Co-production Through Volunteerism in Emergency Management: Drawing Lessons from Canada's Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative

Aaida Mamuji, Catherine Kenny, Suad Ahmed

Disaster and Emergency Management, York University, Toronto, Canada

Author Note:

We have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Aaida Mamuji

Email: amamuji@yorku.ca

Abstract

The field of emergency management has been increasingly encouraging the notion of emergency management as a shared, co-productive responsibility, with all members of the society having a role to play. In such whole-of-society efforts, volunteers play a direct role in the co-production of response outcomes. Canada's mass resettlement of Syrian refugees in 2015 is a case in point, as Canadians rallied *en masse* to ensure the successful resettlement of thousands of Syrian refugees. In exploring the role of volunteers in this co-productive initiative, there are two important lessons for those in emergency management: The first involves learning from the volunteer management strategies implemented by resettlement agencies, which are applicable for any responding entity tasked with managing whole-of-society response efforts. The second (and perhaps more important) lesson is that those managing whole-of-society response efforts must recognize that value is co-created through three key relationships, a triad between volunteers, response entities, and those directly impacted by a disaster. Each of these relationships must be better understood and managed in order to achieve more effective emergency response outcomes in whole-of-society initiatives.

Keywords: co-production, volunteerism, volunteer management, emergency management, spontaneous volunteers, resettlement, whole-of-society

Introduction

> It's about the hard work *we're all going to do* [emphasis added] in the coming weeks, months and indeed years to ensure that everyone who passes through here tonight and in the weeks and months to come are able to build a life for themselves, for their family and also contribute fully to the continued growth of this extraordinary country.

These were the words of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoken at Toronto Pearson International Airport on December 11, 2015, ahead of the arrival of the first wave of Syrian refugees to Canada (as quoted in CBC News, 2015, para. 2). Trudeau was sworn in as Prime Minister on November 4, 2015, and immediately began preparing to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees in Canada by December 31, 2015—a key election promise (Liberal Party of Canada, 2015). Although this initial timeline was not met, by February 29, 2016, over 26,000 Syrian refugees had arrived into the country (Harris, 2015; Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada [IRCC], 2017). On multiple occasions throughout this time, Trudeau made rallying calls to Canadians across the country to assist in the effort to resettle the newly arrived refugees—the above statement is a case in point. Canadians responded with enthusiasm. These calls for a 'whole-of-society' approach to the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative highlight the co-productive nature of this endeavour—that all Canadians had a role to play in assisting with the resettlement and integration of Syrian refugees into their host country. Broadly speaking, co-production refers to the involvement of citizens, volunteers, community agencies, and others as both producers and consumers of public goods (in this case, refugee resettlement services) (Howlett et al., 2017; Bovaird et al., 2015; Osborne et al., 2015; and Poocharoen & Ting, 2015).

The field of emergency management has been increasingly encouraging the notion of emergency management as a shared, co-productive responsibility, with all members of society having a role to play. See, for example, the guiding principles of the United Nations' *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030* (United Nations, 2015) and the priority areas of activity in the *Emergency Management Strategy for Canada* (Public Safety Canada, 2019), each of which encourage active involvement from all of society in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. At the international level, it is not uncommon for thousands of organizations and individuals to flood into countries devastated by disaster; while domestically, local organizations, community groups, and private citizens (often from outside the disaster-affected area) attempt to augment official response activities with offers of support. In response to devastating wildfires, such as the May 2016 fire in Fort McMurray, Alberta, operational support to fight the blaze was provided by volunteer

firefighters; the Canadian Forces; and the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, and Manitoba (CBC Radio, 2016; Geddes, 2016). Charitable giving and fundraisers occurred all over the country, leading to the Canadian Red Cross' largest charitable response in history at the time (Geddes, 2016). An efficient, coordinated response in instances such as this often depends on pre-determined response plans, which have built in procedures for effective collaboration and utilization of volunteer services and capacity (Canton, 2019).

One aspect of such whole-of-society initiatives that poses a challenge to the quality of co-production is the management of spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers. "Emergent groups and spontaneous volunteers are a common feature of disasters…" (Twigg & Mosel, 2017, p. 443), and unless responding agencies—such as municipal emergency management agencies, non-governmental or not-for-profit organizations (to name a few)—have effective volunteer management procedures in place, the co-production of response outcomes may be affected. In this paper, we explore this phenomenon through a case study focusing on the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative and ask: *In light of the Prime Minister's call for a whole-of-society response, what volunteer management challenges were experienced, and what strategies were used to promote co-production through volunteerism?* using qualitative research methods that examine the perspectives of resettlement agency frontline workers and management across Canada, all of whom were involved in supporting the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative.

In the discussion of the research findings, we argue that effective co-production of the resettlement experience through volunteerism relies on better planning and preparation in managing each of the relationships between the three key players in the resettlement process: volunteers, resettlement agencies, and refugees, as each is a co-producer of resettlement outcomes. An imbalance in focus on any one of these without adequate attention paid to the experience and expectations of the others will result in resettlement outcomes that are adversely affected, as impacts from mismanagement or challenges with spontaneous volunteers can cascade throughout this triad of relationships. Given the calls for whole-of-society emergency management, while at the same time recognizing that outcomes through such initiatives are co-produced by a variety of players, this study provides key takeaways for the emergency management community. In particular, identifying how the involvement of spontaneous volunteers can impact the co-productive efforts of various stakeholders in an emergency response is imperative to ensuring positive outcomes and the achievement of operational success for both service providers and recipients.

We begin by first elaborating on the concept of co-production, both in emergency management generally and refugee resettlement in particular, and by providing an overview of the existing literature on volunteer management in Canada's Syrian refugee resettlement initiative.

Background

Calls for citizen engagement and co-production may be understood in light of a shift in social service provision away from government to established citizens through "'localization' or movement of responsibility to more local levels" (Pat & Palmer, 1996, p. 141–2). While this concept of outsourcing of public services to the community through co-production has been around since the 1970s, it received renewed attention in the mid-2000s due to fiscal pressures faced by governments as a way to engage the public in producing public services and reducing government expenditure (Bovaird et al., 2015). Poocharoen and Ting (2015) note that co-production is promoted when politicians increase their confidence in the public. In such cases, community members become an integral part of public service development and provision. The operationalization of collaborative service delivery depends on the government's ability to also be collaborative with citizens or agencies in the community, and to create "space for discretion of other actors while evoking joint responsibility" (Howlett et al., 2017, p. 492).

