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Creating Canadians through Private Sponsorship

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Abstract

We investigate how refugee sponsors and sponsorship groups approach their responsibility to "create new Canadians." We set the stage by reflecting on the history of Canada as an immigrant-receiving, multicultural country, as well as on the role of acculturation attitudes of host community members in establishing the integration environment for newcomers in general. We use findings from nearly 60 interviews with sponsors in the Ottawa area to outline the different approaches that sponsors take. Approaches to sponsorship fall into three general orientations: paternalistic, passive paternalistic and mutualistic. These approaches manifest in the actions that sponsors take during the sponsorship process. In our discussion, we consider the implications of these approaches for the sponsor–refugee relationship, as well as the broader project of Canadian multiculturalism. We argue that mutualistic approaches best demonstrate welcoming acculturation orientations to newcomers, and that they are an important component of supporting privately sponsored refugees to become Canadians.

Résumé

Nous étudions la façon dont les parrains et les groupes de parrainage de réfugiés assument leur responsabilité visant à « créer de nouveaux Canadiens ». Le sujet est introduit par une réflexion sir l'histoire du Canada en tant que pays multiculturel d'accueil, ainsi qu'au rôle des attitudes d'acculturation des membres de la communauté de parrainage dans l'établissement d'un environnement facilitant l'intégration des nouveaux arrivants en général. Des constatations se sont dégagées à l'issue d'une soixantaine d'entretiens avec des parrains de la région d'Ottawa pour décrire les différentes approches adoptées. Celles-ci se répartissent en trois orientations générales : paternaliste, paternaliste passif et mutualiste. Elles se manifestent dans les actions que les répondants entreprennent au cours du processus de parrainage. Dans notre discussion, nous examinons les implications de ces approches pour la relation entre parrains et réfugiés ainsi que pour le projet plus large de multiculturalisme canadien. Nous soutenons que les approches mutualistes sont celles qui démontrent le mieux les orientations d'acculturation accueillantes pour les nouveaux arrivants, et qu'elles constituent un élément important du soutien apporté aux réfugiés parrainés dans la sphère privée pour qu'ils deviennent Canadiens.

The Canadian Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSRP) places the responsibility of integrating refugees into economic and social life in the hands of everyday Canadians. As part of the legal obligation they undertake, sponsors must do the work of supporting integration, which includes a list of commitments but fails to capture the depth and intimacy of the relationships forged between sponsors and newcomers. Sponsors support newcomers in navigating the education and health care systems, certainly, but they also impart norms and expectations with respect to behaviours, for example, about the use of the word 'sorry', the importance of showing up on time for medical appointments, and when to shake hands or hug those whom one meets in public spaces. In so doing, they are, in effect, "creating Canadians."

In this article, we investigate how sponsors and sponsorship groups approach their responsibility to "create new Canadians." We begin by outlining the private refugee sponsorship model. We then reflect on the history of Canada as an immigrant-receiving, multicultural country, and the role of acculturation attitudes of host community members in establishing the integration environment for newcomers. After discussing our methodology, we use findings from nearly 60 interviews with sponsors in the Ottawa area to outline the different approaches that sponsors take. We argue that approaches to sponsorship fall into three general orientations: paternalistic, passive paternalistic and mutualistic approaches. These approaches manifest in the actions that sponsors take during the sponsorship process and in the ways they manage tensions that arise over the sponsorship year. We consider the implications of these approaches for the sponsor–refugee relationship, as well as the broader project of Canadian multiculturalism. Although our results are preliminary, we argue that mutualistic approaches best demonstrate welcoming acculturation orientations to newcomers, and that they are an important component of supporting privately sponsored refugees.

The Government of Canada and advocates for refugee resettlement highlight it as a signature policy that should be transferred abroad (Bond and Kwadrans, 2019). As a policy that delegates the role of settling newcomers to citizens, private sponsorship raises important questions. From the perspective of policy evaluation, questions are raised with respect to the future of Canadian multiculturalism and the ability of the state to direct the implementation of its policies. From a scholarly perspective, questions are raised about the nexus of interaction between federal policy makers, the bureaucratic institutions that implement those policies, and individuals who experience those policies, and are sometimes responsible for implementing them, in their everyday lives. Because of its unusual format and its link to Canadian state values, private sponsorship provides an excellent laboratory for investigating these questions.

Private Sponsorship: A Canadian Program that Makes Canadians

The Canadian PSRP has been in operation since the 1978 Immigration Act (Hyndman et al., 2016; Molloy et al., 2017). Since then, roughly half of all refugees

admitted to Canada have been privately sponsored. These individuals are named by Canadian citizens for resettlement and arrive in Canada to be supported by their sponsors for one year. Sponsors are not only financially responsible for those whom they name for admission; they also take on key integration tasks, including finding accommodation, health care, education/language classes and so on. Sponsors themselves must meet key requirements set out by the Canadian government before their applications to sponsor will be considered (Canada, 2019b).

