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# Information Access and Collective Resilience for Newcomer Communities

Navigation of Formal and Informal Support Networks by Yazidi and Turkish-Speaking Newcomers in York Region.

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**United Way**  
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# The Research Team

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# Study purpose

- 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

# Methods

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

# Advisory committee identified two communities of interest:

- 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

# 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

# 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

# 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



# 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

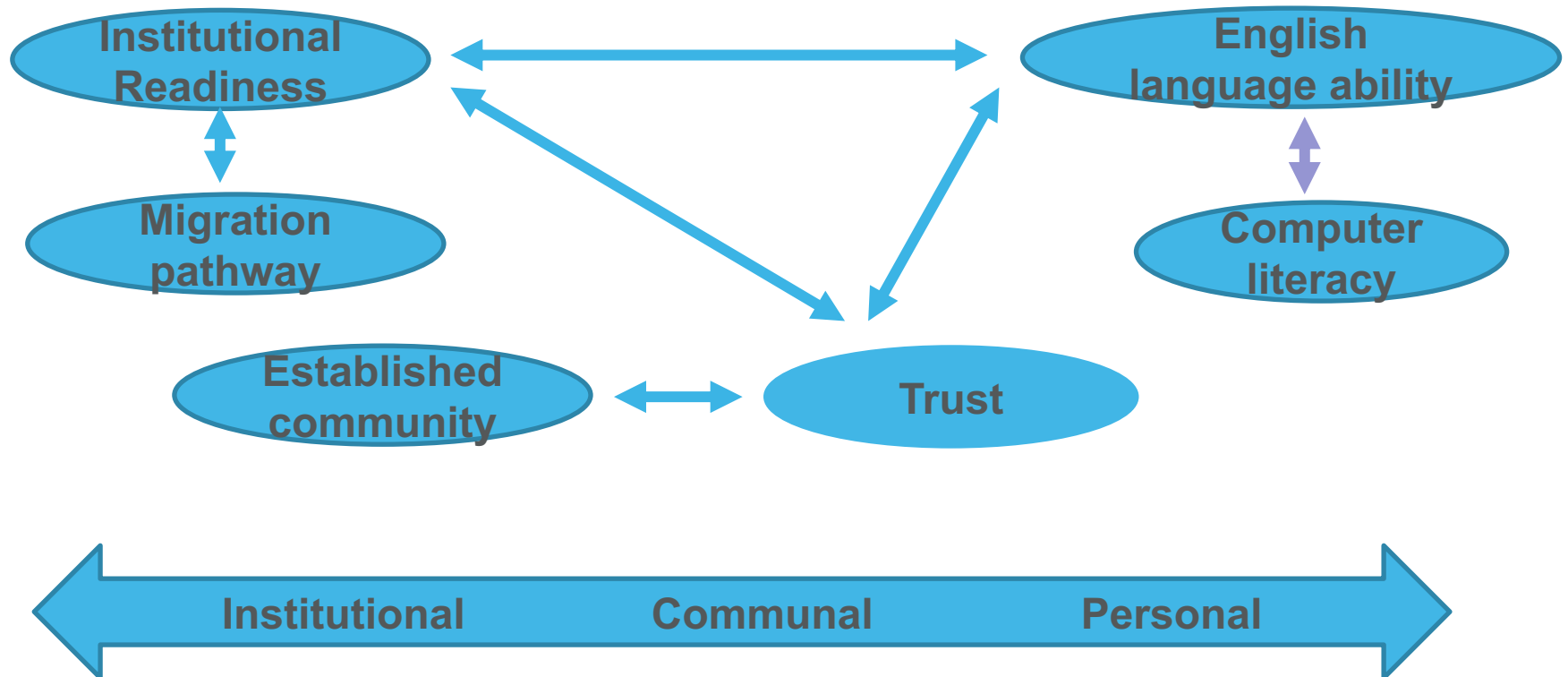
# Formal information sources

- 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

# 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

# Factoring influencing reliance on informal vs formal information sources



# 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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