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GOVERNMENT-ASSISTED REFUGEES IN TORONTO'S LINC CLASSES: AN EXPLORATION OF PERCEIVED NEEDS AND BARRIERS

by

Dunja Metikos Debeljacki, Hon. B.Sc., University of Toronto, 2002

A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in the Program of
Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2007

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GOVERNMENT-ASSISTED REFUGEES IN TORONTO'S LINC CLASSES: AN EXPLORATION OF PERCEIVED NEEDS AND BARRIERS

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Master of Arts
Immigration and Settlement Studies
Ryerson University

ABSTRACT

Studies on any aspect of the resettlement of government-assisted refugees (GARs) in Canada are scarce. This lack of research is particularly prominent in the area of GARs' experience in official language-training programs. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, this paper is the first examination of the perceived needs and barriers of GARs in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), a federally-funded language training program for newly arrived permanent residents. The study focuses on the LINC program in the City of Toronto. Analysis of quantitative data suggests that GARs have high drop-out and low graduation rates from LINC classes compared to other immigrants. Interviews with key informants parallel the findings from the quantitative data, but also identify significant difficulties faced by GARs both inside and outside the LINC classroom. This study contributes to an enhanced understanding of the settlement needs of GARs and advocates for the development of both new and improved programs and services for GARs in Canada.

Keywords: government-assisted refugees (GARs); Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC); City of Toronto; settlement needs; settlement barriers

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1.0 THE GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Although people have been providing disadvantaged individuals with place of safety throughout history, the term *refugee* that categorizes a group of people became a common term only about three hundred years ago, when it was used to describe Huguenot exiles from France (Beiser, 2004). Today, in the era of global migration, this term evokes various and often complex images, but its legal and widely accepted definition has been propagated with the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, signed in Geneva on July 28, 1951. According to Article 1 (2) of the statute (UNHCR, 1951), a refugee is a person who:

> *owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.*

In 2006, there were 8.4 million individuals in the world who fit this definition (UNHCR, 2006a). Providentially, as specified in Article 33 (1) of the 1951 Convention, the statute and its subsequent Protocol, signed in New York on January 31, 1967, serve to guard this vulnerable population from being returned to a country where it would be faced with persecution. Thus, they impose an obligation on the safe country of asylum to ensure that this vulnerable population is protected and supported.

By adopting the Convention and the 1967 Protocol, Canada, along with 140 other countries, has undertaken this obligation (UNHCR, 2006b). Notably, the United Nations'

definition of a refugee is reiterated in Canada's Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2001, Section 96 (Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations), which functions as a legislative framework for Canada's immigration goals and guidelines. As a result of its adherence and commitment to the 1951 Convention, Canada is currently ranked as the third main country of resettlement of refugees, following the United States and Australia (UNHCR, 2006a). This vital participation in and contribution to the international refugee relief is carried out through refugee protection system, which is administered by the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

According to Section 3 (2) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, Canada's refugee resettlement contains seven objectives, which include Canada's aim to: a) save lives and offer protection to those in need; b) fulfill Canada's international legal obligations and its commitment to refugees; c) grant fair consideration to refugee claimants; d) offer shelter to individuals in refugee-like situations; e) establish just and efficient procedures for the refugee protection system; f) facilitate reunification of refugees with their family members in Canada; g) protect the health and safety of Canadians; h) deny access to serious criminals or individuals who pose security risks. Notably, the primary focus of the objectives is on Canada's protection of the refugees it admits. These resettlement objectives pertain to two broad classes of refugees: 1) those who seek protection from outside Canada; and 2) those who make refugee protection claims from within Canada (Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations).

Refugees from the first category are identified and referred to Citizenship and Immigration Canada by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Those who meet the eligibility criteria are selected by Citizenship and Immigration

Canada for its Canada's Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program. In fact, this program is regarded as "a model around the world, and one which has received much attention internationally" (Orr, 2004). It comprises three divisions: 1) the Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) Program, which consists of refugees who are entirely supported by the Government of Canada; 2) the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program, which includes refugees whose resettlement is supported by groups of Canadian individuals or organizations ; and 3) the Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program, which is a joint sponsorship by a private sponsoring group and Citizenship and Immigration Canada of a refugee who requires special assistance and whose admissibility depends on a sponsor's support (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006c).

The GAR Program contains the largest proportion of sponsored refugees. It consists of Convention refugees and members of the Humanitarian-protected Persons Abroad Classes. The Humanitarian-protected Persons Abroad Classes comprises the Country of Asylum class, which includes individuals who are in refugee-like situations, but are not captured by the definition of a convention refuges, and the Source Country class, which includes people who live in one of the countries that are specified in Schedule 2 of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* (Department of Justice Canada). The number of GARs is established every year by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, following consultations with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, provincial governments, Canadian non-governmental organizations and the UNHCR (UNHCR, 2004). For instance, from 1996 until 2005, the number of GARs has ranged from 7,387 to 10,671, with an average of 7,955 refugees per year (Citizenship and

Immigration Canada, 2006a). This number comprises 3 to 4% of the total annual immigrant population.

The income support and essential services for GARs who need them are provided by Citizenship and Immigration Canada through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). Income support is available to GARs for a maximum of twelve months, and, for those with special needs, up to twenty-four months. The amount of financial support is based on the prevailing provincial or territorial social assistance rates for food and shelter (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003a). In addition to financial assistance, the RAP provides GARs with various settlement services through non-government organizations called service providers. One of the most widely used settlement services by GARs is a language-training program for newcomers to Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003a), and, as RAP participants, GARs whose official language proficiency is considered low are required to attend this language program. Language classes are generally regarded as highly beneficial for all newcomers and play a key role in their resettlement success (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003a). Through such programs and service, Canada fulfills its obligation to support the integration of all new immigrants, including GARs.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Research on the resettlement of immigrants in Canada has revealed that their proficiency in English or French is a key component of successful integration. Yet, several studies that specifically examined the resettlement of GARs in Canada have suggested that these refugees cope with significant barriers stemming from their lack of official language skills. Stimulated by such findings, the aim of this study is to explore the experience of GARs in federally-funded language classes for newcomers to Canada called Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada or LINC. To date, there is no publicly available record of how many LINC students from each of the major immigration categories, including GARs, have been assessed and enrolled in LINC classes, and how many of them graduate or drop-out from the program. Consequently, in an attempt to highlight any differences between GARs and the rest of the immigration categories in LINC classes, the study aims at collecting and analyzing data on assessments, enrollments, graduation and drop-out rates within the LINC program in the City of Toronto. Because the LINC program in Toronto does not offer instruction in French, the research will exclusively deal with English language classes. In addition, the study will create an overview of the needs of and barriers faced by GARs in LINC classes, as perceived by LINC coordinators and instructors who interact with GARs on a daily basis. Direct interviews with GARs were not feasible because of recruitment constraints and confidentiality of GARs' contact information. Consequently, the study will provide a synopsis of the factors that perceivably facilitate and impede successful acquisition of language by GARs who are enrolled in Toronto's LINC program.

3.0 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theoretical perspective through which this paper intends to analyze the language learning aspect of GARs' resettlement is the social inclusion framework (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003). This framework advocates for equal opportunity and social participation of those who are relatively disadvantaged and calls for increased state involvement in the well-being of its residents. Omidvar & Richmond state that "social inclusion involves the basic notions of belonging, acceptance and recognition" (p.1) and that "for immigrants and refugees, social inclusion would be represented by the realization of full and equal participation in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of life in their new country" (p.1). In other words, "social inclusion for immigrants and refugees can be seen as the dismantling of barriers that lead to *exclusion* in all these domains" (p. 1). An example of exclusion at the policy level is offered by Danso (2002), who argues that Canada's refugee admission policy is concerned with economic gains rather than humanitarian concerns, as evident in its emphasis on admitting young and economically active refugees who are more likely to enter the labour market (p.5). At the level of GARs' settlement experience, if their lack of language skills creates barriers to their social integration and their ability to find employment, and if their access to language training is for any reason challenging, the social inclusion framework entails making the necessary changes to create the conditions for inclusion.

