be associated with a Muslim group. Real support and meaningful partnerships with the government have been rejected in the past, and even in attempting to apply for Syrian refugee sponsorship, MSS was denied. Lack of support for Muslim groups like MSS at both the organizational level and at the governmental level point to an underlying religion-based discrimination or resistance – a challenge that extends far beyond faith and settlement partnerships, yet has a significant effect on them. For successful partnerships between Muslim-based groups and settlement agencies to exist, there must be some change within the broader system, and a willingness to move away from hatred and discrimination.

Process: How can effective partnerships be better facilitated?

In determining ways in which effective faith and settlement partnerships may be better facilitated, five major themes emerged from this case study, as well as from a broader consideration of these types of collaborations. Though there is some overlap between the themes, generally partnerships can be improved by:

1. Taking a more **client-centred** approach to collaboration, wherein the focus is on the actual needs of the individual newcomer, rather than what the involved organizations perceive these needs to be. This approach would mean including the newcomer more in the settlement process, as well as in partnership evaluations.
2. Creating more **formalized partnerships**, wherein each organization's role within the collaboration is clearly established.
3. **Increased and ongoing communication** between partnering organizations to ensure that agencies are not simply working in silos or parallel systems, but actively working together and pooling resources for the benefit of the client.
4. Emphasising **third party involvement**, wherein faith and settlement organizations can be resourcefully and strategically connected via a neutral, overarching group to best meet the needs of newcomers. Local Immigration Partnerships could play an important role in this.
5. Increased **investment in education and awareness** addressing marginalized communities and the struggles newcomers face, as well as the importance of faith and culturally sensitive services.

Client-Centred Partnerships

Though there are many challenges to overcome within faith and settlement partnerships, the first area that must be addressed is taking a more client-centred approach to collaboration and service provision. Currently, organizations within the settlement sector can be overly concerned with the competition for funds, fostering partnerships that may appear helpful to newcomers on the surface, but in reality leave much to be desired. Recommendations for making the client central in collaborations are:

- **Include the newcomer client in the decision-making process.** A culturally and spiritually sensitive model for intentional listening to the newcomer client should be developed, wherein the newcomer gets to take charge of the decisions being made and prioritize their needs.
- **Recognize that the needs of the newcomer go beyond the standard understanding of "settlement."** Understand that there is much more to a whole person than what standard models can address, and realize that some specific needs in collectivist cultures are rooted in faith and/or culture.
- **Actively engage clients in the assessment and evaluation of partnerships and programs.** Newcomers should be given many opportunities to voice their thoughts and concerns with regards to the services they are receiving. Their voices should be considered when reviewing joint programming and other supports.

Formalized and Equitable Partnerships

For partnerships between small, ethno-cultural or faith-based organizations like MSS and larger well-established agencies to be successful, formalized partnerships should be established. Far too often, small organizations like MSS are taken advantage of by larger partnering agencies, who give them too much work, too few resources, and little to no credit. Though currently MSS's partnerships are mostly informal, many informants both internal and external, agreed that formalized partnerships would be one

of the most effective ways to strengthen the collaborations and ultimately better service newcomers. Recommendations for fostering formal, equitable partnerships include:

- **Creating memorandums of understanding from the outset.** Written agreements between partnering organizations would ensure that each organizations' roles are clearly defined from the beginning, minimizing confusion and/or unnecessary duplication of service.
- **Develop an anti-oppressive common code of ethics between faith-based groups and settlement agencies.** This code of ethics should be rooted in social justice, respect the dignity of everyone involved, and enable trust building.
- **Acknowledgement of work and recognition of organizational capacities.** Formalized partnerships would ensure that all organizations involved in the collaboration receive due credit for their work, and smaller agencies are not left out. Additionally, formalized partnerships would ensure that the capacities of each organization involved are known to partnering groups, so that work may be divided equally.
- **Policy provisions for referrals.** In terms of counselling services, policy changes must be made for referring clients to MSS, wherein their services are paid for by the referring agency. For MSS to continue to provide free counselling to clients in need, there must be a transfer of funds to sustain this.