One of the central benefits of the PSRP is the way it permits citizens to respond to crises around the world; it is a flexible tool, available to Canadians to support refugees when they feel obligated or moved to do so (Krivenko, 2012). Canadians have made use of the program to support not only the Indochinese, but also Kosovars in the late 1990s, Iraqis through the 1990s and 2000s and most recently Syrians. It has been estimated that 2 million Canadians were personally involved in welcoming Syrian refugees to Canada since 2015 (Canada, 2019a). A 2012 variation on the program, the Blended Visa Officer Referred Program (BVOR), permitted even more Canadians to participate in sponsorship. The BVOR list identifies refugees available for sponsorship, and the costs of settling refugees selected from this list are shared between sponsors and the government (Labman, 2016).

Whether sponsored via the PSRP or the BVOR program, the sponsorship of refugees is ultimately a partnership between the Canadian government and sponsors. Even where sponsors bear the "full" cost of sponsorship, all refugees are entitled to state-provided health care, language classes, employment training and so on. Sponsors take over some key jobs in the settlement process, and they often forge emotional connections with those they sponsor, but they rely at the same time on state-funded programs during the year. If refugees are not fully self-sufficient at the end of this year—and statistical data suggest that while the vast majority of refugees are ultimately economic contributors, many require more than one year to establish self-sufficiency—they become eligible for government-funded support (Panesar, 2017).

Together, sponsors and the services that are provided to refugees by the state, work, in effect, to "create citizens." In using this expression, we mean to signal that refugees are supported by sponsors to learn not only the hard skills that are key to successful integration—including competence in one of the two national languages, for example, or the basics of financial literacy—but also to become comfortable with the Canadian norms and values that underpin social and economic interactions. These norms and values are both wide-ranging and subject to contestation, as the actions taken by our sponsors show: what it means to *be* Canadian is by no means agreed. Yet, the idea that sponsors are "creating Canadians" is fundamental to the history of the PSRP.

Canadian Attitudes towards Immigration

The PSRP is embedded in the larger Canadian history of welcoming immigrants from around the world (Abu-Laban, 1998; Holland, 2007; Knowles, 2016; Li, 2003). As a settler-colonial country, Canada's modern formation begins with the arrival of colonizers from Europe and the success of their project of territorial

consolidation and displacement of indigenous polities and peoples (Kelley and Trebilcock, 1998). Since Confederation, Canada has invited immigrants to populate the country, to build essential infrastructure (including notably the railroad that links east to west), to fill both chronic and acute labour shortages as so-called high- and low-skilled workers, and as students to fill Canadian universities and colleges; it has also extended a humanitarian welcome to many groups in need of protection. The myriad admission streams, both historically and presently, reflect a desire to balance multiple factors: the economic needs that can be met by steady immigrant admissions; the on-again, off-again aspirations of a Canada that aims to play its role as a global humanitarian actor; and the importance of protecting options for family reunification.

The importance that Canada has placed on immigration is reflected in the numbers of migrants admitted on a yearly basis. Over 300,000 migrants are admitted every year as permanent residents, needed to fill key jobs; for the last many years, nearly the same number of temporary foreign labour migrants are also present on Canadian territory. Recent years have seen an upsurge in refugee admissions, beginning with the election of the Liberal Party in 2015, in part on a commitment to admit 25,000 people fleeing violence in Syria. As of 2016, just over 20 per cent of the population is foreign-born (Canada, 2017). Public opinion surveys suggest that a majority of Canadians welcomes immigration and recognizes its importance to the country (Soroka and Robertson, 2010). Both the 2018 and 2019 Environics surveys of public opinion on immigration to Canada, for instance, show that about 60 per cent of Canadians do not believe that there is too much immigration in Canada and more than 75 per cent believe that immigrants have a positive impact on the economy (Environics, 2018, 2019).

This long-term admission of migrants has been accompanied by federal and provincial commitment to "multiculturalism"—the Canadian policy of protecting the rights of cultural and ethnic minorities, especially in public spaces—in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 27 demands that "this Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." The 1988 Multiculturalism Act lays out a series of commitments to ensure that the rights of cultural minorities are accommodated across a whole range of domains. As with immigration, support for multiculturalism among the Canadian population appears to be high. Public opinion surveys reveal that approximately 60 per cent of Canadians support "multiculturalism" as official policy and believe it is an important symbol of "Canadian-ness" (Besco and Tolley, 2019).

At the same time, however, according to the survey cited just above, approximately half of Canadians worry that too many immigrants are not adopting "Canadian values" (Environics, 2019). An earlier survey asked Canadians whether they agreed with the statement "ethnic groups should try as much as possible to blend into Canadian society and not form a separate community," and a full 75 per cent said they did (Environics, 2015; see also Proctor, 2016).