4.0 RESEARCH ON THE RESETTLEMENT OF GARS IN CANADA

In order to uncover some of the factors that have facilitated and impeded successful integration of GARs in the past, it is essential to review the broader research conducted on GARs' resettlement in Canada. Although the proportion of GARs is small compared to the other permanent resident categories, it is nevertheless significant, especially in consideration of the findings that GARs are not faring well compared to other categories of immigrants. For instance, the results of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada indicate that refugees as a group, including GARs, "are less likely to have relatives or close friends already in Canada willing to provide support as compared to other newcomers" (Statistics Canada, 2001b). In addition, the survey reveals that refugees have significantly lower levels of education than other immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2001a). Regrettably, research on GARs in Canada is scarce, but the small number of studies that have been conducted reveal that this group of immigrants faces considerable challenges while attempting to integrate into the Canadian society. Although it is difficult to categorize such a small number of studies, they may be organized into the following categories: a) an evaluation study on the Resettlement Assistance Program (Power Analysis Inc., 2002); b) a study on secondary migration of GARs within Canada and the significance of social support for GARs (Simich *et al*., 2002; Simich, 2003; Simich *et al*., 2003); c) studies on a specific ethnic population in Canada (Michalski & Habib, 1997; Danso, 2002; Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2004; Sherrell, Hyndman, & Preniqi, 2005; Hyndman & McLean, 2006).

In 2001, the Ontario Region of Citizenship and Immigration Canada commissioned an evaluation study of the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) in

Ontario, which provides settlement services and financial assistance to GARs for one year. An independent group of researchers examined five sources of information, including a review of government documents and contracts between Citizenship and Immigration Canada and each RAP agency; interviews with key stakeholders; a review of administrative data for all RAP clients who entered Canada in the second quarter of 2001; RAP centre visits; and a survey of GARs who had landed in Ontario from April to June of 2001 (Power Analysis Inc., 2002). The data from the site visit, interviews and surveys suggest that the RAP is an overall success. However, some aspects of the study, especially the data collection, are problematic. The majority of the survey questions were close-ended and did not offer the respondents an opportunity to provide additional information. In fact, of the fourteen questions that dealt with GARs' satisfaction with the RAP, only one was open-ended. More importantly, the way in which GARs for this study were recruited is ethically questionable. Specifically, they were "sent a letter saying they were required to come to an interview concerning RAP" (*idem* p.13). Moreover, in order to protect the confidentiality of GARs, the person who conducted the interviews was a Citizenship and Immigration Canada staff member. Not only are the recruitment tactics used in this evaluation study problematic, but it is impossible to know to what degree the interviewed GARs were sincere in their responses in the presence of a Citizenship and Immigration Canada staff member who administered the survey. Subsequently, the client surveys, which play an integral role in the evaluation, cannot be considered a reliable source of information. In addition, because the study only looked at the GARs in Ontario, the extent to which the RAP is successful in other parts of Canada cannot be known.

In another report commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region, Simich, Beiser, & Mawani (2002)[1] conducted an explanatory study to uncover the reasons for secondary migration of GARs in Ontario. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 47 GARs and 38 informants about the migration process. The findings suggest that the Canadian government, in its attempt to meet provincial targets, can neglect the GARs' preference to settle near family or friends. Nevertheless, GARs often resettle more closely to their social network. Importantly, Simich *et al.* (2002) highlighted the importance of the proximity and the support of GARs' family and friends. Although the sample of GARs interviewed in this study is purposive and cannot be considered representative, the researchers offered a useful insight into the reasons why some of these individuals choose to relocate to Ontario, and demonstrated how political interests are competing with the social needs of GARs.

Several studies have examined the settlement experience of specific groups of GARs in Canada. For instance, in an exploratory, peer-reviewed study, Danso (2002) evaluated the initial settlement needs and experiences of refugees who immigrated from Ethiopia and Somalia to Toronto. The findings of this study suggest that both groups of refugees faced social exclusion, overcrowding, and high rates of unemployment and underemployment. Furthermore, Danso discovered suicidal behaviours among both Ethiopian and Somali GARs. Although these results can be partially explained by the GARs' lack of language skills and the fact that they are new to the country, Danso argues that systemic racism is evident, and that it significantly hinders the integration of this population. In addition, the findings indicate that most of the refugees did not obtain

[1] Findings from this report were also published in Simich, L. (2003) and Simich, L., Beiser, M., & Mawani, F. (2003)

information on settlement assistance from the government, but through their friends, acquaintances or family. In accordance with the study conducted by Simich *et al*. (2002), the importance of social networks in the settlement of refugees was highlighted. Notably, only 10% of the 115 respondents included in the study's definition of a refugee were GARs. Because the study did not categorize its findings according to the respondents' immigration categories, it cannot be known to what extent the needs and experiences of GARs differed from the rest of the sample. Consequently, the findings cannot be applied to other GARs in Toronto. Nevertheless, the study provides interesting avenues for further research on GARs of Ethiopian and Somali origin.

In a report on another group of immigrants from Africa, the researchers from the Centre of Addiction and Mental Health (2004) examined the settlement needs of 220 Sudanese immigrants and refugees who arrived to seven cities in Ontario from 2000 until 2003. This study was also commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region. Unlike the small and unrepresentative sample of GARs in Danso, sixty-two percent of those surveyed in this study were GARs. Although the findings do not point to the existence of systemic racism, as reported in Danso (2002), they do indicate that most of the Sudanese immigrants and refugees faced high rates of unemployment and underemployment. Notably, 77% of those who received government support thought it was inadequate to meet their needs, 70% indicated that they were having difficulty with repaying the government transportation loan, and 31% responded that they worried about not having enough money for food or prescribed medication. In the respondents' identification of unmet needs upon arrival to Canada, this study differentiated the responses of GARs from other immigration categories. The most common unmet needs

reported by GARs were help with continuing education and/or evaluating educational or professional credentials, shopping on a low budget, job hunting, family reunification, and housing assistance (p. 25). It is not surprising that, when asked what helps them cope with difficulties, 73% identified support from friends, and 39% identified family (p. 29). Similarly, the researchers note that the Sudanese community may offer essential resettlement support which would otherwise not be accessible to this group of GARs (p. 22).

In 1996, Canada accepted approximately 300 Iraqi refugees from a Saudi Arabian camp for resettlement to Toronto. In order to examine the settlement expectations, needs and experiences of this group of GARs, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ontario Region, commissioned a longitudinal panel study, which consisted of three waves of interviews with 59, 49, and 42 GARs (Michalski & Habib, 1997). In addition, the researchers conducted interviews with 14 informants to obtain feedback and recommendations for dealing with settlement needs of the Iraqi refugees. The most significant challenges faced by the Iraqi refugees were language barriers, inability to access paid labour market, housing stability, prioritization of work at the expense of schooling, lack of understanding with respect to the Canadian culture, and overcoming trauma of their previous experience. Importantly, having someone to call on for help significantly reduced the vulnerability of this group of GARs as a whole. The fact that this group of GARs had experienced immense losses and often torture prior to their settlement in Canada renders any research on their needs and experiences a beneficial one; yet, the specific circumstances under which the Iraqi refugees arrived are not representative of all GARs in Ontario. In fact, the results cannot even be applied to all

Iraqi refugees in Ontario because the study sampled a particular group of Iraqi GARs - primarily single males under the age of 30 of Muslim background, most of them with minimal official language skills.

More recently, the Government of Canada sponsored a group of over 100 Acehnese refugees from Malaysian detention camps to resettle to Vancouver. Interestingly, the entire community was relocated to one city instead of being spread across the land, as is often the case, which made this group of GARs an interesting one from a research perspective. Hyndman and McLean (2006) employed surveys and focus groups with 80 Acehnese refugees to assess their successes and challenges and to determine what changes are required to improve their settlement experience. The most commonly reported obstacles to settlement were locating affordable housing and lack of English language skills and its impact on the GARs' ability to find employment. It is important to note that many of the Acehnese refugees experienced a "disjuncture between acquiring language skills and the period of federal income support provision" (p. 14). In other words, due to language assessment waiting lists and a shortage of seats in English language classrooms, many of these GARs could not access language training within the first year of their arrival in Canada. What facilitated the Acehnese settlement experience was their social network, a factor deemed necessary for successful settlement in previous studies (e.g., Simich *et al.* (2002)).