Ongoing and Open Communication

Numerous participants highlighted increasing communication as one of the primary ways in which partnerships can be strengthened, stressing that organizations must be on the same page when working together to ensure that newcomers are receiving the best service possible. Ongoing and open communication are important elements for fostering collaborative planning and policy development, aspects of partnership that are crucial to effective partnerships. As the literature on faith and settlement partnerships demonstrates, increased collaboration between the two sectors leads to better support for families, and ongoing meetings can be especially helpful for information sharing (Manso 2016). Specific recommendations for increasing communication and collaboration include:

- **Avoiding working in silos.** It is important for partnering agencies to fight the “silo mentality” (E5), as a key part of working together is to be able to provide newcomers with complimentary services that utilize the resources and expertise of each organization in sensible ways to maintain holistic support. Strategies suggested by participants to avoid working in silos include:
 1. More regular meetings between partnering agencies.
 2. More regular meetings between representatives from organizations in the settlement sector, wherein they provide updates on programing, services, and other projects. This could be via informal meetings, such as brown bag lunches.
 3. Increased dialogue between leaders/management of partnering agencies, especially in-person meetings.
 4. Increased research on the benefits and challenges of faith and settlement partnerships.
- **More education about faith-based organizations.** Interviews in this case study revealed that many collaborating organizations are unaware of what MSS is or does, or to whom it provides services. There is a general lack of knowledge within the settlement sector regarding faith-based organizations like MSS and what they can provide to the settlement process. Therefore, settlement-sector agencies require more education on organizations like MSS, and MSS should also develop better marketing strategies.

- **Increased training sessions and joint workshops.** Informants noted that the training and joint workshops MSS puts on in collaboration with other organizations are extremely useful for the organizations and their newcomer clients. These training and workshop sessions are a particularly promising aspect of faith and settlement partnerships. However, for MSS to run more workshops, increased funding is required.
- **Ongoing collaboration throughout the settlement journey.** Rather than organizations simply referring their newcomer clients to MSS and leaving them to service the client on their own, ideally both organizations should work together with the newcomer throughout the settlement process. For instance, policies could be put in place mandating that representatives from both partnering agencies meet with the client on an occasional basis to make visible to the newcomer the extent of the support. To do so would be to take a client-centred approach, as partnering groups would be actively working together to support the individual or family.

Third Party Involvement: The Role of Local Immigration Partnerships

To facilitate the most effective partnerships, it would be extremely beneficial to have some form of third party involvement, wherein a neutral organization could take on the role of connecting faith and settlement agencies to foster intentional and strategic partnerships in order to maximally benefit newcomers. This third party role is one that Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) could fill, as they are already in an excellent position to bring settlement sector organizations together. As the needs of the community change, LIPs should be able to change with them, adapting their approaches to settlement to meet the fluctuating needs of newcomers (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2014). Recommendations for involving LIPs in faith and settlement partnerships in the most effective ways include:

- **The inclusion of faith-based organizations in settlement planning.** Involving faith-based groups like MSS in partnership meetings and discussions regarding settlement would be particularly effective for addressing the spiritual and cultural needs of newcomers in the community, and would bring a valuable perspective to the discussion that some LIPs currently lack.
- **Connecting faith and settlement organizations.** LIPs could be very helpful in strategically connecting faith-based groups with settlement agencies in order to best meet the identified needs of newcomers. Connections that are fostered through a neutral third party organization may result in increased cooperation between agencies, and better provisions for newcomer clients. These connections could be built through encouraging open and ongoing dialogue between faith based and settlement groups, and by promoting the services of less-known agencies to fill knowledge gaps.
- **Organizational evaluations.** LIPs or other neutral third party organizations could conduct a series of research projects within the settlement sector, evaluating each agency with regards to capacity, strengths and weaknesses, and identify certain gaps in their services that could potentially be filled by partnering with other organizations, faith-based or otherwise. Informants in the study noted that it is essential for organizations to be aware of their own gaps, however this can be a difficult undertaking. Having a third party conduct research in this respect would allow for a more objective understanding of organizational capacity and needs.
- **Develop a database of expertise.** Once organizations have been surveyed for their areas of expertise, as well as certain gaps in service, a pool of expertise or database could be compiled so that organizations can be strategically connected with one another to provide certain services for newcomers. Resources that currently exist, as well as resources that are currently lacking within the area would be made evident through this database, and LIPs would be able to facilitate

strategic volunteer coordination to provide holistic support for newcomers. Additionally, unnecessary duplication of services would be decreased.