How should we make sense of these apparently conflicting data, which suggest high support for both immigration and multiculturalism, but which also indicate worries about newcomers who do not adopt Canadian values? Besco and Tolley (2019) suggest that we must understand that a significant number of Canadians

are in fact "conditional multiculturalists." Conditional multiculturalists are people who welcome immigration on the *condition* that newcomers adapt to "the way we do things around here."

These conflicting ideas about what integration means, and the extent to which it is something required of newcomers and Canadians, or only of newcomers, inevitably translate into the sphere of sponsorship. Sponsors have different ideas about what it means to make someone Canadian, impart Canadian values and create Canadian citizens. Although Canadians are welcoming in general terms, they may personally demonstrate quite distinct "acculturation orientations" (Montreuil and Bourhis, 2004), that is to say, attitudes with respect to how and when newcomers should adopt Canadian norms and values.

In general, acculturation orientations can be welcoming or unwelcoming. Welcoming attitudes are of two kinds. One kind of welcoming attitude displays commitment for integration as a two-way street, where newcomers are permitted to retain key elements of the culture they value, while at the same time adopting key elements of the host culture (Kymlicka, 1998). A second kind of welcoming attitude has an individualist core, where people—regardless of their country of origin—are seen as individuals rather than as members of groups (and where, to the extent that they are members of groups, this is a private matter). Unwelcoming orientations include assimilationist orientations, which expect the full assimilation of minorities into the majority culture; segregationist orientations, which support sustaining social distance between newcomers and hosts; and exclusionary orientations, which actively encourage or prevent newcomers from adopting the host culture. With the exception of the first welcoming attitude, these attitudes are all distinct manifestations of the "conditional multiculturalists" described earlier; they are committed to welcoming newcomers—it is the Canadian thing to do—so long as newcomers adopt what they believe to be Canadian ways of life.

These orientations are influenced by general attitudes toward others, but the particular identity of the persons being welcomed also contributes to how they are received. Montreuil and Bourhis's work has shown that non-immigrant Canadians are more likely to show welcoming attitudes toward valued immigrants than devalued immigrants (2004: 520). However, whether refugees are valued or devalued immigrants is an open question. On one hand, welcoming refugees can be understood as a performance of Canadian friendliness or the Canadian commitment to humanitarian action. However, most refugees belong to racialized communities, particularly Muslim, Arab and African, which are subject to prejudice and discrimination throughout Canadian society (see, for example, Wilkins-Laflamme, 2018). It is possible—even likely—that refugees are "valuable" immigrants in that they are refugees, but are "devalued" through their racialization, and that this fluid relationship to value in the perspectives of (largely white) Canadian sponsors can affect which acculturation attitudes they demonstrate.

Having voluntarily chosen this work, sponsors are likely to be generally welcoming, at least on the surface. But sponsors will inevitably vary in how they develop relationships with newcomers, since they are not required to adopt a particular way of interacting with those whom they sponsor, and there is no "ideal" relationship between newcomers and sponsors. While the broader policy and discursive framework of Canada are generally welcoming, and sponsors themselves commit

to bringing newcomers into the broad community of Canadians, at the microlevel attitudes held by members of the host society will make a difference in how they behave toward newcomers, and also how newcomers understand their reception. The form of becoming Canadian that sponsors promote, and how they promote it, together have important consequences for the refugees they are sponsoring.

Studying Sponsorship: The Creating Canadians Study

Our interest in private sponsorship as a means of "creating Canadians" derives from our experience as members of private sponsorship groups. We have undergone training with sponsorship agreement holding organizations, worked with the array of newcomer-supporting organizations and dealt with conflicts within our sponsorship groups and between refugees and sponsors. This made us curious about how other sponsors, and other refugees, understand the experience of private sponsorship, particularly around the inevitable occurrence of conflict.

To comprehend how sponsors understand the project of sponsorship, we use data collected via a study of private sponsors and privately sponsored refugees, undertaken with financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. From November 2017 to February 2018 we interviewed 56 sponsors in greater Ottawa (38 women and 18 men).[1] To identify participants, we worked in collaboration with several organizations, including Refugee613, the Anglican Diocese and Jewish Family Services. These organizations sent our recruiting email to their lists of sponsors and we spoke to every sponsor who responded to our call. We began our work in the midst of the Canadian response to the Syrian exodus, and a majority of those with whom we spoke had sponsored Syrian families. We spoke to sponsors whose year-long sponsorship was complete, meaning they no longer had a financial or legal obligation to their sponsored refugee(s). Sponsors came from a variety of private sponsorship groups including faith-based groups, community-centered groups and other group configurations organized around connections to family and friends or colleagues (see also Macklin et al., 2018). The type of sponsorship group with which participants were involved did not correspond to the attitudes of individual sponsors, and thus we have not desegregated our findings based on the kind of group to which sponsors belonged. Sponsors were interviewed for 90–120 minutes, using standard semistructured interviewing techniques.[2] Below, we focus on sponsor statements about the ways in which both sponsors and refugees (from the sponsors' perspectives) navigated cultural differences between them, and the ways in which sponsors attempted to impart what they believed were Canadian norms and values.