Co-Production Through Volunteerism in Emergency Management

Definitions of co-production vary, with differing levels of emphasis placed on the citizens' role in enhancing service provision *output* (i.e., the quantity of services provided), service quality, service provision *outcomes* (i.e., the extent to which services achieve their intended objectives), and how citizens co-create value within the process of delivering or receiving these services (Bovaird et al., 2015; Osborne et al., 2015). For example, according to Bovaird et al. (2015), early definitions of co-production emphasized the citizens' role in "raising the quantity and/or quality of provision of a service" (p. 2). While this definition highlights service quality, it does not address whether a high-quality service translates into one that meets its intended objectives for the user. By contrast, an approach that highlights the importance of outputs, quality and outcomes defines co-production as "professionals and citizens making better use of each other's assets, resources, and contributions to achieve better outcomes [and/]or improved efficiency" (p. 2). Of interest in this paper is the significant role that volunteers can play in the co-production of outcomes, and specifically their role

in either contributing to or hindering the co-creation of value within the process of service delivery. At times, volunteers can become a potential roadblock to effective service provision.

The term *volunteerism* can be defined as unpaid work benefiting people that do not belong to the household or the family of the volunteer, or as any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization (Simsa, 2017). Whittaker et al. (2015) suggest that volunteerism takes four forms in disaster situations: *Anticipated individual volunteers* fulfil the general expectations of society on an individual and ad hoc basis, while *anticipated organization volunteers* are regularly associated with an organization. *Spontaneous individual volunteers* aid as individuals, usually in the early stages of a disaster, and *spontaneous organization volunteers* place themselves at the service of an organization once an emergency or disaster has occurred. Spontaneous volunteers are also known as emergent, convergent, walk-in, or unaffiliated volunteers (see Harris et al., 2017), and often present the most challenges in emergency situations.

Informal voluntary action is a valuable resource and capacity for emergency response. Given that disasters are experienced locally, individuals such as family members, friends, and neighbours are consistently recognized as being important actors in urban disaster response, particularly for urgent response activities such as search and rescue, provision of care to those injured, and clean-up activities (Twigg & Mosel, 2017). In light of this, enhancing volunteer management capabilities is an essential part of improving whole-of-society, co-produced disaster response.

Given that spontaneous volunteers arrive unexpectedly, however, they are often underutilized and "have tended to be viewed as a nuisance or liability" (Whitaker et al., 2015, p. 359). In their study on the role of spontaneous volunteers during domestic disasters such as the 2013 Calgary floods and 2014 shootings in Moncton and Ottawa, the Conference Board of Canada (2016) highlighted how productive collaboration with spontaneous volunteers is generally hindered by six key elements: a lack of trust; unclear leadership dynamics; and concerns about risk, liability, productivity, skill matching, and retention. Despite these issues impacting a coordinated approach towards spontaneous volunteers, research shows that when spontaneous volunteers are engaged adequately through proactive planning and training, they can provide the surge capacity needed in emergency situations (Whitaker et al., 2015; Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2011).

Studying the co-production of the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative, particularly given that this initiative galvanized nation-wide support, highlights important lessons that can be drawn

for the emergency management community wishing to better incorporate volunteers in response efforts. Given that evacuation hosting is a common aspect of domestic emergency response in Canada, important lessons can be drawn by studying Canada's role as a host country in refugee resettlement initiatives and how management of spontaneous volunteers was carried out. Also, by focusing on response outcomes as co-produced, beyond the enhancement of the outcomes between volunteers and responding agencies, this paper will show how efforts should be made to understand the effect of volunteer management and mismanagement on the outcomes of those impacted by disaster, i.e., the co-creation of value. This will be particularly important when reviewing response performance through After-Action Reviews (AARs) or lessons learned exercises.

Co-Production Through Volunteerism in the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative

The Canadian government's invitation for all social actors to become involved in the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative—be it the private sector, religious and community groups, or unaffiliated individuals—developed the opportunity and appetite for co-production by demonstrating to citizens multiple ways in which they can shape their public domain through public participation (Hajer, 2003; Healey et al., 2003). An important site of co-production in this initiative was resettlement agencies—non-profit organizations that receive government funding to assist refugees over the immediate days and weeks following their arrival through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). These Resettlement Assistance Program Service Provider Organizations, or RAP SPOs, offer port-of-entry services; translation; temporary accommodations; assistance with locating and moving to permanent accommodations; and referral to other settlement services, amongst other services[1]. The tone set by the federal government and the extent of freedom they provided to RAP SPOs during the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative impacted RAP SPOs' ability to enable volunteers to successfully co-produce services.

RAP SPOs offer resettlement services primarily to government-assisted refugees (GARs), as opposed to privately sponsored refugees (PSRs), who receive support primarily through private citizens who sponsor them (IRCC, 2016). Of the first Syrian refugees that the Government of Canada resettled, roughly 15,000 arrived into Canada as GARs. Therefore, RAP SPOs held a unique position in this initiative, as they were often the first substantial point of contact for GARs, a position which simultaneously led to heightened media attention and public offers of support in the

[1] Throughout the remainder of this paper, the terms "RAP SPOs" and "resettlement agencies" are used interchangeably.

form of volunteerism. With unprecedented numbers of refugees arriving on short timelines, not only did these organizations have to ensure refugees were receiving safe and effective services, they were also tasked with managing the public's strong desire to play a co-productive role in this initiative, particularly through managing volunteers.

Canada's previous experience with another large-scale refugee resettlement initiative set a precedent for widespread and enthusiastic public support and involvement. Between 1979 and 1981, 60,000 refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia came to Canada through a similar federally-driven, but all-of-society approach. Naomi Alboim (2016), a federal coordinator of the 1979–1981 Indochinese refugee resettlement initiative, notes that "[c]ivil society matters…" in an initiative of this scale, and that partnerships and collaboration across all levels of government, as well as between government and civil society, are crucial to their success (n.p.). Collaboration within and across groups allows supportive relationships to form, and requires resources to be identified and mobilized more effectively. For example, research demonstrates that community members can help newcomers access services and resources, provide many types of support, and provide a buffer against the effects of stress, ultimately facilitating integration (Elliott & Yusuf, 2014; Ager & Strang, 2008; Lamba & Krahn, 2003; Simich et al., 2003). Therefore, through developing supportive relationships between refugees and volunteer community members, volunteering can become one source of co-producing positive resettlement outcomes.