It should be noted that the wave of Acehnese refugees initially sponsored by the Government of Canada was comprised almost exclusively of men. Consequently, this limits the application of the research findings. For example, it is difficult to predict to what extent the result are representative of the needs and experience of any of the

Acehnese women who subsequently immigrated to Canada as family sponsors. In addition, since this group of GARs settled exclusively in British Columbia, it cannot be assumed that any Acehnese refugees who later immigrated or resettled to other parts of the country have the same needs and experiences. Nevertheless, the study offers an interesting glimpse into the initial needs and settlement experiences of a relatively unique population of GARs in Canada.

Three years after the Acehnese refugees' resettlement in British Columbia , over 900 Kosovar refugees were accepted to settle in several British Columbian cities from camps in Macedonia. In 2002 and 2003, Sherrell *et al*. (2005) conducted seven focus groups and forty-two interviews with the Kosovar GARs and informants from British Columbia's immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies. The findings reveal that employment prospects and the presence of family are the most supportive factors in integration of this group of refugees. Although the sample used for this study was also purposive and one that is not representative of the general population of GARs in the country, Sherrell *et al*. provide yet another example of the key role that social support plays in the settlement of this group of immigrants. Additionally, Sherrell *et al.* reveal that other key predictors of successful integration, as identified by the refugees and the informants, are the support of the host community and the GARs' English language proficiency.

Importantly, in a detailed profile of GARs who landed in Canada between 1980 and 2000, an independent group of researchers revealed that "in most landing years, more than two out of three GARs could not speak English or French upon their arrival in Canada" and that "in some years the number was as high as 9 out of 10 GARs" (SRDC,

2002c, p.12). Yet, the significance of official language proficiency discussed by Sherrell *et al.* (2005) is affirmed by other studies as well. Chiswick and Miller (2000) note that greater aptitude in an official Canadian language enhances immigrants' productivity in the labour market, while Pendakur (2002) states that it increases their employment earnings.

Although the existing body of literature on the resettlement of GARs is valuable, it is evidently insufficient. The studies pose more questions than they are able to answer, and they suffer from small and purposive sampling and lack of additional studies on the same topic. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that all of the findings point to the need for improved settlement services for GARs in Canada. Collectively, the research reveals that GARs generally face considerable social and economic challenges in their settlement, and that official language skills seem to be an indispensable component of their integration into the Canadian society. The most commonly reported barriers to the successful integration of GARs are financial difficulties, the government's neglect of the refugees' needs, social exclusion, unemployment, and lack of official language skills. What improved the settlement experience of GARs was a presence of a social support network, as reported in all of the research conducted thus far. Based on these findings, research on the needs of and potential barriers faced by GARs in their attempts to become fluent in English would be highly beneficial and appropriate.

5.0 CANADA'S LINC PROGRAM

In order to provide the necessary help for newly arrived immigrants, including GARs, the federal government funds various settlement programs. Notably, in cooperation with provincial governments, school boards, community colleges, and immigrant and community organizations, the Government of Canada offers free and nation-wide fundamental language training in English or French for adult permanent residents. In most provinces, this program is referred to as Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC).

5.1 Historical Framework of the LINC Program

Canada's settlement programs, including adult English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, stem from two central movements: 1) the self-help movement and 2) the philanthropic action movement (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xiii). Although newcomers to Canada traditionally relied on previous immigrants to learn about life in their newly adopted country, philanthropic and voluntary associations often provided support to these immigrants (*idem*). It is in this context that ESL programs for adult immigrants developed in the early twentieth century. Initially, ESL classes were run by non-governmental organizations, such as Frontier College, the YMCA, churches, school boards, and individual citizens (James & Burnaby, 2003, p. 277-78), but in the 1940s, the federal government began funding the classes in order to help immigrants integrate and find suitable employment. Specifically, in 1947, a series of programs entitled the Citizenship and Language Instruction and Language Textbook Agreements were created by the federal policy to fund ESL classes for adults in schools boards and

non-governmental organizations through provincial departments of education (*idem*, p. 278). Although the demand for ESL classes exceeded their supply, as the labour market became less favourable after the economic prosperity of the 1960s and 1970s, the federal funding changed accordingly and established a competition-based granting structure among agencies that intended to provide ESL training (Burnaby, 1998; James & Burnaby, 2003, p. 278). Although ESL teaching became professionalized in the 1970s, poor coordination of ESL funding and delivery has plagued language-training in Canada since the 1960s (James & Burnaby, 2003, p. 281).

Nevertheless, in 1983, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission proposed the creation of a new ESL program which would provide a fundamental curriculum throughout the country, along with the possibility of child care and transportation assistance for newcomers to Canada (Burnaby, 1998; James & Burnaby, 2003, p. 281). The tender bypassed the provincial government's involvement in ESL training and proposed direct and renewable one-year contracts between the federal government and service providing agencies (James & Burnaby, 2003, p. 282). After several modifications in the way the adult language-training programs were designed and administered, in 1991, the federal government introduced a new integration strategy, which focused on providing additional resources and new programs for newcomers both prior to and after their arrival in Canada. The new immigration plan included a revised adult language-training program entitled Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) (*idem*, p. 282). In this initiative, the federal government selected service providers through an annual proposal-based competition, which meant that only those agencies that provide an acceptable bid could offer LINC classes (*idem*, p. 282). Based

on the notion that one's ability to communicate in one of the official languages is a vital component of a successful integration into the Canadian society, LINC was envisioned as a program that would focus both on the newcomers' English or French language proficiency and introducing them to the Canadian way of life in the first three years of settlement (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xiii). Although the program initially encountered some resistance from the community, its support eventually increased (*idem*). Consequently, LINC remains one of the most widely recognized language-training programs in Canada.

5.2 Overview of the LINC Program

The aim of the LINC program is to facilitate immigrants' integration into the Canadian society by providing them with an opportunity to acquire official language skills and become oriented in Canada. In order to be eligible for LINC classes, one must belong to one of the following categories: 1) permanent resident of Canada; 2) protected person as defined in Section 95 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act; or 3) person in Canada whose application for Permanent Resident status is being processed in Canada. In addition, LINC students must be eighteen years of age or older (Centre for Education and Training, 2007b). The program's eligibility criteria exclude Canadian citizens and refugee claimants; however, Convention Refugees and other categories of government-assisted refugees are eligible to attend classes. From the service delivery perspective, eligible providers include non-profit organizations, educational institutions, businesses, provincial, territorial or municipal governments, and individuals (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xiv).

The LINC program is divided into three components: a) linguistic eligibility determination and related services; b) language training; and c) delivery assistance (*idem*). These will now be explained in further detail.

5.2.1 Linguistic Eligibility Determination and Related Services

Prior to being enrolled in the LINC program, newcomers must undergo an assessment interview at one of the LINC Assessment Centres. These centres are located in every Canadian province and territory. Ontario has the largest number of assessment centres, as there are currently twenty-seven of them in this province alone (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007a). In the City of Toronto, which received 43% of the total number of immigrants and refugees to Canada and 80% of the total number of immigrants and refugees to Ontario in 2005 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006c), students who wish to attend LINC classes are assessed through the YMCA of Greater Toronto at any of its four assessment centres, which cover various parts of the city. LINC assessors confirm the clients' eligibility, determine their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, and refer them to the most appropriate LINC service provider. Clients' language proficiency is assessed using the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) framework for English and the *Standards linguistiques canadiens* (SLC) framework for French (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004). CLB and SLC are sets of task-based level descriptors of one's language ability, and they serve as indicators of how much training may be needed for a client to achieve the LINC program outcome competency level (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xiv).

After completing the language assessment, LINC assessors recommend one or

more service providers that most closely match the client's level of language proficiency and his or her needs. The client is actively involved in this process, and ultimately chooses the LINC school he or she wishes to attend. In order to provide clients with accurate and up-to-date information, LINC assessors need to be familiar with the schedules, LINC levels, and the services offered at each LINC site. Consequently, LINC assessors and LINC service providers maintain frequent contact with each other.