Our findings suggest that private sponsors adopt a range of approaches to the task of integrating newcomers to life in Canada. We observed three distinct strategies deployed by sponsors, which we have labelled paternalistic, passive paternalistic and mutualistic approaches. These strategies inform how sponsors confront the tasks associated with integration, including how sponsors manage tension and conflicts when they emerge. No sponsor operated according to "type" in every encounter, certainly; the approaches we identify operate more like Weberian ideal types, depicting the general orientations we observed and their corresponding actions and reactions taken by sponsors. These "types" provide a useful starting point to

assess the approaches that sponsors took, and why it may be that some are better than others. In this section, we rely on our data to elaborate upon each of the three strategies and then connect our findings to the discussion of distinct acculturation orientations we identified earlier.

Paternalistic

Paternalistic approaches are characterized by a parent–child style relationship, in which sponsors take on the role of teaching refugees how to be successful in Canada. Of course, paternalism is in part built *into* the sponsorship structure— knowledgeable and integrated Canadians are tasked with instructing newcomers, who are vulnerable and have few resources beyond their sponsors on which to rely (Lenard, 2016). To define an approach as "paternalist" is to identify approaches that emphasize the power dynamic that is inherent to the sponsor relationship, rather than (as a later approach does) attempt to minimize it as much as possible. In these types of sponsorships, sponsors often show significant frustration when newcomers do not 'listen' to them, a frustration in part borne from a failure to recognize that refugees have knowledge and experience that shapes their objectives and choices in Canada.

First, sponsors who adopt a paternalistic approach to sponsorship assume the role of the parent in relation to newcomers, who are treated like children in need of instruction and guidance. They assume that refugees must be taught the "way we do things around here" as a condition of their integration into Canadian society. One central way in which this parental orientation is manifest is in discussions around budgeting and financial management. Sponsors noted repeatedly the need for newcomers to learn appropriate money management skills, explaining that since newcomers were being asked to live on such limited budgets, learning how to do so without "going beyond their means" was a key ingredient of successful integration. This frustration emerged especially clearly with respect to refugees' desire to purchase a car. Paternalistic sponsors focused on the costs of the car, stipulating that newcomers cannot afford it, and insisting that their belief otherwise is a manifestation of their failure to understand appropriate budgeting and/or what their financial priorities should be. One sponsor said, "[Refugees] are about to buy a car, he loves cars and wants a car. I don't understand, I don't like the cost of cars, I don't have one myself." More generally, sponsors in paternalistic relations were especially on the lookout for unwise spending decisions, complaining for example that newcomers continued to smoke, even though the cost of doing so was high, or that newcomers insisted on sending money to family members left behind, since in their view, newcomers simply could not afford to do so.

A complication for many sponsors stemmed from the process by which they had raised money to support the sponsorship—many sponsors felt they had obligations to donors to ensure that the raised money was well spent. Indeed, they often imagined themselves in the position of justifying the spending choices of newcomers to these donors, much like a parent might be asked to justify a child's (bad) choices. Paternalistic sponsors generally understood that newcomers were being asked to make do with comparatively small amounts of money, but nevertheless often chalked up financial shortfalls to bad decision making[3] (one sponsor commented

"I think there is a lack of discipline with spending money, they don't seem to know how to do it") rather than simply not having enough money to make ends meet.

According to paternalistic sponsors, where newcomers failed to budget appropriately and correspondingly failed to gain a financial foothold in the Canadian economy, they would be forced to turn to social assistance support, and this result would be *problematic*. Sponsors worried that newcomers would "get addicted to" social assistance. One sponsor said, "Don't let them get addicted to welfare—it's easy provided you educate them." Another sponsor stated that, "The system here gives them an impression that they will keep getting the money after the first year is over. You struggle with this mentality. Many of them are also uneducated. They hear that everything is free and many of them will not start to prepare themselves [for self-sufficient living]." Sponsors further felt that returning to donors with the announcement that the newcomers had transitioned from their donations to social assistance would amount to saying that the sponsorship had failed. One sponsor stated, "We never really talked about what if our family ended up on social welfare, but if they did we would feel like we had failed…. We're fortunate that both of our families want to work and take our advice." Another sponsor expressed the pride they felt when the refugee family said they would not be accessing social assistance, saying "This one of the reasons we are so proud of our family—they told us at the end of year one that they wouldn't be going on welfare."