- **Training.** A neutral third party agency like LIPs could develop a common model of training for volunteers and workers within the settlement sector in order to address identified gaps. Different aspects of training could be led by agencies or individuals internal to the settlement sector identified as having expertise in a particular area. This model of drawing from resources and knowledge already present within the community would be more cost effective than hiring outside experts for training sessions, and would also help close the knowledge gap between agencies.

Education and Awareness

Finally, for faith and settlement partnerships to flourish, there must be an increased emphasis on education and awareness. This includes education regarding the immigrant and refugee experience, intercultural competency training, anti-racism and anti-oppression education, and an awareness of how spiritually and culturally sensitive services can be integral to newcomer integration. Increased education and awareness within the community, not only limited to the settlement sector, will help shift the focus of integration to the real needs of the newcomer. Developing an in-depth understanding of issues newcomers face in Canada will help service providers and partnerships become more client-central, and will ultimately benefit the settlement experience. Recommendations for improving education and awareness within the settlement sector are:

- **LIP facilitated talks and workshops.** Again, LIPs can be extremely helpful in organizing talks and training sessions for settlement sector organizations. These talks should touch on important issues immigrants and refugees face, such as racism, discrimination, trauma, and other challenges.
- **Education on the value of faith-based and spiritually sensitive services cannot be underestimated.** It is becoming increasingly clear both within academic and in practice that spiritually and culturally sensitive services, particularly in terms of counselling, can be invaluable to newcomer integration and well-being. Increasing awareness about the importance of these services is an important step forward for faith and settlement services.

Conclusions

In combining primary data attained through in-depth interviews with community stakeholders and instances of participant observation with secondary materials, this case study has demonstrated that faith and settlement partnerships are already an important aspect of newcomer integration in the Waterloo Region. Indeed, as more immigrants and refugees are expected to relocate to the area within the next few years, many of whom will be religious, the need for collaborations between settlement-sector organizations and faith-based groups will likely only increase. There is a visible need for the types of services Muslim Social Services provides to the community, both for the newcomers themselves and for the settlement agencies for which MSS acts as a bridge to newcomer clients. In addition to providing spiritually and culturally sensitive services, one of MSS's most important roles within these partnerships has been taking on the bridging role, making connections between newcomer families and various mainstream service providers, ultimately helping immigrants and refugees navigate the system in a safe and meaningful way.

However, despite the need for faith and settlement partnerships within the community, they will only continue to be made possible if recognition is given where it is due, and if larger settlement sector organizations begin to take seriously the services faith-based groups like MSS can provide. Currently, the major barriers preventing effective partnerships are the competition for funds among agencies, ill-informed assumptions about MSS's capacity and intentions, and a skepticism regarding faith-based groups in general, particularly those associated with the Muslim tradition. To ameliorate these issues, better and ongoing communication is needed between collaborating organizations, whereby ideological barriers can be overcome by meaningful dialogue. Partnering agencies must also understand that the first priority is always serving the newcomer, and should therefore be more concerned with strategies for collaboratively obtaining this goal, rather than competing for funding and/or recognition. Formalized partnerships are perhaps the most effective way to reach this goal, as they would lay out the expectations from each agency from the onset, alleviating any confusion about roles or competition between organizations. It is by implementing these types of formalized partnerships, as well as the various other suggestions made throughout this report, that faith and settlement partnerships may truly be strengthened, thus benefiting newcomers, the agencies themselves, and ultimately, Canadian society as a whole.

Directions for Further Research

Though this case study has provided a comprehensive idea of partnerships between MSS, faith-based community service group, and various organizations within the settlement sector, there are various other directions in which research on faith and settlement partnerships could be taken. There is little to no literature that documents the role of mosques in the settlement process. Currently, mosques are seen as new players within the settlement sector, as the notion of mosques sponsoring refugees is quite new. As was evident from some of the partnerships MSS has been involved in recently as well as in the past, the main role Muslim groups and mosques have played is as co-sponsors. Several mosques in the Waterloo Region participated in refugee settlement in partnership with the Mennonite Central Committee. These partnerships were enabled by MSS. More recently MSS has been involved with a tri-faith group where members from several churches, a local Jewish congregation and MSS came together to raise funds to support a Syrian refugee family.