5.2.3 Language Training

In order to accommodate a variety of students' needs, the LINC program is offered on a part-time and a full-time basis, and may be delivered in a classroom setting or through home study, distance or workplace learning, or itinerant teachers for small communities (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004). In addition, transportation assistance and child care may be offered to clients if required. The period of time it takes a client to complete each of the LINC levels depends on each person's ability, and students learn at their own pace. Each client's progress is regularly monitored using the CLB or SLC level descriptors (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004). LINC levels range from literacy to level 7. Upon completion of LINC level 5, one's proficiency is considered high-intermediate, and students are eligible to graduate from the program. A LINC graduate is "a client who has completed LINC training and has reached the LINC outcome competency level" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xv). Although the Citizenship and Immigration Canada LINC Certificate of Success is given to all students who complete LINC level 5, two more LINC levels have been added to the program in Ontario since the end of 2006. Nevertheless, levels 6 and 7 are designed for

supplementary language learning, especially for communication in the workplace, and they are not mandatory for graduation (YMCA of Greater Toronto LINC Assessment Centre, personal communication, June 7, 2007).

Although service providers in some small communities may provide both LINC assessments and LINC training, these two services are typically provided by different organizations (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004). The City of Toronto alone presently accommodates 39 service provider organizations with 98 distinct locations offering LINC classes (YMCA of Greater Toronto LINC Assessment Centre, personal communication, March 15, 2007).

5.2.4 Delivery Assistance

This component of the LINC program pertains to government funding to support the delivery of both language training and assessment within the program (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xv). It includes development of teacher and assessor training materials, research on traits and language needs of local immigrant client groups, monitoring the progress of LINC clients, providers, and assessors (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xv; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2004). This component was designed to maximize the extent to which LINC clients' benefit from the program and to ensure effective execution of the program.

5.3 Modifications to the LINC Program

Since its origin in 1991, the LINC program has undergone several alterations. The most significant changes pertain to the assessment tools and the number of LINC

levels. When LINC began operating, a national standard for adult education in ESL programs did not exist (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xv). The Canadian Language Benchmarks standard was developed by a government-appointed National Working Group shortly after the program's inception. Importantly, this standard played a principal role in establishing consistency in the way the LINC program was designed and delivered. Additionally, the LINC program in Ontario initially consisted of three LINC levels. Nevertheless, the program eventually expanded to include levels 4 and 5 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xv), and, most recently, levels 6 and 7 (YMCA of Greater Toronto LINC Assessment Centre, personal communication, June 7, 2007). Other modifications to the LINC program in Ontario include improvements in the childcare program; a computerized monitoring of clients' LINC training history and class attendance; and a centralization of administration and funding of LINC programs (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003c, p. xvii). Together, these changes have enabled the program to function more effectively, and LINC will likely continue to evolve to meet the needs of newcomers to Canada. Fittingly, this study will explore the perceived needs and obstacles of a particular group of LINC students - government-assisted refugees - and provide an overview of the factors that support and hamper their success in the program.

6.0 METHODOLOGY

In order to construct a preliminary overview of the experience of GARs in Toronto's LINC classes, it was necessary to begin by collecting statistics on the assessment, attendance, drop-out, and graduation rates of all immigrants in the LINC program. The data needed to be organized according to the various immigration categories of LINC students, including GARs, and then analyzed for any differences between these categories. Because the statistical results alone cannot provide any information on the needs or barriers of GARs in the LINC classroom, we also conducted interviews with informants who were considered likely to be familiar with the daily experience of newcomers in the LINC program. Consequently, the study was divided into two parts: 1) the collection and analysis of statistics on the numbers and proportions of each of the main immigration categories in Toronto's LINC classes; 2) face-to-face interviews with informants in response to the findings from the statistical analysis. Thus, this study is both quantitative and qualitative.

6.1 Statistical Records on LINC Students in the City of Toronto

In the present document, the data on government-assisted refugees and other immigrant categories of LINC students in the City of Toronto were obtained from the Automated Reservation System (ARS) team at the Centre for Education and Training in Mississauga, Ontario, whose database contains information on every newcomer who has been assessed for or registered in the LINC program in Ontario. The Automated Reservation System is an information management system which subscribes to Citizenship and Immigration Canada's mandate and holds records of LINC client inventory, LINC referrals, and statistical information on the LINC program in Ontario.

The central characteristics of the system are real-time collection, storage, and retrieval of LINC records and the generation of statistical reports (Centre for Education and Training, 2007a)

With permission from the designated authorities, the ARS team was contacted and asked to share any statistical reports on the assessment, enrollment, graduation and drop-out rates of each of the immigration categories in Toronto's LINC program for as many years back as possible. The study intended to collect and analyze the statistical records, from the inception of the LINC program in 1992 to this day. However, due to the various changes in the way data has been recorded over the years, the ARS database was able to generate detailed records dating back only from 2004 until 2006. According to the ARS team, any previous records are considered unreliable (ARS Team, personal communication, February 4 – July 9, 2007).

Importantly, the investigator had no access to either the ARS database or to any personal information about LINC students, such as their names or contact information. Instead, the collection of statistical records relied on the ARS administrators' willingness to share their reports. Consequently, client or staff confidentiality was not jeopardized. The ARS team generated the numbers of LINC assessments, enrollments, withdrawals, and graduates from 2004 until 2006, and provided a breakdown of how many clients belonged to each of the permanent resident subcategories. We then categorized these numbers and conducted cross-comparisons of all categories. It was anticipated that this analysis would offer a perspective on the extent to which government-assisted refugees are similar or different from the other categories of Toronto's LINC students when it comes to their assessment, enrollment, drop-out or graduation rates.

6.2 Interviews with Informants

The second component of the study consisted in face-to-face interviews with informants. Because of recruitment constraints and ethical considerations, it was not possible to conduct interview with GARs themselves. For example, GARs could not be contacted directly because all LINC client information is confidential. It was possible to post an open invitation for all GARs interested in participating in the study at a number of LINC sites, but this option was disregarded because previous attempts to recruit GARs through similar methods for various purposes yielded poor results (YMCA of Greater Toronto LINC Assessment Centre, personal communication, January 17, 2007). In addition, all refugees are considered a vulnerable population, and the extent to which any interview questions would affect them could not be controlled. Thus, in the absence of specialized personnel who have the ability to handle unexpected emotional or psychological responses, interviews with GARs were deemed unfeasible. Instead, the study employed face-to-face interviews LINC instructors and coordinators of LINC sites. These informants were thought to be best equipped to provide the needed information because LINC instructors interact with their students on a daily basis, while LINC coordinators have detailed knowledge of their site's statistical information, such as attendance rates, drop-out rates, and changes in the number of students over the years.

Face-to-face interviews were chosen for three main reasons: qualitative research tends to be more open to discovering new issues; face-to-face interviews have the highest response rates and often allow for more time than any other interview type; and investigators usually have the ability to control the sequence and types of questions

asked, to observe the surroundings, and to use non-verbal communication (Neuman, 2002, p. 290). On the other hand, the disadvantages of conducting face-to-face interviews that needed to be considered were a relatively high interviewer bias, such as the investigator's appearance, tone of voice, and question wording, which may affect the respondent's answers (*idem*). In spite of these disadvantages, the study employed interviews rather than mail or self-administered questionnaires because the latter generally have a low response rate, the conditions under which a mailed-in questionnaire is completed cannot be controlled, and no one is present to clarify questions or to probe for more information when respondents offer incomplete answers.

For practical reasons, including time constraints, the study focused on LINC instructors and coordinators in the City of Toronto. Because Toronto houses more refugees and LINC classes than any other city in Canada (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2003b), it was thought that a variety of informants' perspectives could be obtained. The goal of the investigator was to interview coordinators and instructors from three different LINC sites. In order to accomplish this goal, a list of ten randomly selected LINC sites was generated from a publicly available list of LINC service providers. The plan was to contact as many of the sites from the list as needed until coordinators and instructors of three different sites agree to be interviewed.