A second feature of paternalistic sponsors is that they display confidence that they know the best way to achieve a particular goal—whether it is with respect to linguistic education, or when to get a job, or whether to buy a car—and display negative reactions when refugees deviate from these "best ways." In the best cases, according to paternalistic sponsors, newcomers respond "appropriately" to their advice: "[The refugees have] always been so grateful that they do most of everything we think they should do. Maybe that's why we don't have any failures. They all want to work, we've taught them that." The sponsor in this case believes that the newcomers have succeeded because of what they had been taught by the sponsorship group. This sponsor continued: "You should always support newcomers with the objective to be independent. Number one, fellowship is essential. By giving them fellowship they want to be like you. That is about 80 per cent of their motivation to start working and becoming independent." This sponsor appears to believe that integration means creating new Canadians that look, act, speak and work exactly as they do.

Paternalistic sponsors explained the frustrations they felt when newcomers deprioritized English language education, for example, wondering aloud how newcomers could expect success in Canada without adequate linguistic competence. They recorded frustration in cases where families subscribed to norms, especially gender norms, that they felt had no place in Canada, in particular when they relegated women to the home. Speaking about a Muslim refugee woman, one sponsor commented that, "Muslim women tend to be not as independent and she had to learn to take the bus and not call us all the time."

This frustration stemmed from a third feature of the paternalistic approach—a discounting of newcomers' knowledge and past experiences. Paternalistic sponsors often expressed amazement for all that refugees had done to survive before arriving in Canada, but then quickly explained that living in Canada required new and

distinct skills that they had yet to learn. For example, one sponsor stated that it was the sponsor's responsibility to "educate and teach them." They seemed to believe refugees brought little valuable knowledge to the table, or that their past experiences (though perhaps demonstrating resourcefulness) were not relevant or transferable to the Canadian environment. Newcomers had to learn an entirely new way of doing things in order to fully integrate.

Passive Paternalistic

Passive paternalistic approaches to sponsorship share features with paternalistic approaches, but with some modifications and additions: (1) in cases of conflict over options, where newcomers refuse the advice or suggestions offered by sponsors, passive paternalistic sponsors withdraw their help as a kind of punishment for failure to listen; (2) they are condescending toward newcomers' values and experiences (rather than dismissive of them, as are paternalistic sponsors); and (3) they have strong expectations that newcomers express gratitude to them for the work that they have taken on as sponsors.

Paternalistic and passive paternalistic sponsors express negative reactions when newcomers refuse their advice or make choices that they believe they have warned newcomers against. These sponsors pay lip service to the idea that newcomers should be permitted to make their own choices but respond to situations where they do so with frustration and even anger. What distinguishes passive paternalistic sponsors from merely paternalistic ones is that, when faced with a situation in which newcomers refuse their advice, they respond by withdrawing support in key ways. In a standardly passive aggressive manner, sponsors are effectively shrugging their shoulders, saying to newcomers "it's up to you," but communicating that if they don't make the "right" decision they will not offer further help. In one example, a passively paternalistic sponsor explained the frustrations they experienced in supporting refugees in their quest to gain employment: "Our view as a group is, we assist them to get employment, but it's not our responsibility to find an infinite number of jobs for them—if they turn it down. It's their choice, but we won't find more opportunities…. You have to respect his decision, but then that's the end of us finding employment for him." In another instance, a sponsor spoke about a refugee's desire to buy a car, stating that refugees "want to buy cars really early on and that's always really problematic, and cellphones when there were contracts they would get locked into things that weren't as good…. But again they are adults."

A second characteristic of passive paternalistic sponsors is the presence of demeaning or condescending attitudes toward newcomers and their values and norms. Whereas paternalistic sponsors were dismissive of newcomers' past experiences, as well as their current values, passively paternalistic sponsors are actively condescending toward them. One sponsor made this attitude clear when discussing the alleged lack of resourcefulness of the refugees they sponsored, saying that,

> We've [sponsorship group] all grown up on stories of sacrificing and we had a notion of how we would be learning from them how to be resourceful and make ends meet, but that was not the case with them (i.e., buying groceries and cooking). Because our refugees were in a holding pattern for four years,

they didn't have to be resourceful—so they have less resourcefulness than the average person—but we assumed they would have more.

No allowance was made for the possibility that the family is processing trauma or decompressing from stress related to their four-year displacement, or that what the 'resourcefulness' that helped them survive those four years might have taught them is different from what sponsors expected, or even that what appears as a lack of resourcefulness might actually be confusion about cultural and economic differences between the refugee context and the Canadian one.

A third characteristic of passive paternalistic sponsors is the expressed desire for recognition or validation from newcomers for the work they do. Conflict can arise when refugees do not express gratitude to the sponsor for the work they have done. This tension stems from sponsors' conviction that their work is being done as a matter of (voluntary) charity, and so deserves commendation. One sponsor explained what happens when the expected gratitude is not demonstrated: "You are constantly in the face of the person receiving your charity and it can become a very fraught relationship." Paternalistic sponsors do not see sponsorship as a mutual relationship, but as a one-sided effort to bestow charity on someone else, for which recipients should be grateful. The same sponsor continued:

[Regarding the] issue of thanking, we don't want them to fall over themselves, but an acknowledgement would be good—because this isn't our job to do this—so it's a tension. [Refugees] don't recognize what we're doing. We have chosen to fund initiatives out of our taxes, to enable services, and should we still be doing this too? Like we have another child too?

