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Information Access and Resilience for Newcomer Groups:

Yazidi and Turkish-Speaking Newcomers in York Region

Dr. Michaela Hynie, Department of Psychology/Centre for Refugee Studies

Trisha Scantlebury, Manager, Research, Public Policy, and Evaluation



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The Research Team

- **Rubaiyat Karim**
- **Gülay Kilicaslan**
- **Cansu E. Dedeoglu**
- **Palmer Taylor**
- **Chelsey Heins**
- **Laura McDonough**



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STUDY PURPOSE



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- Explore the relationship between information access strategies and collective resilience among recent newcomers in York Region
- Collective resilience:
 - The capacity for groups to overcome social or environmental challenges through agency, social learning and adaptability
 - This capacity depends on resources at the personal, communal and institutional level
- **Information access** is a key aspect of collective resilience



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METHODS



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Identifying the issue

United Way hosted 3 community consultations with newcomer serving agencies

- Question: What research would help organizations address current challenges or maximize current opportunities?
- Answer: Need to understand newcomers' lack of access to appropriate and timely information to meet their needs

Formed advisory committee of 14 agency representatives to guide the study



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Identifying communities of focus

- Advisory committee recommended:
 - Yazidi refugees
 - because of the complexity of their history and needs
 - Turkish-speaking refugee claimants
 - because of recent increase in York Region
 - because of very low engagement with service provider agencies



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Data Collection

Formal Service Providers

- 2 focus groups (n = 15 participants, total)
- 2 key informant interviews

Newcomers

- Yazidi refugees
 - 8 participants in focus group (in Kurmanji)
- Turkish-speaking refugee claimants
 - 8 interviews (in Turkish)

Interviews – Informal Support Provider

- 5 in English or Kurmanji for Yazidi community
- 3 in English or Turkish for Turkish-speaking community



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Communities of Focus

- Yazidi newcomers
 - 1400 Yazidi resettled in Canada since 2017 with little notice to community orgs
 - Genocide and mass displacement by ISIS in 2014 led to “survivors of Daesh” program in Canada
- Turkish-speaking newcomers
 - Turkey was source country for 8.8% of accepted refugee claims between 2017 and 2019 (almost 4700 people)
 - Collapse of the peace process with PKK in 2015
 - Displacement of 500,000 in Kurdish cities following urban warfare
 - Emergency measures in Turkey imposed following a failed military coup in 2016
 - Widespread dismissals, detentions and prosecutions



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RESULTS



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Informal information sources

- Mostly informal sources
 - Volunteer agencies & NGOs (Yazidi)
 - Community organizations (Turkish-speaking)
 - Social networks (both)
 - Close and hierarchical in Yazidi community (in person or phone)
 - Turkish-speaking had several close communities, ranging in how hierarchical or horizontal they were in relationships
 - Mutually mistrustful groups with strong boundaries based on historically divided social and political differences
 - High prevalence of intragroup social media communication



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Information sources

- Some formal information seeking also undertaken
 - Yazidi mostly went to settlement agencies
 - But low expectations and lack of information provision during pre-arrival about who might help them upon arrival in Canada
 - Also actively sought information about resettling other family
 - Turkish-speaking used a range of available services (e.g., education)
 - Knowledgeable and expecting services but mistrustful
 - System navigation of formal services was also facilitated by informal networks



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Formal information sources

- Self-directed search
 - Internet search widely used by Turkish-speaking groups
 - Frequently confirming information from multiple sources
 - Social media apps
 - Able to expand social network and navigate systems especially related to employment and education credentials