LINC coordinators were the first potential informants to be contacted. They were visited in person at their respective sites and told about the study. The purpose of these conversations was twofold: 1) to ask coordinators if they were willing to meet with the investigator to discuss the study in more detail, and 2) to request that the information about the study be shared with LINC instructors at the site. If coordinators agreed to

meet with the investigator, the investigator came at a specified time, discussed the study in more detail, and asked if they would be willing to participate in the interview process. If coordinators demonstrated interest, a new meeting was arranged. Additionally, coordinators were asked whether the investigator could speak to any of the instructors at the site about the study and whether a handout containing more detailed information could be distributed to the instructors at the site. Importantly, any instructor who showed interest in participating in the study was asked to contact the investigator directly instead of through the site's coordinator. Moreover, they were clearly informed that they could choose the most suitable time and location for the interview. Consequently, coordinators were not aware of which instructors chose to participate in the interview process, which eliminated the possibility of jeopardizing instructors' confidentiality.

The coordinators and instructors who agreed to be interviewed were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to confidentiality. They were asked to sign the Informants' Consent Agreement for Audio-Recording and the general Informants' Consent Agreement before the interview took place, and they were given a copy of these agreements. Subsequent to the interview, the answers were transcribed and the audio recordings were destroyed to protect the informants' confidentiality. Thus, it is not possible to identify any individual's contributions to the interview.

The interview was designed to last approximately 30 minutes. Two slightly different versions were created, one for LINC coordinators (see Appendix 1) and one for LINC instructors (see Appendix 2), to benefit from the unique experiences and perspectives of each group. The versions differed in that the instructors were asked a

couple of additional questions regarding their experience with teaching GARs. Since these questions were not applicable to coordinators, they were omitted from their version of the interview. Significantly, both versions employed mainly open-ended questions in order to obtain as much information as possible, to encourage respondents to think and talk freely about the question, and to avoid mechanical responses.

7.0 Limitations of the Study

One of the most significant limitations of the study is that the statistical records on GARs in Toronto's LINC classes could not be personally accessed by the investigator. In order to protect students' confidentiality, the findings of the study relied on the information compiled by the ARS administrators. Consequently, the investigator was passive in the process of accumulating the records and was unable to validate them.
In addition, because the ARS data excluded all personal client information, it cannot be known whether the students who were enrolled in a particular year are the same ones who were assessed that year. It is possible that the enrollment records for one year contain students who were assessed in the previous year because language assessments are valid for six months and students are not obligated to enroll in the program immediately after the test. Nevertheless, since statistics are collected for a period of three years, and since the ratio of assessed and enrolled clients does not change significantly from one year to the next, it is safe to assume that the information is reliable.

Another limitation is the size of the sample. Namely, it cannot be known to what extent the three LINC sites that form the sample are representative of all LINC service providers. Similarly, no undisputable conclusions can be drawn about the general

population of LINC coordinators and instructors based on the sample of ten informants interviewed for the study. Nevertheless, it is also significant to note that the LINC sites were chosen randomly and that they cover three different areas of Toronto – Scarborough in the east end of the city, North York in the north part of city, and the downtown at the core of the city. Moreover, the three sites differ in the number of their instructors, students and LINC levels and include two community organizations and one Toronto District School Board service provider. Consequently, the sample does entail some diversity. In spite of these limitations, the study's findings offer an invaluable insight into the experiences and observations of the selected informants and serve as a catalyst of ideas for future research.

8.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

8.1 Findings from the Statistical Records on LINC Students in Toronto

The ARS records span a three-year period, from 2004 until 2006 since the system cannot generate reliable records prior to 2004. The statistics were grouped into the following four categories: 1) students who were assessed in Toronto's LINC Assessment Centres from 2004 until 2006; 2) students who were enrolled in Toronto's LINC program from 2004 until 2006; 3) students who graduated from the LINC program from 2004 until 2006; and 4) students who withdrew from the LINC program from 2004 until 2006. These four categories were further divided into student immigration categories, which yielded some interesting points of comparison. The ARS groups LINC students into the following four immigration categories: a) economic immigrants; b) family class immigrants; c) government-assisted refugees; and d) other immigrants. The economic class category includes business immigrants, live-in caregivers, provincial-territorial nominees, and skilled workers. The family class includes spouses, parents, grandparents, fiancés, sons, daughters and other relatives of immigrants in Canada.

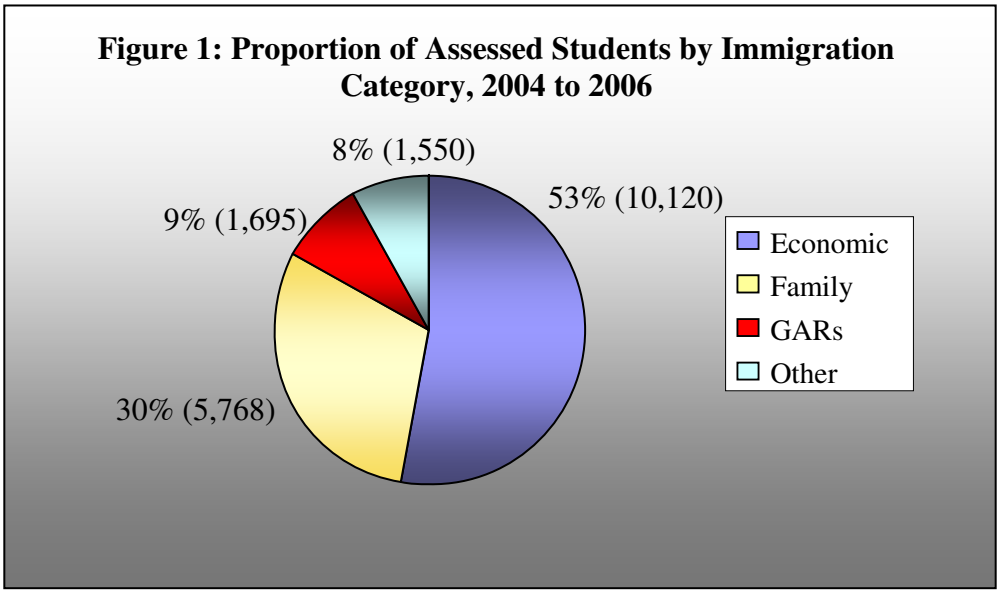
The ARS category labeled as "other" includes the following student categories: Canadian citizen; Intend to land; Intend to land – others; Backlog; Deferred removal order class; Dependents abroad of protected persons; Humanitarian and compassionate; Permit holders; Post-determination refugee claimants; Protected persons landed in Canada; and Retired. Because the records for this category are considered unreliable by the ARS team (ARS Team, personal communication, July 9, 2007), the category was excluded from our analysis.

8.1.1 Students Assessed in Toronto's LINC Assessment Centres from 2004 until 2006

As specified in Table 1 and illustrated in Figure 1, the largest immigration category of students assessed from 2004 until 2006 belongs to the economic class and its subcategories, with an average of 10,120 students in this category in the three-year period. This group comprises 53% of all assessed students. The second largest immigration category of assessed students belongs to the family class, with an average of 5,768 students or 30% of all assessed students in the three-year period. Government-assisted refugees form the third largest immigration category of assessed students, with an average of 1,695 or 9% of all assessed students from 2004 until 2006. Finally, an average of 1,550 students in the three-year period fall under all other immigration categories and comprise 8% of all assessed students.