This attitude is further entrenched if the refugee is seen as failing to integrate, because the sponsors then feel as though their charity had gone to waste. Speaking about the conflict within the sponsorship relationship, this sponsor concluded: "We thought we would have saved someone."

Mutualistic

The mutualistic approach contrasts significantly with the two approaches described above. Mutualistic approaches are characterized by a commitment to treating newcomers as equals (rather than as children), an orientation toward learning with and from newcomers, including a willingness to be self-critical about the values, norms and assumptions that sponsors hold, and a flexible definition of what counts as a successful sponsorship.

The key difference between mutualistic approaches and paternalistic approaches stems from the view, expressed by sponsors, that refugees were equal members of the sponsorship. As with paternalistic sponsors, mutualistic sponsors recognized that they had a job, namely to communicate Canadian norms to newcomers, but they understood that this job needed to be done without treating newcomers like children. This commitment to equality meant, said sponsors with this orientation, respecting their opinions and views about what is best for them. A sponsor stated:

> You have to treat them with respect—they aren't inferior in any way, but you have to respect their views if they want to do their own thing…. We sit down and discuss with them, sometimes we discuss with their parents. It depends on the relationship that you have with them. And when they get in trouble you try and help them … [sponsors need to h]elp the refugees figure out what their skills are and what they can do in Canada. Help them understand cultural differences. Don't treat them like children, and let them make their own decisions.

In a mutualistic approach to sponsorship, decision-making and managing expectations or conflicts looks more like a conversation than a lecture or scolding. These sponsors continually reminded themselves that the decision was ultimately up to the refugee, and that the responsibility of the sponsor was to inform and guide refugees as best as possible but not to make decisions for them. One sponsor stated: "At the end of the day we have to remember that we can't tell them what decisions to make, but we guide them."

A second characteristic of mutualistic sponsors is their view that, though they know some ways to be successful in Canada, they do not know all the ways; they are correspondingly self-aware and self-critical about the ways in which they approach sponsorship. Mutualistic sponsors displayed considerably less confidence than did both types of paternalist sponsors that there was one way, or a best way, in which to integrate; they correspondingly displayed more openness when newcomers proposed ideas for moving forward that were other than those recommended by the sponsorship group. One mutualistic sponsor noticed that:

> [The refugee family] pushed on some things and had a better understanding of what was best for them than we did…. [Our job was to] support them, but don't hold them back because you are uncomfortable. For example, the father really wanted a job. We helped him find a good one, regardless of our reservations. Get over your reservations and get on board with their decisions.

This sponsor firmly believed that the refugee family knew what was best for them, and while the sponsors were there to guide them, the refugees ultimately made the decisions and the sponsors were there to support those decisions. Another sponsor said: "They made different decisions than we would, and we saw that as them making their own life."

Earlier, we highlighted a paternalistic sponsor who responded to a refugee's choice to buy a car with lack of understanding. As with paternalistic sponsors, mutualistic sponsors were skeptical about the preference and eventual choice to buy a car. Here is a mutualistic sponsor describing how they responded. This sponsor says: "They bought a car against our advice. We were adamant that the cost would be a lot. We had to learn that they will make their own decisions, and accept the consequences." Even though the sponsors did not agree with the decision, they did accept the refugee's decision and later acknowledged that "it is hard to operate without a car"—recognizing that the decision was not black and white, but had both pros and cons. Another mutualistic sponsor responded similarly:

> When dad bought his car he asked me what he should do, I thought he should have bought the more inexpensive car, but he didn't. And he really wanted the car, and told me he never had anything nice. I knew it wasn't the end of the world, but it was him asserting what he wanted…. It was a decision where I had to step back and make sure that they made their own decisions.

Sponsors with a mutualistic approach also experienced frustration with sponsored refugees. Living in relationships with others does not mean living without disagreement. However, when these sponsors experienced conflict they tended to try not to take refugees' actions personally, but kept in mind that there are many pathways to success; they did not need the refugees to make exactly the same choices as they would, even if they felt the decision was not the best one.

This "lesser" self-confidence was often manifest in a reflective, self-critical attitude, in which sponsors questioned the advice they were offering, as well as the cultural assumptions that motivated this advice, recognizing moments where they had made mistakes or offered advice that in retrospect they could see, from the newcomers' perspective, was clearly bad. One sponsor explained:

> I do think that you really have to be alert to your own values and judgements and sit on them a bit, but not always. You have to be self-critical and self-reflective. We suffer a cultural dissonance when they come and we need to create some space for reflecting and listening before we react. We are in the privileged position and we need to reflect and allow them the space to fail.