Research on volunteer engagement in response to the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative discusses a number of volunteer management styles observed. Smith, Hadžiristić, and Alipour (2017) use an analytical framework to describe the variety of volunteer initiatives in Canadian communities as the first 25,000 Syrian refugees arrived. Interesting observations are made depending on the size of the resettlement sector prior to the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative (non-existent, small and central, or large and complex), and the nature of the volunteer initiatives (novel, emerging from pre-existing initiatives repurposed to assist with refugee resettlement, or initiatives devoted to resettlement work). Mackwani's (2016) case study on the role of volunteers during the arrival and welcoming of 1,500 Syrian refugees in Halifax found that spontaneous volunteers were well-managed thanks to pre-existing tools, frameworks, and bilateral agreements between the voluntary sector and the community-based organizations borne out of the 1999 arrival of 5,000 refugees from Kosovo. This previous experience facilitated the formation of a taskforce that communicated needs to the public and referred interested volunteers to appropriate areas by way of an online volunteer registration process. In their study on housing searches for Syrian refugee newcomers in Canada,

Rose and Charette (2017) found that integrating volunteers into different aspects of work in smaller cities was easier than in larger ones, due to greater flexibility in operational aspects when RAP SPOs were smaller and high profile of volunteering in smaller communities.

Rather than a command-and-control (C-2), centralized approach, the surveyed studies highlight the need for fluid structures for management of spontaneous volunteers. Without adequate planning and coordination, spontaneous volunteers can become underutilized and feel unfulfilled, hinder certain functions, and volunteers themselves can be adversely affected. The current study contributes to existing literature on volunteerism in the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative by applying a co-production lens to understand this whole-of-society response.

Most volunteers that stepped up to assist with the Syrian refugees, and the ones that RAP SPOs were least prepared to handle, were spontaneous volunteers. While it is recognized that volunteers can play an important role in refugee resettlement through improving social outcomes and assisting with community integration, given the scale of the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative, its quick pace, and the heightened media and public attention, many resettlement agencies faced challenges in managing and utilizing public goodwill, particularly given their limited resources for management of these spontaneous volunteers. The following sections present the perspectives of resettlement agency employees on the challenges faced with volunteer management during the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative, and strategies they implemented to address these challenges.

Methodology

In order to investigate the volunteer management challenges that were experienced following the Prime Minister's call for a whole-of-society response to the 2015 mass Syrian refugee resettlement initiative, as well as the strategies that were used to promote co-production through volunteerism, a qualitative case study approach examining the perspectives of resettlement agency frontline workers and management across Canada was undertaken. Data gathering included semi-structured interviews with approximately 52% of the population of organizations that held contracts to provide services as a part of the Resettlement Assistant Program (RAP) as of February 2016.

All 27 agencies that held federal contracts to deliver RAP as of the end of February 2016 were contacted to participate in this study[2]. Fifteen employees (labelled as RAP01–RAP15 in this paper) across fourteen resettlement agencies chose to participate in the interviews that took place between July and October 2016. This approach enabled the capturing of experiences and voices of participants as they faced the challenge of managing eager volunteers head on while simultaneously trying to maintain high quality service provision to a population in need.

In addition to this primary data gathering, secondary data was analyzed to inform both the research approach and theoretical grounding of this paper. This included a review of literature on narratives of refugee settlement and co-production discourse, as already discussed in part in previous sections of this paper.

[2] Organizations in Quebec were not contacted for this research, as Quebec's resettlement program is run by the province.

Findings

In line with the federal government's call for whole-of-society involvement, resettlement agency employees that participated in this study welcomed the public's desire to help and felt their involvement was important for making the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative successful. Many RAP SPO participants noted how proud they felt of their communities, and that this initiative brought out the best in their towns and cities. Reflecting back on the experience, RAP10 noted that the role of volunteers in an initiative like this is "*absolutely* crucial [emphasis added]. We could not have done it without the community. And we found the success of the venture has been largely due to the volunteers, who [...] in many cases, almost become like family" to the refugees they support. RAP10 also noted that volunteers were likely to positively impact these newcomers' long-term integration. Similarly, RAP06 specifically noted that public support for, and involvement in, this initiative "transformed the community." Likewise, RAP15 commented, "[O]ne of the things about this initiative is really the extent to which volunteers really facilitated it. You know, yes, yes, there's the funding; yes, there's the formal services. But, there's also incredible groups that stepped forward on a volunteer basis." These recollections by resettlement agency employees demonstrate the crucial co-productive role that volunteers play in creating value in service outputs and outcomes by participating in resettlement service provision, ultimately helping to shape the resettlement experience of both their communities and the refugees themselves.

Findings from this research demonstrate that RAP SPO volunteers generally completed tasks in one of two categories: offering support to Syrian refugees directly or offering service delivery support to RAP SPOs. Direct support for refugees consisted of welcoming activities; transportation, housing, and language support; child-minding; and matching programs between volunteers and newcomers for a relatively extended period to facilitate integration. Volunteers also led English practice groups, field trips to help refugees better understand where community resources were, and outings to community celebrations. Examples of volunteer tasks to support RAP SPOs' service delivery included administrative support, assistance with volunteer and donation management, and allocation of temporary accommodations. Despite these benefits, complications arose as RAP SPOs were inadequately prepared to manage the volume of volunteers interested in playing a role in the whole-of-society initiative.

Challenges Facing Resettlement Agency Employees in Managing Volunteers

Upon the announcement of the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative and official calls for a whole-of-society approach, most agencies that participated in this study conducted community engagement sessions to provide insight into the resettlement process, in order to assist with recruiting volunteers. Recognizing that volunteer satisfaction is central to successful engagement, some agencies conducted volunteer assessments to match volunteers with activities that interested them, while others proactively planned the most effective ways to utilize volunteer efforts. RAP10 noted, "When we set aside the time to think through the RAP process, we delegated which would remain staff assignments and then which we would delegate to teams of volunteers." "At that point," however, RAP04 explains, "we didn't see that there were additional *government* sponsored refugees coming," which increased citizen desire to get engaged.