Table 1: Students Assessed in Toronto's LINC Assessment Centres by Immigration Category, 2004-2006

Immigration Category	2004		2005		2006		Average 2004-2006	
	#	% total	#	% total	#	% total	Average #	Average %
ECONOMIC	**10,564**	**53.2**	**10,705**	**55.8**	**9,090**	**49.5**	**10,120**	**52.8**
Business Immigrants	879	4.4	852	4.4	813	4.4	848	4.4
Live-in Caregiver	12	0.1	32	0.2	66	0.4	37	0.2
Provincial-Territorial Nominees	63	0.3	85	0.4	91	0.5	80	0.4
Skilled Workers	9,610	48.4	9,736	50.7	8,120	44.2	9,155	47.8
FAMILY CLASS	**5,850**	**29.5**	**5,390**	**28.1**	**6,063**	**33.0**	**5,768**	**30.2**
GAR	**2,274**	**11.5**	**1,999**	**10.4**	**812**	**4.4**	**1,695**	**8.8**
OTHER	**1,167**	**5.9**	**1,091**	**5.7**	**2,391**	**13.0**	**1,550**	**8.2**
Canadian Citizen	26	0.1	17	0.1	1	0.0	15	0.1
Intend to land - CRDD	36	0.2	38	0.2	277	1.5	117	0.6
Intend to land - Others	34	0.2	31	0.2	11	0.1	25	0.1
Backlog	2	0.0	2	0.0	8	0.0	4	0.0
Deferred Removal Order Class	18	0.1	10	0.1	8	0.0	12	0.1
Dependents Abroad of Protected Persons	674	3.4	628	3.3	762	4.2	688	3.6
Humanitarian and Compassionate	9	0.0	14	0.1	240	1.3	88	0.5
Permit Holders (APR)	7	0.0	6	0.0	12	0.1	8	0.0
Post-Determination Refugee Claimants	4	0.0	4	0.0	1	0.0	3	0.0
Protected Persons Landed in Canada	167	0.8	145	0.8	753	4.1	355	1.9
PSR	190	1.0	196	1.0	317	1.7	234	1.2
Retired	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	**19,855**	**100**	**19,185**	**100**	**18,356**	**100**	**19,132**	**100**



Clearly, the number of assessed government-assisted refugees is significantly smaller than the number of assessed students in the other two major immigration categories, with an average of six times as many economic immigrants and three times as many family immigrants from 2004 until 2006. This is not surprising since the proportion of GARs in the general population of immigrants is much smaller than the proportion of the other two categories (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006a).

A comparison of the immigration categories of those assessed in Toronto's LINC Assessment Centres and those who landed in City of Toronto generated some noteworthy findings. Specifically, the proportion of economic and family class immigrants assessed in Toronto's LINC Assessment Centres closely matches the proportion of economic and family class immigrants who landed in Toronto from 2004 until 2006 (Table 2). For example, 53% of all permanent residents who were assessed for the LINC program in Toronto in 2004 belonged to the economic class; similarly, 57% of all permanent

residents who landed in Toronto were economic immigrants. In addition, 29% of all permanent residents who were assessed for the LINC program in Toronto in 2004 were family class immigrants, and 26% of all permanent residents who landed in Toronto belonged to the same category.

Nevertheless, the records for GARs do not follow the same pattern - the proportion of GARs assessed for the LINC program from 2004 until 2006 is on average three times greater than the proportion of GARs who landed in Toronto in the same time period (Table 3). Namely, while GARs form 3% of all landed immigrants in Toronto from 2004 until 2006, they constitute 9% of all landed immigrants assessed in Toronto for the LINC program in the same time period (Table 3).

Table 2: Proportion of Students Assessed in Toronto's LINC Assessment Centres and Permanent Residents Who Landed in Toronto by Immigration Category, 2004-2006[2]

	ECONOMIC			FAMILY			GARS		
	2004	**2005**	**2006**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**
Assessed for LINC (% of all assessed students)	53.2	55.8	49.5	29.5	28.1	33.0	11.5	10.4	4.4
Landed in Toronto[3] (% of all permanent residents who landed in Toronto)	56.7	59.6	54.9	26.4	24.2	28.0	3.1	2.8	2.9

[2] Data for "Others" were excluded from the table because many of the subcategories were not separately documented in Citizenship and Immigration Canada Facts and Figures.
[3] From Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2007b)

Table 3: Average Proportion of Students Assessed in Toronto's LINC Assessment Centres and Permanent Residents Who Landed in Toronto by Immigration Category, 2004-2006

	Economic	Family	GARs
Assessed for LINC (average % of all assessed students)	52.8	30.2	8.8
Landed in Toronto (average % of all permanent residents who landed in Toronto)	57.1	26.2	2.9

As illustrated in Table 2, the proportion of GARs assessed in 2006 is significantly smaller than the proportion of GARs assessed in both 2004 and 2005. In addition, the proportion of assessed students in the family category is higher in 2006 than in the other two years. Although the Centre for Education and Training cannot explain these differences (ARS Team, personal communication, August 23, 2007), the records on permanent residents who landed in Toronto in the same three-year period reveal a similar pattern. Specifically, the number of GARs admitted to Toronto was lower in 2006 than in 2004 and 2005, and the number of permanent residents admitted to Toronto under the family class was significantly higher in 2006 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007b).

Although the proportions of economic and family immigrants in the assessed and landed category do not differ significantly, it is interesting to note that the proportion of economic immigrants among the assessed clients is consistently smaller than the proportion of economic immigrants among Toronto's landed immigrants in each of the three years, while the proportions of both family immigrants and GARs assessed for the LINC program are greater than the family and GAR landed immigrants in Toronto. These findings suggest that the economic immigrants are under-represented among the

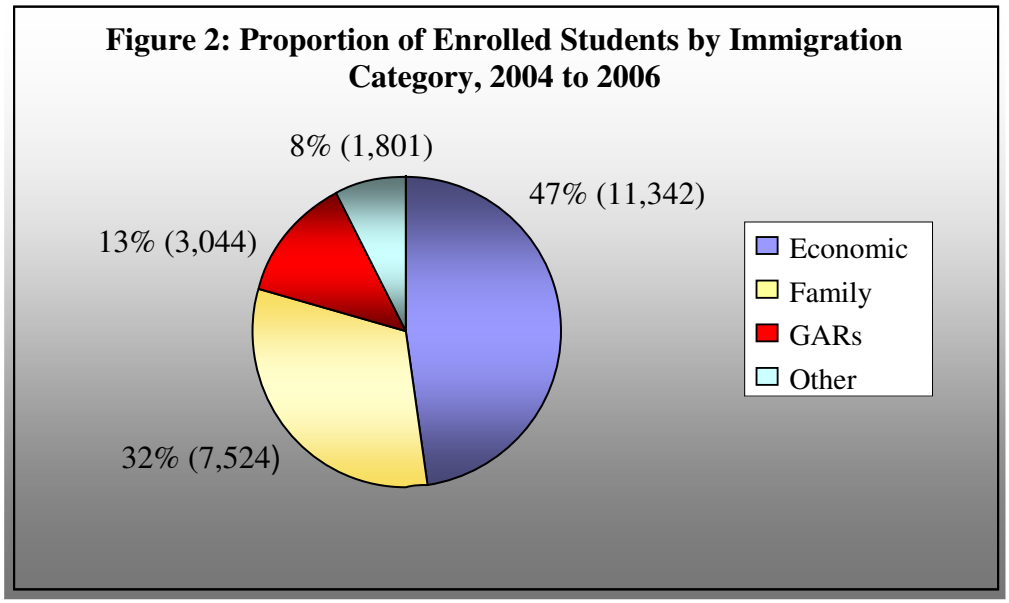
immigrants assessed for the LINC program in Toronto, while family class immigrants and GARs are over-represented.

8.1.2 Students Enrolled in Toronto's LINC Program from 2004 until 2006

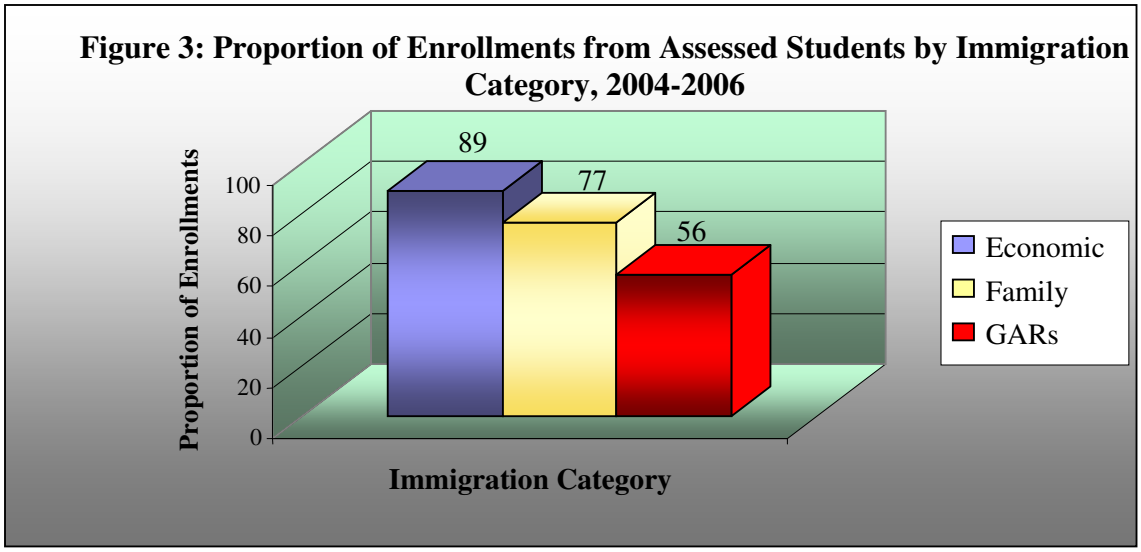
Table 4 and Figure 2 illustrate that the largest immigration category of students enrolled in Toronto's LINC program from 2004 until 2006 belongs to the economic class and its subcategories, with an average of 11,342 students in this category in the three-year period. This group comprises 48% of all enrolled students. The second largest immigration category of enrolled students belongs to the family class, with an average of 7,524 students or 32% of all assessed students in the three-year period. Government-assisted refugees form the third largest immigration category of assessed students, with an average of 3,044 or 13% of all assessed students from 2004 until 2006. Finally, an average of 1,550 students in the three-year period fall under all other immigration categories and comprise 8% of all assessed students. Thus, the records for enrolled students follow a similar pattern as the records for assessed students.

