SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RESILIENCE THROUGHOUT THE MIGRANT JOURNEY

NATIONAL IMMIGRATION CENTRE MEMBERS MEETING
October 27th 2021

Building Migrant Resilience in Cities/Immigration et résilience en milieu urbain:
Partnership Grant PI: Valerie Preston
International student working group: Christine Gabriel, Sutama Ghosh, Francine Schlosser, Luisa Veronis and Margaret Walton Roberts,

BMRC
IRMU

Building Migrant Resilience in Cities/Immigration et résilience en milieu urbain

Home   **Our Research**   What's happening?   Resources   About Us   Members   English (English)   Français (French)

About the Project

Established in 2016, Building Migrant Resilience in Cities (BMRC-IRMU) is a research partnership and a multi-sector collaboration. It draws on over 20 years of experience in bringing together a range of key actors working on issues of immigration and settlement through CERIS, a leading Ontario network of migration and settlement researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Our unique initiative explores the concept of social resilience to examine how institutions can facilitate migrant settlement in urban areas across Quebec and Ontario. We are generating new knowledge for academic debate and discussion that will be made readily available to decision-makers and practitioners who strive to enhance migrant settlement.

What are we doing?

Multiple activities are being carried out to address our overarching research questions, and impact the lives of migrants. From a research perspective, our activities contribute to the growing field of migration studies, by incorporating and evaluating a resilience lens into the research.

- We are comparing the political, socio-economic, and individual factors that affect how migrants settle in different local contexts.
- We are documenting how organizations and institutions contribute successfully to the strength and resilience of migrants as they settle into new lives in Canada.
- We are using the data and findings to pilot evidence-based strategies that can work in diverse contexts to foster healthy and successful settlement.

f 🐦 ▶️ yFile

News

How did this project come together? Partnership Engage Grants COVID-19 Special Initiative : COVID-19: Working Through the Pandemic - The Experience of Immigrant Women by Christina Gabriel, Concordia University; Luisa Veronis, University of Ottawa; and Monica Cruz Bolanos.

What community needs are you trying to meet through this project?

What learnings are you expecting from this project?

How do you intend to implement these learnings?

Title: Initiative spéciale pour l'attribution de subventions d'engagement partenarial – COVID-19COVID-19: Working Through the Pandemic - The Experience of Immigrant Women by Christina Gabriel, Concordia University; Luisa Veronis, University of Ottawa; and Monica Cruz Bolanos.

The Resilience Approach

- The **Building Migrant Resilience in Cities** explores resilience in a broad sense that goes beyond economic success and poses the question of how migrants **develop capacities** to overcome settlement challenges (Akbar & Preston 2019). We also pay close attention to **views of resilience** among key actors in settlement, such as policymakers, service providers, employers, and migrants themselves (Bushell & Shields 2018).

- The project argues that deeper understanding of resilience is crucial for enhancing migrant settlement, and this includes **institutional resilience.** We ask what kind of supports and systems can foster resilience and effectively respond to **structural crisis and change**, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Sheilds & Alrob 2020).

- Strategies, resources, and networks that migrants employ to cope with daily challenges and major shocks in order to **'bounce back'** are important, but to cope with and adapt to adversity, **policies and institutions** must be also be assessed in terms of how they model resilience (Veres, Schlosser, Shahbazi 2018).

- For **international students** we need to understand how resilience works when students are away from their families and moving along multiple/parallel migrant pathways- PR on arrival, vs. "Two step" / temporary/work visa PR.

- Also, we need to understand how resilient **policy structures** are in terms of operation and outcomes.

International Students in Canada

➢ 642,480 international students in Canada as of December 31, 2019

➢ India is the top sending country, over 34%

Rank	Country of Citizenship	2018	2019
1	India	171730	219855
2	China	141995	141400
3	South Korea	24070	24180
4	France	22540	24045
5	Vietnam	20185	21595
6	United States of America	14440	15015
7	Iran	10535	14745
8	Brazil	13770	14560
9	Nigeria	11190	11985
10	Mexico	7805	8710

The Research

- Members of the BMRC city networks considered the merits of a **resilience approach** to studying the experiences of international students in Canada and their interaction with educational and other institutions during their **migration journey**.

- We considered how **educational institutions**, among other **stakeholders**, influence the settlement of these students and those who transition from temporary to permanent status.

- We examine how the **urban and provincial context** shapes settlement by considering the location where our respective studies were completed, including mid-sized cities (Kitchener-Waterloo, Ottawa, Sudbury, Windsor) and metropolitan areas (Toronto) with a focus on Ontario, and Montreal for **comparative** purposes.

- Finally, we consider how **COVID-19** has affected international students, and the actions governments and educational institutions took to support and promote the resilience of the education and settlement sector and international students in the face of an unprecedented pandemic.

Resilience and Resistance

- Resistance is about **insensitivity to disturbance**, resilience refers to the **rate of recovery** (i.e., bouncing back) after the disturbance (Shade et al., 2012).

- Another focus is how the **system itself can build-in resilience** to manage change

- But, the system can also **undermine the resilience** of those within it. For example, Canadian immigration policy does not recognize work that students do on campus or in co-op programs (Mackenzie, 2021; Ladhar et al., forthcoming).

- Being resilient enables individuals to **rework or resist** oppressive structures (Katz 2004). While this 'reworking' can reconfigure the position of an individual in relation to the system, generally **collective action** is needed to change systems.

- We conceptualize resilience as being relevant at **multiple levels**, from that of the individual, to their networks, the institutions to which they are attached, as well as the state and non-state organizations that exert some control over their lives.

System resilience

- The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need for resilience from a **systems perspective.**

- We have examined how international students manage their careers and how universities, colleges and communities can provide support to make them more resilient (Schlosser et al., 2021, Ladhar et al., 2020).

- A **resilience approach to settlement** is important for international student success, since this group has a **truncated,** or multi-step, pathway to settlement and integration (i.e., a shift from temporary status to potentially permanent).

- International students who are becoming a growing source of revenue for the post-secondary education sector. We must focus on **institutional resilience and migrant resilience relationally.**

Service Gaps

- Settlement agencies **do not** receive funding to support international students
- Settlement support are **not viewed as core** to the educational mission of post-secondary institutions.
- Employers partner with universities and colleges to develop opportunities, but **do not always understand the** international student hiring process.
- The international student visa system is **not conducive** to allowing employer relationship to easily develop.
- International students are also ineligible for settlement services such as language and employment training, even though the model expects international students to be part of a **skilled labour pool**.
- Canada offers a pathway for international students to become permanent residents, and yet **limits their initial steps** to PR by denying access to services.

Acknowledgements

- We thank our community partners, research participants & research teams

- For more information on the project: http://bmrc-irmu.info.yorku.ca/

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

Canada