RAP SPOs were soon "overwhelmed" by the number of volunteer applications (RAP14), with one agency receiving 6,000 applications. Most agencies received "more [volunteers] than [they] could have used" (RAP04). RAP15 noted that with the federal government's call for Canadians to get involved in the initiative, the resettlement sector "bore a lot of that pressure," as members of the public would call "saying, 'When are you going to send me those GARs?' or 'I want a GAR family.'" One agency did not begin recruiting and training volunteers until officially becoming a RAP SPO in January 2016. Yet, given the public interest for volunteering, within only one month, "even before [the agency] got the contracts to receive GARs, [it] had already recruited four or five hundred volunteers" (RAP03). Reflecting upon the difficulties faced by resettlement agencies, one respondent explained that while volunteers "were anxious to help," in many cases, the public did so "against our will" (RAP07). Often, volunteers would arrive at RAP agencies with "offers of donations of stuff, of money, and of support" (RAP08), which were sometimes unneeded, and which most agencies lacked capacity to manage. RAP12's agency processed between 800 and 1,000 volunteer applications, although they "really didn't have the capacity to review or screen that many volunteers and interview them and find spots for them."

Regarding volunteer screening, RAP01 explained, "somebody who wants to work with refugees [has] to go through a volunteer orientation and they have to get a vulnerable sector check for the police, which takes time," making the process as intensive as "hiring an employee" (RAP10). As a result of delays in processing, volunteers grew frustrated (see also Smith et al., 2017). In situations where agencies wanted to be proactive with regard to volunteer engagement and training, such as RAP15's Call to Action put out in November 2015, the Syrian refugees did not arrive for

over a month thereafter, "for a lot of people it was that 'hurry up and wait.'" This resulted in employees having to "[manage] people's frustrations that [refugees] weren't here yet" (RAP15). While turning away volunteers might have been an option, RAP07 explains the difficulty experienced by resettlement agency employees when faced with such a choice:

> You feel so horrible [turning people away], right? 'Cause they're in your face saying, "Oh, here's money, here's clothes. Here are things." …The dynamic is pretty hard to handle because you feel horrible and you want to make sure that people *can* get involved.

In fact, soon after refugees began arriving, hundreds of spontaneous volunteers arrived in some occasions at temporary accommodations where Syrian refugees were housed for the time being, such as hotels. These locations "became the place to go and interact with Syrian refugees," explains RAP07. As a result of their unexpected appearance, spontaneous volunteers were described as, "just pulling and pulling and pulling" at RAP SPO staff time. These examples illustrate that challenges related to volunteer management can reduce the ability of volunteers to effectively contribute to service output and quality, thereby preventing them from enhancing refugee outcomes—all key components in playing a positive co-productive role in this initiative.

Resettlement Agency Strategies for Volunteer Management

The interviewed RAP SPOs adopted a range of strategies to manage the volume of interested volunteers and enhance volunteers' ability to co-produce this initiative. Half of the participants indicated that they managed volunteers by shifting internal responsibilities and using existing human resources, demonstrating that volunteer management was an additional—but necessary—responsibility that RAP SPOs bore. Some agencies used provincial funding to complement federal funding and fill gaps in their volunteer management capacity. Many RAP SPOs that secured external funds created community and volunteer engagement positions to manage volunteer resources. For other agencies, long-time volunteers took on more extensive settlement roles. RAP15 explains:

> We were very fortunate in that we had some long-term volunteers who were known to us that we could also recruit in. And, you know, you knew the quality of work that was being done…In that initial phase, we were very much moving responsibilities from one person to another, so we were taking up our expanded workload and sharing it.

By creating specific volunteer management and community coordination positions, core agency workers could lessen their own stress while ensuring that volunteers were adequately involved in undertaking quality refugee resettlement services. Developing volunteer management roles also freed up RAP resources to focus on RAP-supported activities, enhancing resettlement workers' own service output and quality and achieving positive outcomes. For instance, RAP03 noted, "If you're able to get the volunteers doing things that they really want to be engaged with, it allows you to free time up […] to do strategy and think through [the resettlement] process."

Some RAP SPOs also partnered with government or community groups to share volunteer management responsibilities. RAP06 created a network of community actors to manage volunteer offers of support by channeling requests through a single point at the municipal government. Through this partnership, RAP06 could direct support to community partners that had already been engaged in resettlement-related activities, such as organizing donations. Furthermore, if interested community members called the RAP SPO directly, they were channeled to the city's phone line, which would direct them accordingly. The networks of volunteers around the city that were channeled through the municipality lowered the stress and resource burden experienced by the RAP SPO.

Another agency leveraged their city's Islamic association, enabling the community to play a co-productive role in refugee resettlement. RAP12 notes:

> [The Islamic Association] put someone in charge, so when community members would show up and say, "I want to help, I want to meet people, and I want to take them and do this and this," we could say, "Okay, you know we have someone coordinating that on behalf of the community. You can contact this person and they'll tell you what you can do."

In this case, external volunteer coordinators allowed RAP SPOs to focus on their primary concern of refugee health and safety, without having to directly turn volunteer support away.

With respect to volunteers that came directly to temporary accommodation sites, some agencies assigned staff to temporary accommodations to monitor and "gatekeep" access to refugees. Others developed a screening process to vet volunteers. RAP05 explains that, "at some point in the process, we adapted [volunteers] to carry ID cards." To obtain these ID cards, volunteers were required to undertake a "rigorous screening process" which included "a certificate of conduct and reference checks" (RAP05). Individuals that went through these processes became RAP SPO-affiliated volunteers, which gave peace of mind to on-site RAP SPO staff, and enabled these

volunteers to more successfully co-produce resettlement services. Some agencies also adopted practices seen in private sponsorship arrangements in an effort to address refugees' needs and volunteer burnout. For example, a GAR support group model emerged in one RAP SPO to share responsibilities among a team of volunteers, increasing the chance of a successful co-productive relationship.

Discussion

In engaging with the volunteers, RAP SPOs were required to actively resolve challenges as they emerged. Observed strategies came about as a reaction to unfolding events and can be understood as a practice in policy learning (see Marshall & Béland, 2019). Getting to a place where volunteers effectively participated in co-production took time, however. Despite the strategies employed, even a year after the arrival of the initial wave of refugees, media reports continued to highlight complications with volunteer management, with headlines such as, "'We still have more volunteers than we can manage:' Offers of help for refugees overwhelm support groups" (Carman, 2017). It was clear then that more needed to be done. One way to do this is better understanding the full extent of inadequate volunteer management by applying a co-productive lens.