Table 4: Students Enrolled in Toronto's LINC Program by Immigration Category, 2004-2006

Immigration Category	2004		2005		2006		Average 2004-2006	
	#	% total	#	% total	#	% total	Average #	Average %
ECONOMIC	**12,926**	**49.6**	**11,218**	**48.7**	**9,881**	**44.8**	**11,342**	**47.7**
Business Immigrants	1,151	4.4	1,106	4.8	1,075	4.9	1,111	4.7
Live-in Caregiver	8	0.0	24	0.1	34	0.2	22	0.1
Provincial-Territorial Nominees	60	0.2	79	0.3	114	0.5	84	0.4
Skilled Workers	11,707	44.9	10,009	43.5	8,658	39.3	10,125	42.6
FAMILY CLASS	**7,969**	**30.6**	**7,131**	**31.0**	**7,472**	**33.9**	**7,524**	**31.8**
GAR	**3,697**	**14.2**	**3,178**	**13.8**	**2,256**	**10.2**	**3,044**	**12.7**
OTHER	**1,456**	**5.6**	**1,508**	**6.5**	**2,438**	**11.1**	**1,801**	**7.7**
Canadian Citizen	19	0.1	8	0.0	6	0.0	11	0.0
Intend to land - CRDD	30	0.1	42	0.2	206	0.9	93	0.4
Intend to land - Others	38	0.1	30	0.1	17	0.1	28	0.1
Backlog	3	0.0	2	0.0	5	0.0	3	0.0
Deferred Removal Order Class	24	0.1	18	0.1	11	0.0	18	0.1
Dependents Abroad of Protected Persons	814	3.1	889	3.9	998	4.5	900	3.8
Humanitarian and Compassionate	7	0.0	16	0.1	193	0.9	72	0.3
Permit Holders (APR)	8	0.0	6	0.0	9	0.0	8	0.0
Post-Determination Refugee Claimants	7	0.0	8	0.0	2	0.0	6	0.0
Protected Persons Landed in Canada	196	0.8	196	0.9	584	2.6	325	1.4
PSR	310	1.2	293	1.3	406	1.8	336	1.4
Retired	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	**26,048**	**100**	**23,035**	**100**	**22,047**	**100**	**23,710**	**100**



When the average number of assessed and enrolled students from 2004 until 2006 is compared for each of the immigration categories, the results indicate that GARs as a group are the least likely category to enroll in classes after being assessed. As Figure 3 illustrates, an average of 89% assessed economic immigrants and 77% of assessed family immigrants enroll in the LINC program. This percentage is significantly lower for GARs, with a mere 56% of assessed GARs who register in the program. The difference between the number of assessed and enrolled students in all immigration categories could have resulted from various factors, such as a possibility that the records for enrolled students may have included some returning students or those who were assessed in the previous year or that the records for assessed students include individuals who decided not to be enrolled in the program subsequent to being assessed.



In a scenario reminiscent of the assessed students, a comparison of the immigration categories of those enrolled in Toronto's LINC classes and those who landed in the City of Toronto reveals that the proportion of economic and family class immigrants enrolled in Toronto's LINC classes from 2004 until 2006 closely matches the proportion of economic and family class immigrants who landed in Toronto in that same time period (Table 5). For instance, 50% of all students enrolled in Toronto in 2004 belonged to the economic class, and 57% of all permanent residents who landed in Toronto the same year were economic immigrants. Also, 31% of enrolled students in 2004 belonged to the family class, and 26% of all permanent residents who landed in Toronto were in the same category. Once again, the data for GARs do not follow the same pattern. In fact, the proportion of GARs enrolled in Toronto's LINC classes from 2004 until 2006 is on average over four times greater than the proportion of GARs who landed in Toronto in the same time period (Table 6). Specifically, 13% of all students enrolled in the LINC program from 2004 until 2006 are GARs, although they represent only 3% of all landed immigrants in Toronto in that period (Table 6). This finding

suggests that GARs may also be over-represented in the Toronto's LINC classes when compared to the overall proportion of GARs who landed in Toronto.

Again, the proportions of economic and family immigrants in the enrolled and landed category do not differ significantly, but they follow the same pattern observed in the assessed category. The proportion of economic immigrants among the enrolled students is consistently smaller than the proportion of economic immigrants among Toronto's landed immigrants in each of the three years, while the proportions of both family immigrants and GARs enrolled in the LINC program are greater than the family immigrants and GARs who landed in Toronto during this time (Table 6). This pattern could have resulted from the fact that economic immigrants typically arrive in Canada with more advanced official language skills than the other two categories. However, it is also possible that economic immigrants access alternate official language training programs. In order to land, economic immigrants must meet the points system criteria and, since one of the key aspects of the points system is official language proficiency, it is not surprising that their language skills are generally better than those of family immigrants or government-assisted refugees. Consequently, it is not surprising that the proportion of economic immigrants assessed for and enrolled in Toronto's LINC program from 2004 until 2006 is consistently lower than the total proportion of economic immigrants who landed in Toronto during this time, while the reverse is observed for family immigrants and government-assisted refugees.

Table 5: Proportion of Students Enrolled in Toronto's LINC Classes and Permanent Residents Admitted to Canada by Immigration Category, 2004-2006

	ECONOMIC			FAMILY			GARS		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Enrolled in LINC (% of all enrolled students)	49.6	48.7	44.8	30.6	31.0	33.9	14.2	13.8	10.2
Landed in Toronto[4] (% of all permanent residents who landed in Toronto)	56.7	59.6	54.9	26.4	24.2	28.0	3.1	2.8	2.9

Table 6: Average Proportion of Students Enrolled in Toronto's LINC Classes and Permanent Residents Admitted to Canada by Immigration Category, 2004-2006

	Economic	Family	GARs
Enrolled in LINC (average % of all assessed students)	47.7	31.8	12.7
Landed in Toronto (average % of all permanent residents who landed in Toronto)	57.1	26.2	2.9

Additionally, when the average number of assessed and enrolled students from 2004 until 2006 is compared for each of the immigration categories, the results indicate that GARs as a group are the least likely category to enroll in classes after being assessed. As Figure 3 illustrates, an average of 89% assessed economic immigrants and 77% of assessed family immigrants enroll in the LINC program. This percentage is significantly lower for GARs, with a mere 56% of assessed GARs who register in the program.