An exploration of what faith-based organizations such as MSS are doing for newcomers and what local mosques are doing would be an important next step for analysis. This study can also be broadened into researching what other Muslim relief agencies, social service organizations and mosques are planning long term for becoming sponsoring agencies. In the recent influx of Syrian refugees, a survey of local mosques revealed that they have been actively engaged in raising funds for helping settle refugees as well as creating networks that can support the newcomers that arrive to Canada. A preliminary survey of

personnel from a Kitchener Waterloo-based mosque demonstrated that they have initiated various programs to help incoming Syrian refugees focused on settlement and meeting social needs. Important areas of assistance include interpretation and language services, as well as clothing and food drives. Primary goals of the mosque are to provide newcomers with holistic education and spiritual development, and much like MSS, a significant tenant “is community involvement and service not only with the Muslim community, but with every community, regardless of faith or background” (E12). They believe that faith-based groups, especially Muslim groups, are important within the community because of belief that serving others is one of the best ways to serve the creator, and therefore do it without expecting anything in return. However, the mosque strives to establish a distinctly Islamic presence in Canada, whereas MSS base their values on Islamic teachings, but extend beyond a Muslim presence, and are representative of a more diverse community.

Significantly, though the mosque’s efforts for Syrian refugee settlement have been quite impactful within the community, there are currently no solid plans for future initiatives beyond the present refugee influx. There is not yet any system in place for carrying out settlement assistance beyond the initial stages of integration. Likewise, though the mosque does have some programming for various sectors of the society in terms of social services, these programs are not yet extensive. Though local mosques and MSS do provide some similar services to the KW newcomer community, from this preliminary research it appears MSS’s scope is much broader, and more diverse and sustainable than that of the mosque. Though the mosque has partnered with MSS before, as well as with other various organizations invested in newcomer settlement, it would be worth researching these collaborations further, and determining how they might be improved as well. Indeed, perhaps in partnering more formally with MSS, the mosques could benefit from their programs, sustainability, and close connection with the community, whereas MSS could benefit from their resources. Further research on Canadian mosques and refugee settlement could be very helpful for continuing to strengthen faith and settlement partnerships.

Furthermore, more research on what other, more recently established ethno-cultural and faith-based organizations are doing for newcomer resettlement could also be important for moving forward. Since MSS was first established over ten years ago, other small, ethno-cultural groups have arisen within the Kitchener Waterloo community, many of whom are also involved in newcomer resettlement. As some community partners noted, MSS was one of the prime movers within the community that laid the foundation for these other organizations, and therefore often provides assistance to these groups. However, some of these groups have arisen more recently in response to refugee influxes, which leads to the question of whether the programs and services they provide are sustainable beyond these influxes. Again, though some of the services provided by these ethno-cultural organizations are like those that MSS have been providing for years, it remains to be seen whether these programs will be maintained in years to come. More research is needed on this topic, specifically in terms of whether partnerships with MSS or other settlement sector service providers will increase sustainability and allow them to continue to meet changing community needs. As noted above in the recommendations, LIPs could play an important role in coordinating partnerships among various mainstream agencies, local religious groups, and faith based social services. This would enhance service to the newcomers, avoid duplication of services and promote resource sharing.

Further research on reasons why faith-based organizations like MSS get involved in settlement and newcomer integration is also an area of interest. Preliminary research on this topic suggests that for Muslims, helping newcomers through the settlement process comes from a long tradition in the Islamic tradition, and not done with the intention of proselytization or soliciting, but as an act of charity and good will. Indeed, within the Islamic faith, followers cannot discriminate on who they provide assistance to based on faith. Rather, everyone is equal, and deserving of equal assistance when needed. However, even

though MSS provides assistance to newcomers regardless of their faith tradition, some partners seem to be under the impression that it only serves Muslims, or only serves non-Muslims with the intention of conversion. Future research will therefore look further into why this is, and why there are still so many misconceptions and suspicions regarding Muslim groups.