Understanding Volunteer Management Impact Holistically: A Triad of Relationships

While RAP SPOs became a central access point for citizens to volunteer, when the Canadian government placed an emphasis on whole-of-society involvement, this resulted in more than simply a relationship between RAP SPOs and volunteers that needed to be effectively managed. Rather, there was indeed a triad of relationships that emerged in this co-productive effort, each of which often experienced challenges in service output, quality, and/or outcomes that stemmed from inadequate volunteer management, highlighting the adverse impact volunteers can have on co-production if not properly managed or engaged. The three relationships are between volunteers and RAP SPOs (which we have already discussed), volunteers and refugees, and RAP SPOs and refugees. Figure 1 outlines the ideal outcomes of each of these three relationships when co-production occurs successfully, which we have labelled as 'co-productive relationships.'

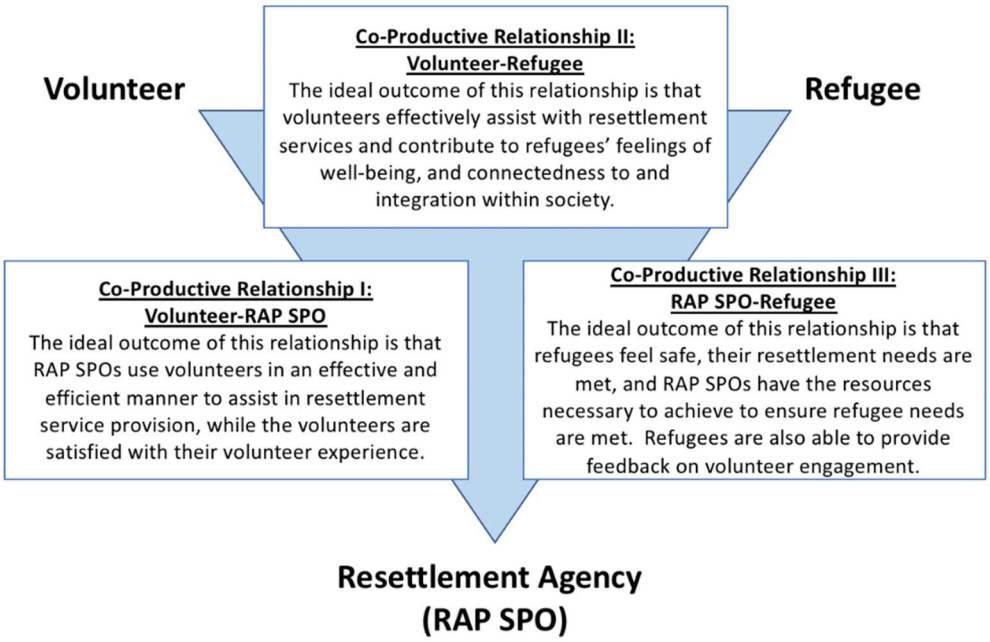

Figure 1: Triad relationship between RAP SPOs, volunteers, and refugees to better understand the ideal outcomes of each of these co-productive relationships.

This triad of co-productive relationships illustrates a holistic approach to understanding a volunteer's role in refugee resettlement. From a resettlement perspective, the outcomes of each relationship are unique. For the relationship between volunteers and RAP SPOs (Relationship I), with successful co-production, resettlement agencies leverage volunteers to assist with resettlement services and other duties while aiming to ensure volunteers are satisfied with their experience. The ideal outcome of a co-productive relationship between volunteers and refugees (Relationship II) involves volunteers assisting with resettlement services effectively while contributing to refugee well-being and community integration. Finally, the ideal outcome of a co-productive relationship between RAP SPO and refugees (Relationship III) involves the latter having their needs met, with necessary supports and resources in place for effective delivery of RAP services. This includes a means by which refugees can participate in the co-production of the initiative by providing feedback on volunteer engagement. In our conversations with RAP SPO employees, we learned that beyond simply the Relationship I, all three relationships experienced their own challenges during the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative as a result of mismanagement of, or challenges with, spontaneous volunteers. As such, each of these relationships requires effective management for co-production of resettlement to be optimal.

With respect to Relationship II—between volunteers and refugees—it should be reiterated that refugees constitute a vulnerable group. While some RAP SPOs took precautions to ensure that

refugees were not taken advantage of by volunteers that had not been vetted, others had to "[turn] volunteers away" (RAP03) when volunteer management was becoming too resource intensive. Having to turn away potential volunteers highlights how improperly resourced volunteer management contributes to a direct reduction in the service output that volunteers are able to provide to refugees, and is therefore an impediment to co-production, such as in enhancing the social capital of refugees. In response, some volunteers looked for ways to assist refugees independently, outside of the institutional framework provided by resettlement agencies. RAP12 explains:

> There was, for example, someone who came and was like, "Oh, this [refugee] family has agreed to come and live in my basement suite and they're going to work in my factory." And it's like, *who are you* and *what are you* [emphasis added]? Like… it sounds like, it could be a really bad situation.

The skepticism of this resettlement agency employee highlights that volunteers engaging outside of the institutional framework can result in a reduction in resettlement service quality (indeed, potentially an unsafe situation altogether), again demonstrating that inadequate volunteer management adversely impacts the co-productive process.

In addition to refugees being put into potentially compromising situations, volunteers were also overwhelmed in many cases, particularly when they were not given adequate onboarding training. RAP07 explains that volunteers often had "a naïve approach to helping a refugee family" and a lack of understanding of the complexities faced by the latter. In such cases, volunteers were prone to experiencing burnout "because they underestimated the extent of the need…Some of our volunteers were having problems. 'I can't handle this anymore. The [refugees] are too needy. I can't be doing this anymore'" (RAP07). This burnout inevitably affected the relationship that volunteers had with refugees and the quality and amount of care they would be able to provide.

Public involvement in the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative also added challenges to the relationship between RAP SPOs and refugees (Relationship III). In some cases, increased resources funneled into volunteer management took employee attention away from assisting refugees with the resettlement process itself. This was particularly pertinent given RAP SPO resources required for media management and communication. Due to a lack of understanding of the RAP process and unrealistic expectations, it was not uncommon for spontaneous volunteers to criticize RAP SPOs' ability to care for refugees in the media (see CTV News, 2016). For example, RAP03 notes:

> [T]here has been some challenges […] with people who don't really know the process, so in the midst of it all, we had some very vocal public criticism about not providing *enough* support. And we had to try to explain […] what our role is and our approach of giving people choice. [For example] there was enough money for people to furnish their apartments, but some people chose not to buy all their furniture at once. So, there were people [members of the public] who went to the media and said, 'These people don't have living room furniture.' Well, it's their choice! They want to take time to decide how to spend their money. They want to get a sense of how much, how far it goes. […] [T]hat was a challenge to have to deal with that as well.