Here, there is a recognition that sponsors are in a privileged position because they are the sponsors, living and working in a society with which they are familiar, but not perfectly so. Newcomers may choose their own paths; it is part of the freedom they gain as residents in Canada.

Another sponsor explained that "[Sponsors] have to be concise about your values. Everyone has their assumptions, and there are more than one way to do things. You have to pull back sometimes and say: that's not necessarily an accurate assumption about how something should be done." There is a conscious awareness of the many biases and prejudices that the sponsor may hold. Another sponsor stated that through the sponsorship process he learned:

> … that I'm a lot more judgemental than I thought I was. I lived and worked overseas and work in international development and I thought that I could deal with intercultural relationships well. And I think my demonstrated behaviour was good, but I felt that it tested me in my personal experience, despite my broad experience internationally. You're going to encounter some stuff about yourself.

These sponsors recognized that they needed to pull back sometimes and reflect on their decisions, thoughts and actions. Regarding the need for constant reflection throughout the sponsorship process, another sponsor stated that "You constantly have to check yourself, it's challenging." This approach was also applied to mistakes, and how sponsors handled both their mistakes and those made by refugees.

Regarding sponsorship mistakes, one sponsor said: "If we disagreed about things, we talked it out and always deferred to [female refugee] … we talk it through and we try to forgive ourselves for the mistakes that we make. And we're upfront with her that we may make mistakes too, we are new to this." There is an open, honest, mutual relationship present in that statement. The sponsors not only admitted their mistakes to each other, they were also upfront with the refugee, demonstrating the mutual respect they believe is key to sponsoring well.

While sponsors who took a paternalistic approach to sponsoring often felt they had learned nothing from the refugees, sponsors with a mutualistic approach mentioned things they had learned from the experience. Because living in a relationship requires at least some mutual respect for one another, these sponsors recognized that both sponsors and refugees had something to offer each other that was of value. One sponsor stated:

> You learn a lot about the human spirit and that desire to be safe; how important family is—you want the best for your kids. There is a warmth and a generosity from them—and they don't have very much. You realize there are more similarities than difference. Sometimes you have to go with the flow. Even if things are frustrating you just have to laugh—everything will be ok.

Another sponsor explained the group's journey with sponsorship like this: over time the group "moved from leading to following."

Third, mutualistic sponsors were less single-minded about the nature of sponsorship success than were paternalistic sponsors. For mutualistic sponsors, success was more flexibly defined by what the refugees understood as success, and sponsors helped refugees along the way by providing advice, offering help and explaining the consequences of the decisions that refugees chose to make. Mutualistic sponsors may have preferred that newcomers were able to be financially self-sufficient following the official close of the sponsorship, but they did not view newcomers who required ongoing access to social assistance as having failed, and nor did they believe that such a choice or requirement was a manifestation of sponsorship failure (Lenard, 2019). In this way, sponsors understood that they were entering into a relationship with the refugees they were supporting, and not conducting a charity project. One sponsor concluded that sponsors can "come into this [sponsorship] with a charity mindset, and we should strengthen the training on managing expectations and inter-cultural communication."

Conclusion

Private sponsorship is not easy, and it is important to keep in mind that whatever orientation sponsors take, they are participating in a profoundly important task, in which because of their *voluntary* efforts, individuals and families can find safety in Canada. The fact that safety is difficult to access for so many refugees must press us to recognize that even where sponsorships are not "perfectly" done, the result is a small and important contribution to remedying a global problem.

Mistakes will be made, and approaches to this relationship often evolve over time. However, sparse research on this relationship has left sponsors, scholars, policy

makers and practitioners without much evidence to suggest best practices. Our evidence shows that sponsors take a variety of attitudes toward how to manage conflicts during the sponsorship relationships, including paternalistic, passive paternalistic and mutualistic approaches. These three orientations are ideal types, intended to illuminate the dominant ways in which sponsors approach their work. No sponsorship relationship operates rigidly within one of these models for its entire year-long commitment, but the characteristics that we have attributed to each orientation tended to cluster together and shape particular sponsorship experiences.

The approaches sponsors take are a manifestation or a function of their underlying acculturation orientations, which influence how refugees feel welcomed and become integrated into society. Conditional multiculturalists welcome newcomers, but express worry that they may not adopt Canadian values; as a result, as sponsors, they encourage and pressure newcomers to adopt (what they see as) Canadian values, and express frustration when they are not successful. Paternalistic behaviour reflects an orientation toward assimilation; though sponsors may have no problem with refugees maintaining surface elements of their culture in areas such as food or dress, at their core they believe that the refugees they sponsor can only become successful Canadians if they behave exactly like the sponsor. Passive paternalistic behaviour reflects some aspects of what Montreuil and Bourhis (2004) identify as a segregationist attitude, where newcomers are permitted to keep their culture but, in the view of sponsors, therefore remain at a social distance from the host culture; those with passive paternalistic orientations are typically unwilling to consider the shifting of attitudes and behaviours that is required, from both members of host societies and newcomers, for real integration to take place. Mutualistic behaviour reflects elements of the two welcoming acculturation attitudes Montreuil and Bourhis identify. It recognizes refugees and sponsors both as individuals, who make decisions based on their personal assessment of what they want, and also recognizes the mutual change and growth central to integration.