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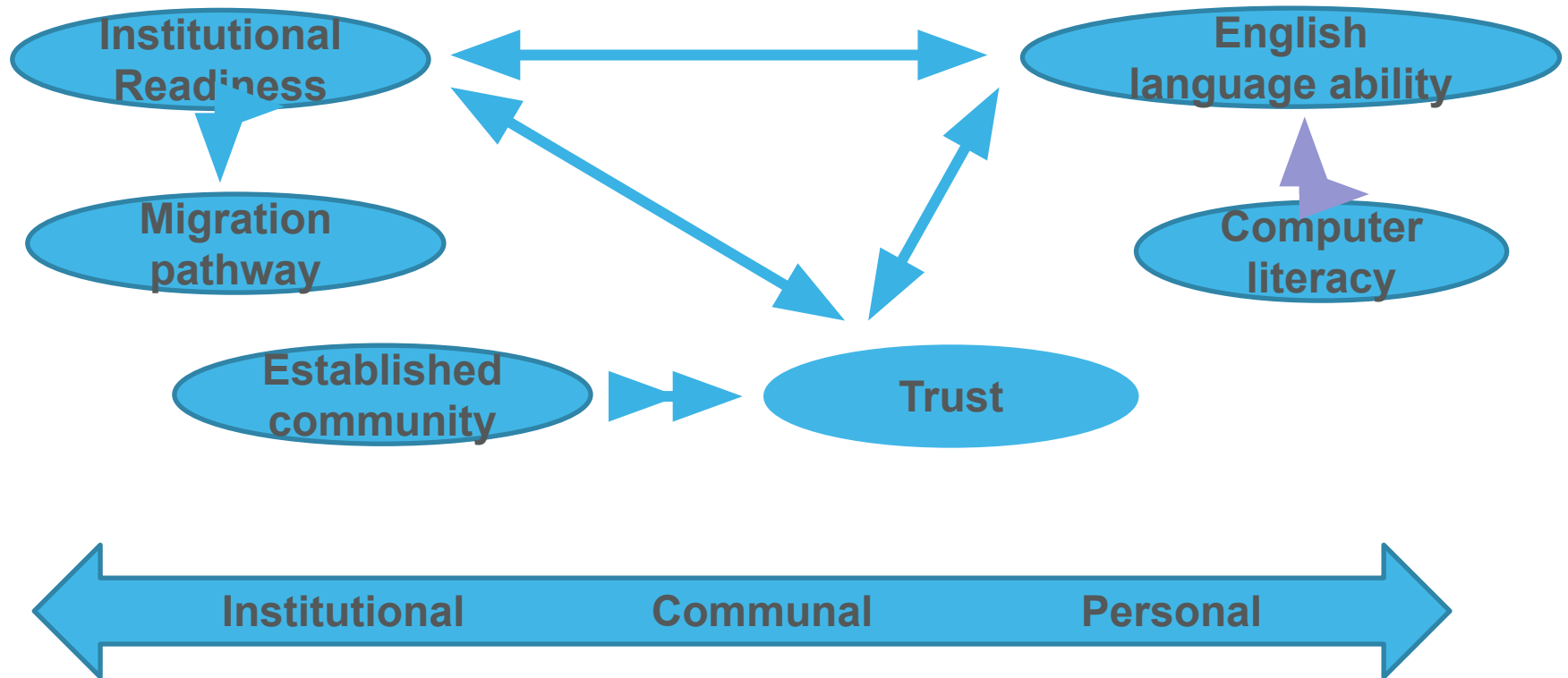
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Information seeking and collective resilience

- Trust was a central element in determining use of formal versus informal information sources
 - Various elements of the settlement context and communities' histories shaped their trust over time
 - Both necessitated and supported collective resilience
- Collective resilience operates differently in different social network structures

Factors influencing reliance on informal vs formal information sources





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RECOMMENDATIONS

Support the collective resilience of newcomer and refugee communities by:

- Examining existing service delivery models to identify areas and opportunities to provide more accessible information seeking strategies
- Developing community based programs that help to build social capital – both bridging and bonding – with newcomer and refugee communities



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Michaela: mhynie@yorku.ca
Trisha: tscantlebury@uwgt.org

@UWGreaterTO
@MichaelaHynie