This comment directly relates to the agency of refugees and how they co-create value in response efforts through their engagement, such as by deciding how to spend the money they are given by the government or by contributing to the house hunting process. In order to educate the public, resettlement agency employees invested resources into informing the public of the proper RAP procedures. RAP04 explains, "We immediately got some information sessions going, and contacted the media, Facebook, social media to say, 'Here's what we do…here's how you can work with us to help in this situation.' …Our whole effort was to sort of direct people into something." Other agencies organized special outings that media could attend. The impromptu management that this, as well as other aspects of volunteer management, discussed necessarily took away from the resettlement service outputs, quality, and outcomes that RAP SPO staff could offer directly to, or to develop with, refugees.

When considering the co-creation of value, examining volunteer management challenges and strategies from only the perspective of resettlement agencies dismisses the impact that inefficient or ineffective management has on other aspects of the triad of relationships. In other words, in seeking to improve the status quo, developed strategies should consider challenges arising from inadequate volunteer management in the relationships among all three key actors involved, namely volunteers, resettlement agencies, and refugees. This exemplifies the need for volunteer and refugee voices to be central to understanding effective volunteer management. For example, rather than volunteer satisfaction being solely the responsibility of RAP SPOs, true co-production also allows those impacted and being served to shape the volunteer experience. This can be accomplished by refugees providing feedback on the impact that volunteers have had on their resettlement experience, and volunteers receiving this information. RAP SPOs are ideally placed to facilitate this exchange, and in this way, volunteers are provided firsthand accounts of the impact of their efforts, while refugees are able to actively share important information regarding the effectiveness of volunteer engagement ahead of future co-production initiatives.

By learning from all stakeholders involved, a more comprehensive understanding of volunteer management techniques can be developed to ensure that services are provided effectively, volunteers are satisfied with their role, and, most importantly, refugees feel supported in and connected to their new communities. Thus, while interviews with responding agency employees (as was done in this study) are valuable, it is also important to solicit feedback from volunteers as well as refugees themselves.

Lessons for Co-produced Emergency Management

The co-production evident in the Syrian refugee resettlement initiative is one of its major positive characteristics: the Canadian public rallied *en masse* to ensure the successful resettlement of thousands of Syrian refugees. Considering the emphasis on whole-of-society and co-produced response efforts in emergency management, there are two important lessons that can be drawn from this case study. The first involves learning from the volunteer management strategies implemented by resettlement agencies.

Although many resettlement agencies did not have established mechanisms and resources in place to handle the volume of volunteer requests, they improvised and adjusted in time, thereby facilitating more efficient coordination of volunteers. Adopted strategies included shifting internal RAP SPO resources to deal with volunteer coordination; using trusted volunteers to assist with volunteer management; obtaining funding to hire a volunteer management coordinator; and outsourcing volunteer management to outside partners (e.g., government partners, ethno-cultural groups). Strategies to monitor and "gatekeep" access of volunteers to those impacted are critical, especially given that disaster victims constitute a vulnerable population (many of whom have compounded vulnerabilities). While the RAP SPOs most effective in this were those that were proactive and attempted to onboard volunteers ahead of the arrival of the refugees, given that screening of spontaneous volunteers can be quite difficult in the midst of an unfolding event, quick solutions, including assigning low-risk responsibilities to spontaneous volunteers, managing expectations, and arranging impromptu information sessions, are useful. In general, encouraging citizenship engagement while simultaneously reducing funding to community engagement programs or not increasing funding to assist with volunteer management activities is counterproductive.

These lessons learned from studying the RAP SPO experience are applicable to any responding entity tasked with managing whole-of-society response efforts, including municipal emergency management agencies, first responders (such as Fire Departments or Emergency Medical Services), and non-governmental or not-for-profit organizations. Given that Canada is a host

country in the given case study, lessons are especially pertinent for those entities responsible for coordinating and managing mass evacuee hosting activities, particularly in light of the high incidence of domestic flooding and wildfires in Canada, and how they often prompt widespread public support.

As the second (and perhaps more important) lesson, this study has shown us that beyond simply focusing on enhancing the outcomes between volunteers and responding agencies in whole-of-society efforts, the co-creation of value through co-production must be recognized. In doing so, After-Action Reviews (AARs) or lessons-learned exercises should incorporate the feedback of the multiple stakeholders involved in co-creation of response outcomes, rather than simply focusing inward on internal processes of responding agencies. As has been shown, volunteers in the emergency response context can pose challenges for both responding entities as well as those impacted by disasters.

To better understand the role of volunteers in impacting the co-production of outcomes, Figure 2 presents a revised triad that can apply to any emergency situation. The figure illustrates the basic relationships between volunteers, responding entities in an emergency, and impacted stakeholders.

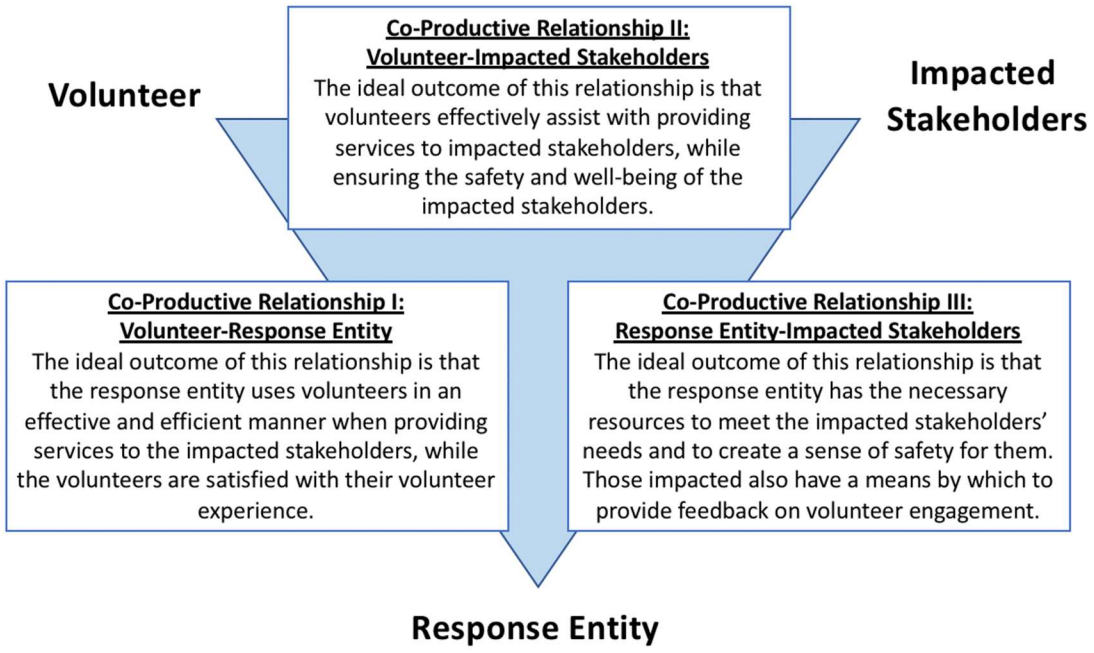

Figure 2: Adapted from Figure 1, this triad illustrates the co-productive relationship between volunteers, response entities, and impacted stakeholders following any emergency situation. Like the refugee resettlement example, if improperly managed, volunteers can similarly adversely impact the emergency management process following an emergency situation and negatively affect those impacted.