Although our data do not allow us to tie these approaches directly to how sponsored refugees experience the sponsorship process, or the success of the project of "creating Canadians" out of refugees, we believe there is a strong normative argument for encouraging mutualistic approaches. Welcoming acculturation orientations are an important part of building strong social support for diversity. They are the foundation of productive intercultural contact, which is essential for society to grow and change and welcome newcomers into the fold (Boucher and Maclure, 2018). The closer relationships among different people are, the more they support a lessening of prejudice and a greater acceptance of diversity (Tropp and Pettigrew, 2011). Strong sponsorship relationships, particularly those founded in mutualistic attitudes and behaviours, fill precisely this role. At its best, sponsorship encourages a direct, intimate form of intercultural contact, which brings together newcomers and hosts for a sustained period of mutual obligation.

Paternalistic and passive paternalistic attitudes have the potential to work against productive intercultural contact. They represent an unwelcoming attitude toward newcomers, even if the people demonstrating them desire to be welcoming and take actions, such as engaging in private sponsorship, that seem to reflect that desire. While we do not have evidence from these interviews about how these attitudes affect the refugees being sponsored by groups with less-welcoming attitudes,

it is certainly plausible to imagine that those refugees might face more challenges in integrating, or feel less welcomed in the process.

In spite of what paternalistic sponsors suggest, the data reveal that there is no single narrative of what a 'successful' sponsorship is. At some level, every sponsorship is successful if it brings a refugee to Canada and grants him or her rights and safety. But there are empirical questions regarding how welcomed refugees feel upon arrival, how supported they are by their sponsors and the broader society, and whether they are able to achieve markers of integration and well-being such as employment or further education. Sponsors play an important role in this process, but there are other factors beyond their control that matter as well. While some sponsors made comments about the harms they saw from paternalistic or passive paternalistic attitudes, we do not have the data to directly demonstrate that those attitudes produced negative effects for the refugees affected by them. While we accept the limitations of our data, we believe that there are meaningful implications of these different approaches for the broader project of Canadian multiculturalism. They suggest that mutualistic attitudes toward integration may help refugees feel more welcomed and improve the process of creating a multicultural society that better supports all of its diverse members.

Because private sponsorship is such a decentralized policy implemented by private citizens, it is challenging to recommend high-level policy action to move toward a more mutualistic approach to sponsorship—not to mention that governments trying to change how people interact with each other in the private sphere raises ethical and practical questions. However, this does suggest that changes to the PSRP could be made in order to increase the frequency of mutualistic approaches. For instance, training for would-be sponsors can focus more directly on helping them understand their unconscious biases or stereotypes, and how this may colour their sponsorship work. Sponsorship that is not paired with reflection and interrogation of the role sponsors play in helping to create Canadians has the potential to backfire in its goals of building a stronger, multicultural Canada that plays a role in helping those in need. Additionally, more contact between refugees and sponsors before arrival may also encourage sponsors to view refugees as partners in the settlement process (Kyriakides et al., 2019).

Private sponsorship is only one piece of the puzzle in terms of refugee integration and broader questions of multiculturalism in Canada, but it represents a unique opportunity for intercultural contact and for the growth and transformation of Canadian society. While private sponsors will take different approaches toward sponsorship, some of those attitudes hold great potential for producing real social transformation. We encourage sponsors, and those who support them, to adopt mutualistic attitudes and practices that reflect them in order to reap those goods for all of society, including the innumerable benefits that private sponsorship offers to those who are able to come to Canada, and live in safety, through it.

Notes

1 In addition, we interviewed 26 privately sponsored refugees, who were beyond their first year of sponsorship. We do not use that data in this article primarily because there was very little useful content; interviewed refugees were unwilling to speak about challenges or conflicts with sponsors, even with

prompting. It is possible that this is because the research assistants conducting the interviews were unable to establish trust or credibility during the process. However, it also suggests that the hierarchies of power between sponsors and sponsored refugees do not dissolve upon the end of the sponsorship relationship, and that refugees may not feel free or equal in these relationships.

2 The full interview questionnaire is available from the authors.

3 To put this into context, consider that a sponsor group sponsoring a family of four is asked to raise $21,200 as income support (plus an additional $7,000 for initial settlement costs, like buying furniture and setting up mobile phones) (RSTP, 2018). Canada's official poverty line for a family of four is $37,542 (Statistics Canada, 2019). Families with children are now also entitled to the Canada Child Benefit, though that was not available to 2015 arrivals nor to many 2016 arrivals (Canada, 2018).

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