It may also be beneficial to direct further research to refugee sponsorships and co-sponsorships, examining what role settlement organizations and faith-based groups play within this context. Specifically, understanding MSS's role within such endeavours could be useful to understanding power dynamics within co-sponsorships. MSS has partnered with other faith groups to sponsor refugees over the years, including recent Syrian refugees. Research in this area could look at how vulnerable persons themselves view these sponsorships, and how the inner workings of these partnerships affect their lived realities. This research could be imperative to better understanding the more immediate role of faith-based groups like MSS within sponsor-based partnerships, and include refugee perspectives. Literature on the subject suggests that refugees may sometimes feel pressured when sponsored by faith-based organizations to engage within that religious tradition as well, therefore it is important to inquire into co-sponsorships wherein the sponsors are associated with different faith traditions. Again, much more research within this area is required.

Finally, from a therapeutic perspective, more research on refugee and immigrant perceptions of going to therapy could prove significant to the dynamics of MSS's partnerships. For many newcomers, the notion of seeking psychotherapeutic assistance is entirely foreign, or even stigmatized within the community. For service providers like MSS, and many of its partner organizations, more information on providing therapy to newcomers in a way that minimizes stigma and may be able to provide them with meaningful experiences is imperative. Additionally, more research about the role newcomers see religion playing within different therapeutic models could also be very beneficial, and may help further strengthen faith and settlement partnerships that include a psychotherapeutic aspect.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to assessing settlement from the perspective of one organization only. An important aspect of this assessment is involvement of the clients, the recipients of MSS services. While MSS always evaluates their services, for this study we did not include any of that program assessment data. It would have been very beneficial for us to do a survey of the clients across various cultures. However, the ethical concerns of speaking with a newcomer vulnerable population, often through an interpreter, prevented us from involving the clients. The limited client data included in this report is based on observation of some of MSS activities. However, for future research that would be an important area in understanding the role of faith based organizations in settlement of newcomers.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Internal Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This interview is part of a larger case study, the purpose of which is to gain insight into your organization's partnership with government-funded settlement organizations in your community, including the activities that you do and the impacts it may have on newcomers. We hope to use the information in this study to determine how these partnerships can better lead to positive settlement outcomes for newcomers, and ultimately benefit Canadian society. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Introductions (context and vision)

- (1) Please tell me about yourself, and describe your current role within Muslim Social Services Kitchener-Waterloo.
 - a. Has your role changed over time? If so, how?
 - b. Prior to your current role, how, if at all, did you support newcomers in your community?
- (2) What was the vision surrounding the formation of Muslim Social Services?
 - a. How has your organization's vision and mission evolved over time?

Activities and Outcomes (structure)

- (3) What are the main government-funded settlement organizations that you partner with?
 - a. What is the purpose of these partnerships/collaborations?
 - b. What is your organization's role within these partnerships? What is the role of (government-funded settlement organization)?
 - c. What motivated your organization to become involved in this partnership?
 - d. How similar or different are your organizations' motivations? How were differences in motivation navigated?
 - e. How do these partnerships/collaborations support the "journeys" of newcomers?
 - f. What are the benefits of these partnerships on the participating organizations?
- (4) What are the non-government-funded settlement organizations you partner with in terms of newcomer integration?
- (5) What service gaps do your partnerships currently address in your community?
(Thinking about: needs assessments of newcomers, referrals to services, developing settlement information products, providing settlement orientation sessions/workshops, formal language training classes, culturally and spiritually sensitive counselling, youth and women empowerment, advocacy support for newcomers, etc.)
- (6) What aspects of your partnerships with government-funded settlement organizations are particularly promising? Why?

- (7) What challenges, if any, have emerged in your work with government-funded settlement organizations?
- Prior to partnering, did you anticipate these challenges?
 - What has been done to address these challenges?
- (8) What impact have your partnerships with government-funded settlement organizations had on newcomers in your community?
- (Thinking about: received appropriate services, attained awareness of community resources, increased knowledge of life in Canada (laws, rights, responsibilities), learned official language skills, acquired knowledge, skills, and connections related to finding employment, made connections to community and public institutions, developed relationships with others in the community)*

Future Directions (processes)

- (9) How, if at all, can partnerships between your organization and government-funded settlement organizations be strengthened in the future?
- How could collaborative planning and policy development be further encouraged?
 - What training and professional development activities could be developed or shared?
 - How could your partnerships be best evaluated?
- (10) Are there any other government-funded settlement organizations that your organization is considering partnering with? What would this partnership potentially look like? How would it be similar or different from your existing partnerships?
- (11) Do you have any final comments about your partnerships with government-funded settlement organizations specifically, or the benefits of these partnerships more broadly?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview!

External Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This interview is part of a larger case study, the purpose of which is to gain insight into your organization's partnership with Muslim Social Services Kitchener-Waterloo, including the activities that you do and the impacts it may have on newcomers. We hope to use the information in this study to determine how these partnerships can better lead to positive settlement outcomes for newcomers, and ultimately benefit Canadian society. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Introductions (context and vision)

- (1) Please tell me about yourself, and describe your current role within (name of organization)?
 - a. Has your role changed over time? If so, how?
 - b. Prior to your current role, how, if at all, did you support newcomers in your community?
- (2) Please tell me the story of how your organization began partnering with Muslim Social Services.
 - a. How does Muslim Social Services support your organization's work with newcomer populations?
 - b. What motivated your organization to become involved in this partnership/collaboration?
 - c. What gaps in the services your organization provides does Muslim Social Services fulfill?
 - d. What opportunities and challenges have arisen from the work you do with Muslim Social Services?

Activities and Outcomes (structure)

- (3) How do Muslim Social Services' programs help support the "journeys" of your newcomer clients?
(Think about: women's programs, Welcome to Canada, youth art and theater programs, mother and child programs, parenting classes, etc.)
- (4) What service gaps does your partnership/collaboration currently address in your community? If this partnership did not exist, what would be missing in your community?
(Thinking about: needs assessments of newcomers, referrals to services, developing settlement information products, providing settlement orientation sessions/workshops, formal language training classes, culturally and spiritually sensitive counselling, youth and women empowerment, advocacy support for newcomers, etc.)
- (5) What in your collaboration with Muslim Social Services seems to be working well? Why?
- (6) In an ideal situation, what other support/services from Muslim Social Services would your organization benefit from to assist in successful integration of newcomers?

- (7) What challenges, if any, have emerged in your work with Muslim Social Services?
- Have you anticipated any of these challenges?
 - What has been done to address these challenges?
- (8) What impact has your partnership had on newcomers in your community?
(Thinking about: received appropriate services, attained awareness of community resources, increased knowledge of life in Canada (laws, rights, responsibilities), learned official language skills, acquired knowledge, skills, and connections related to finding employment, made connections to community and public institutions, developed relationships with others in the community)
- (9) What benefits has this collaboration with Muslim Social Services had on your specific organization(s) and its clients?

Future Directions (processes)

- (10) How, if at all, can the partnership between your organization and Muslim Social Services be strengthened in the future?
- How could collaborative planning and policy development be further encouraged?
 - What training and professional development activities could be developed or shared?
 - How could your partnership/collaboration be best evaluated?
- (11) Do you have anything else to add?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview!

Appendix B: Muslim Social Services Documents

Strategic Plan (2015-2017)



MUSLIM SOCIAL SERVICES

STRATEGIC PLAN (2015-2017)

MISSION

“Serving the Community”

VALUES

Faith

Respect

Inclusion

Compassion

Social Justice

Confidentiality

VISION

MSS envisions an inclusive community that understands everyone’s needs and provides support for all.

GOAL

MSS aims to foster a healthy, inclusive environment and provide various opportunities of learning and personal growth through educational, outreach, and support initiatives.

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. **Excellence in Social Programming:** Evaluate and assess programs and services.
2. **Expansion of Organizational Capacity & Development of Additional Resources:** Create an organizational sustainability plan and financial viability model.
3. **Partnerships & Collaboration:** Continue to build bridges with community organizations with shared values and strengthen capacity through shared resources.
4. **Volunteer Capacity:** Foster and strengthen volunteer capacity.
5. **Marketing & Promotion:** Increase community awareness of MSS services and program participation.

Values Model



MUSLIM SOCIAL SERVICES

VALUES MODEL