In considering the three relationships among all implicated actors in a co-production initiative, a more holistic picture begins to emerge: challenges are better understood, existing capacities can be identified, and areas requiring more resources are made evident. While traditional volunteer management review exercises are internal, focusing primarily on the relationship between responding agencies and volunteers, this approach is clearly too narrow and can hinder the possibility of using these exercises to bolster financial support and resources in managing other relationships in co-produced emergency response efforts, i.e., those between volunteers and impacted stakeholders directly (Relationship II), and those between responding entities and those impacted stakeholders (Relationship III). Each relationship in the triad requires effective management for co-production to be optimal.

Consider the well-publicized response to the January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti, where many unaffiliated and unanticipated volunteers, as well as an abundance of donations, arrived into the country. Despite the goodwill, this caused major challenges in response efforts. For instance, when hundreds of thousands of kilograms of pharmaceutical supplies and thousands of kilograms of medical supplies arrived into the country in the two-week period following the earthquake, the medical supply chain was overwhelmed, causing "significant delays in pushing medications out to medical teams" (Jobe, 2011, p. 4). Such logistical obstacles and resulting delays costed time, energy, and even lives (Aleccia, 2010).

In this example, ineffective management of volunteered donations, characterizing Relationship I (Volunteer-Response Entity), adversely impacted Relationship III (Response Entity-Impacted Stakeholders); hence, logisticians in the responding entity were unable to provide medical supplies to both medical personnel and victims of the disaster at the normal rate due to being overwhelmed with incoming supplies. Even from afar, citizens who volunteered these items did not create value within the emergency response. Rather, they inadvertently created challenges and reduced service quality and output. Similarly, Jobe (2011) notes that some volunteers that arrived in Haiti had underlying medical conditions that rendered them not only unable to meaningfully contribute to the response efforts, but end up in need of medical assistance themselves. In this case, these volunteers were unable to play a successful co-productive role within the response effort, affecting Relationship II (Volunteers-Impacted Stakeholders); they were both unable to provide services to victims of the disasters and were required to use much-needed medical equipment. Like the refugee resettlement case study in this paper, this illustration from the 2010 earthquake in Haiti

shows that ineffective management of volunteers and donations can prevent positive co-production of emergency response activities, with volunteers negatively impacting the services provided to disaster victims.

In a situation such as this, learning from all parties involved is imperative. How should responding entities address the problems posed by ill-equipped volunteers or overwhelming amounts of donations? For volunteers, how can they best contribute while avoiding the problems encountered? Most importantly, and perhaps least examined, how do people directly impacted by disasters experience the provision of services, both positive and negative, by volunteers? Asking questions like this and examining all three relationships in this triad when seeking to identify lessons learned, can help responding entities ensure that volunteers are more likely to successfully co-produce and add value to emergency response efforts. In order to do this successfully, practitioners in the emergency management field are encouraged to engage researchers and academics in order to solicit their methodological expertise and reach in examining the full extent of volunteer impact in whole-of-society disaster responses. Similarly, it is equally important for researchers to initiate participatory research projects with practitioners, such as through Collaborative, Community Engaged Scholarship (CCES), which provides a critical space where previously marginalized voices can ascend into academic literature and policy analysis, providing new ideas and potentially new solutions (Warren et al*.,* 2018). Such collaboration between those in academia and those on-the-ground has the potential to enhance co-production goals in emergency management.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the impact that spontaneous volunteers can have on service provision, with a particular focus on Canada's Syrian refugee resettlement initiative. It has argued that the recent emphasis on whole-of-society engagement in emergency settings can provide an environment for volunteers to play a positive co-productive role, in which they bring value to the service provision process. However, as has been highlighted, volunteer engagement represents a paradox: while it is indispensable, if not proactively planned for and supported with adequate resourcing and management, poor volunteer engagement can disrupt service output, quality, and outcomes—ultimately, adversely affecting the service delivery process and those impacted by disaster. Improved volunteer management, however, is not restricted to the relationship between volunteers and response entities themselves, but must consider a triad of relationships involving responding entities, volunteers, and impacted victims. Each of these stakeholders are co-producers of disaster management outcomes, and it is important to ensure that adequate resources are available to manage each relationship for service outputs, quality, and outcomes to be optimally achieved.

Lessons learned from this case study are applicable to emergency managers who may be tasked with coordinating responses to other types of disasters, where the public is both encouraged and motivated to become involved in a co-productive role. The emphasis on whole-of-society involvement in emergency management adds urgency to this approach, as the continued presence of spontaneous volunteers should be both expected and welcomed. As exemplified in the triad of relationships discussed in this study, to optimize collaborative approaches in emergency management, emergency management practitioners are encouraged to recognize the co-creation of value within the process of delivering and/or receiving services in whole-of-society responses to disasters. We advocate for capturing the lived experience of each of the implicated stakeholders in the triad of relationships in co-produced initiatives, as well as the provision of adequate resources in managing each of these relationships, for improved overall disaster management.

References

Ager, A. & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 21*(2), 166–191.

Alboim, N. (2016). Lessons learned from the Indochinese and Syrian refugee movements. *Policy Options Politiques: Le Forum au Service de Bien Public*. http://policyoptions.irpp.org/fr/magazines/mai-2016/lessons-learned-from-the-indochinese-and-syrian-refugee-movements

Aleccia, J. (2010, January 21). Disaster do-gooders can actually hinder help. *NBC News*. https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna34958965

Bovaird, T., Van Ryzin, G. G., Loeffler, E. & Parrado, S. (2015). Activating citizens to participate in collective co-production of public services. *Journal of Social Policy, 44*(1), 1–23.

Carman, T. (2017, January 15). "'We still have more volunteers than we can manage:' Offers of help for refugees overwhelm support groups." *Vancouver Sun*. http://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/we-still-have-more-volunteers-than-we-can-manage-offers-of-help-for-refugees-overwhelm-support-groups

Canton, L.G. (2019). Emergency Management: Concepts and Strategies for Effective Programs (2nd ed.). Wiley, New Jersey.

CBC News. (2015, December 11). Full text of Justin Trudeau's remarks ahead of refugees' arrival. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/syrian-refugees-justin-trudeau-remarks-1.3360401.

CBC Radio. (2016, May 9). 'Fire shooting sparks and debris': Meet frontline firefighters in Fort McMurray. *The Current.* https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/alberta-under-fire-a-special-edition-of-the-current-for-may-9-2016-1.3573093/fire-shooting-sparks-and-debris-meet-frontline-firefighters-in-fort-mcmurray-1.357310

CTV News. (2016, January 26). 600 refugees crammed into Toronto hotel despite waiting sponsors. *CTV News*. https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/600-refugees-crammed-into-toronto-hotel-despite-waiting-sponsors-1.2753568

Conference Board of Canada. (2016). *Spontaneous Volunteers: Community Participation in Disaster Response and Recovery*. https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/c5c4ff17-6073-4754-8cce-4c1a2471bcb0/7875_Spontaneous-Volunteers_BR.pdf

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2011). *A whole community approach to emergency management: Principles, themes, and pathways for action*. https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/23781

Geddes, J. (2016, May 12). A nation responds to the Fort McMurray fire. *Macleans*. https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/a-nation-responds-to-the-fort mcmurray-fire/

Government of Canada. (2020). Sponsorship Agreement Holders – Sponsor a refugee. *Immigration and Citizenship*. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders.html

Hajer, M. (2003). A frame in the fields: Policymaking and the reinvention of politics. In M. A. Hajer & H. Wagenaar (Eds.), *Deliberative policy analysis: Understanding governance in the network society* (pp. 88–110). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Harris, K. (2015, November 24). Liberals won't meet deadline to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada by year's end. *CBC News*. *https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/liberal-plan-syrian-refugees-1.3333623*

Harris, M., Shaw, D., Scully, J., Smith, C. M., & Hieke, G. (2017). The involvement/exclusion paradox of spontaneous volunteering: New lessons and theory from winter flood episodes in England. *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*, *46*(2), 352–371.

Healey, P., de Magalhaes, C., Madanipour, A. & Pendlebury, J. (2003). Place, identity and local politics: Analysing initiatives in deliberative governance. In M. A. Hajer & H. Wagenaar (Eds.), *Deliberative policy analysis: Understanding governance in the network society* (pp. 60–87). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Howlett, M., Kekez, A., & Poocharoen, O. (2017). Understanding co-production as a policy tool: Integrating new public governance and comparative policy theory. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis, 19*(5), 487–501.

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. (2016). Evaluation of the resettlement programs (GAR, PSR, BVOR and RAP). *Audits and evaluations*. http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/resettlement.asp

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. (2017). Canada's Syrian commitments. *Refugees*. http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/commitment.asp.

Jobe, K. (2011). Disaster relief in post-earthquake Haiti: Unintended consequences of humanitarian volunteerism. *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease, 9*(1), 1–5.

Lamba, N. K. & Krahn, H. (2003). Social capital and refugee resettlement: The social networks of refugees in Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 4*(3), 335–360.

Liberal Party of Canada. (2015). *Liberals Commit to Leadership on Syrian Refugee Crisis*. https://www.liberal.ca/liberals-commit-to-leadership-on-syrian-refugee-crisis/

Mackwani, Z. (2016). Assessment of the Canadian Voluntary Sector Capabilities and Capacity in Emergency Management. *Canadian Red Cross Contract Report.* https://cradpdf.drdc-rddc.gc.ca/PDFS/unc276/p805440_A1b.pdf

Marshall, A. & Béland, D. (2019). Street-level bureaucrats, policy learning, and refugee resettlement: The case of Syrian refugees in Saskatoon, Canada. *Canadian Public Administration*, *62*(3), 393–412.

Osborne, S. P., Radnor, Z., & Strokosch, K. (2015). Co-production and the co-creation of value in public services. A suitable case for treatment? *Public Management Review, 18*(5), 639–653.

Pat, O. M., & Palmer, D. (1996). Post-keynesian policing. *Economy and Society, 25*(2), 137–155.

Poocharoen, O. & Ting, B. (2015). Collaboration, co-production, networks: Convergence of theories. *Public Management Review, 17*(4), 587–614.

Public Safety Canada. (2019). *Emergency Management Strategy for Canada: Toward a Resilient 2030*. https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/mrgncy-mngmnt-strtgy/mrgncy-mngmnt-strtgy-en.pdf

Rose, D., & Charette, A. (2017). *Finding housing for the Syrian refugee newcomers in Canadian cities: challenges, initiatives and policy implications. Synthesis report*. INRS Centre Urbanisation Culture Société. http://espace.inrs.ca/id/eprint/6458/1/FindinghousingforSyrianrefugees-report.pdf

Simsa, R. (2017). Leaving emergency management in the refugee crisis to civil society? The case of Austria. *Journal of Applied Security Research*, *12*(1), 78–95.

Simich, L., Beiser, M., & Mawani, F. N. (2003). Social support and the significance of shared experience in refugee migration and resettlement. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 25*(7), 872–891.

Smith, C. D., Hadžiristić, T. and Alipour, L. (2017). *Volunteer & Settlement Sector Interactions In Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. Together Project: Filling the Gap. http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/b89524_e2207c535cda46c7ae85bb4539add26d.pdf.

Twigg, J., & Mosel, I. (2017). Emergent groups and spontaneous volunteers in urban disaster response. *Environment and Urbanization*, *29*(2), 443–458.

United Nations. (2015). *Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction 2015–2030*. https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

Warren, M. R., Calderón, J., Kupscznk, L. A., Squires, G., & Su, C. (2018). Is Collaborative,

Community-Engaged Scholarship More Rigorous Than Traditional Scholarship? On Advocacy, Bias and Social Science Research. *Urban Education*, *53*(4), 445–472.

Whittaker, J., McLennan, B. & Handmer, J. (2015). A review of informal volunteerism in emergencies and disasters: Definition, opportunities and challenges. *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 13*, 358–368.