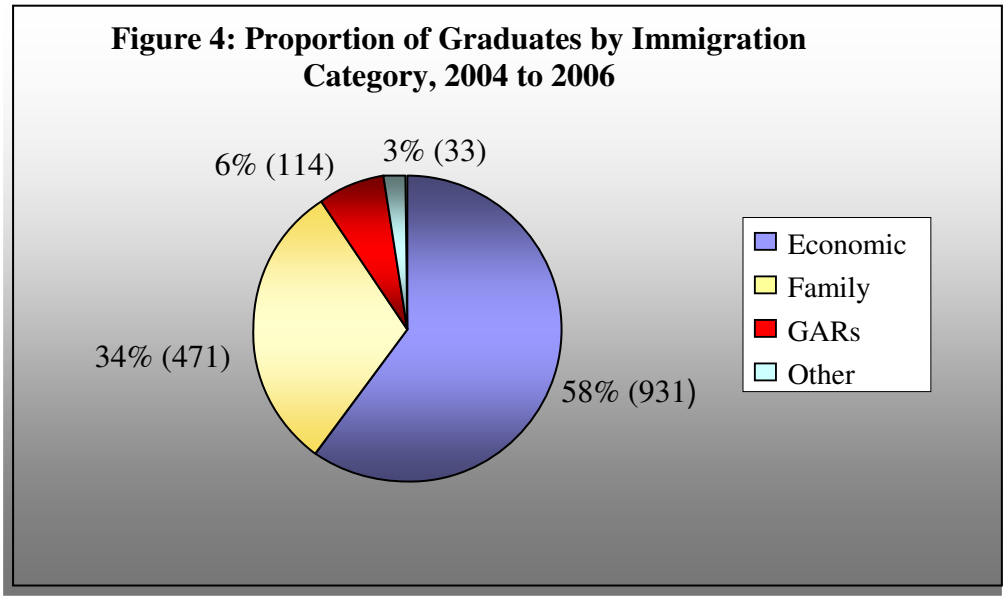
[4] From Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2007b).

8.1.3 Students who graduated from Toronto's LINC Program from 2004 until 2006

The ARS records indicate that the largest immigration category of students who graduated from Toronto's LINC program from 2004 until 2006 belongs to the economic class, with an average of 726 students of graduates in this category in the three-year period (Table 7). As illustrated in Figure 4, economic immigrants comprise 58% of all graduates. The second largest immigration category of graduates is family immigrants, with an average of 427 or 34% of all graduates during the same time period. Finally, only 74 students or 6% of all graduates are GARs. Considering the fact that GARs comprise 13% of all enrolled students (Table 4), it is clear that the proportion of GARs who graduate from LINC classes is relatively small. Such a significant difference between the proportions of enrolled students and graduates is not observed in the other two major immigration categories. In fact, economic immigrants form an even larger proportion of graduates than enrollments, with 48% of all enrolled students in this category (Figure 4). The proportion of family class graduates is only slightly smaller than the proportion of family immigrants who are enrolled (32%). When each year is analyzed individually, the same patterns are observed.

Table 7: Students Who Graduated from Toronto's LINC Program by Immigration Category, 2004-2006

Immigrant Category	2004		2005		2006		Average 2004-2006	
	#	% total	#	% total	#	% total	Average #	Average %
ECONOMIC	**703**	**54.3**	**728**	**58.8**	**748**	**59.5**	**726**	**57.5**
Business Immigrants	44	3.4	37	3.0	26	2.1	36	2.8
Live-in Caregiver	1	0.1	2	0.2	3	0.2	2	0.2
Provincial-Territorial Nominees	1	0.1	4	0.3	6	0.5	4	0.3
Skilled Workers	657	50.7	685	55.3	713	56.7	685	54.3
FAMILY CLASS	**469**	**36.2**	**408**	**33.0**	**403**	**32.1**	**427**	**33.7**
GAR	**87**	**6.7**	**64**	**5.2**	**71**	**5.6**	**74**	**5.8**
OTHER	**36**	**2.8**	**38**	**3.1**	**35**	**2.8**	**36**	**2.9**
Intend to land - CRDD	1	0.1	2	0.2	2	0.2	2	0.1
Intend to land - Others	2	0.2		0.0	1	0.1	1	0.1
Backlog	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Deferred Removal Order Class	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Dependents Abroad of Protected Persons	27	2.1	29	2.3	17	1.4	24	1.9
Humanitarian and Compassionate	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0
Permit Holders (APR)	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Post-Determination Refugee Claimants		0.0	1	0.1		0.0	0	0.0
Protected Persons Landed in Canada	2	0.2	2	0.2	8	0.6	4	0.3
PSR	4	0.3	4	0.3	6	0.5	5	0.4
Retired	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	**1,295**	**100.0**	**1,238**	**100.0**	**1,257**	**100.0**	**1,263**	**100.0**



Importantly, when the average number of students enrolled in the LINC program under each of the immigration categories from 2004 until 2006 is compared to the average number of students who graduated under each of those categories, the results are striking. The records suggest that 1 out of every 16 enrolled economic immigrants and 1 out of every 18 enrolled family immigrants graduate from the program annually. Surprisingly, 1 out of every 41 enrolled GAR students is a graduate. These findings suggest that the graduation rate of GARs is significantly lower than the graduation rates of both economic and family class immigrants in Toronto's LINC classes.

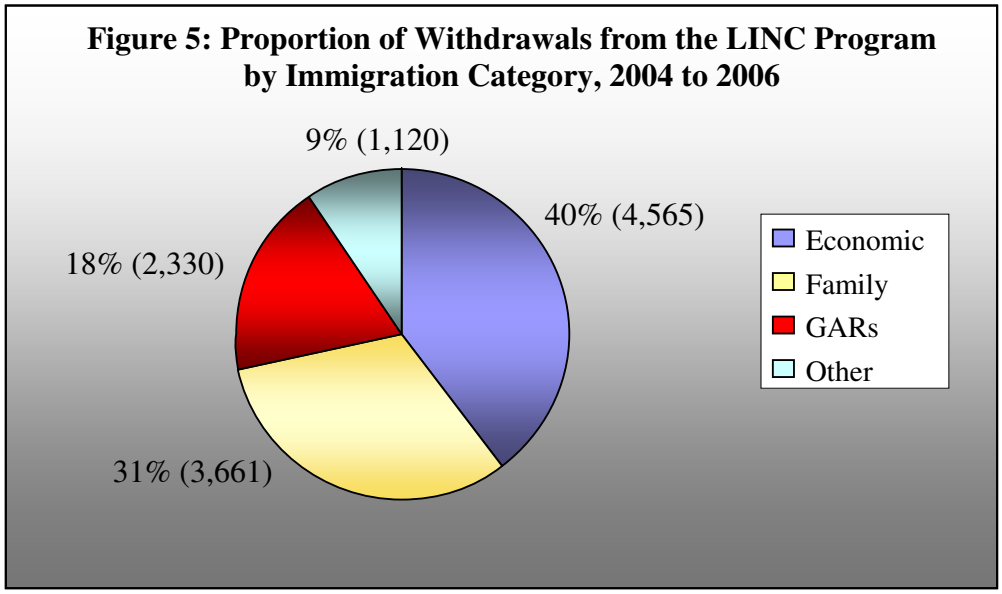
8.1.4 Students who withdrew from Toronto's LINC Program from 2004 until 2006

As illustrated in Table 8 and Figure 5, the immigration category containing the largest proportion of students who withdrew from Toronto's LINC program from 2004 until 2006 is economic immigrants. This category had an average of 4,565 withdrawals

or 39% of the total number of students who withdrew from the program in the three-year period. Family class immigrants follow with an average of 3,661 withdrawals or 31% of the total. The third largest category includes GARs, with an average of 2,330 students or 18% of all students who dropped out of the program.

Table 8: Students who withdrew from Toronto's LINC Program by Immigration Category, 2004-2006

Immigrant Category	2004		2005		2006		Average 2004-2006	
	#	% total	#	% total	#	% total	Average #	Average %
ECONOMIC	**4,692**	**40.5**	**4,981**	**43.2**	**4,022**	**33.7**	**4,565**	**39.2**
Business Immigrants	721	6.2	883	7.7	805	6.8	803	6.9
Live-in Caregiver	2	0.0	8	0.1	13	0.1	8	0.1
Provincial-Territorial Nominees	9	0.1	42	0.4	59	0.5	37	0.3
Skilled Workers	6,960	60.2	7,031	60.9	6,145	51.6	6,712	57.5
FAMILY CLASS	**3,520**	**30.4**	**3,498**	**30.3**	**3,964**	**33.3**	**3,661**	**31.3**
GAR	**2,546**	**22.0**	**2,097**	**18.2**	**2,346**	**15.2**	**2,330**	**18.5**
OTHER	**813**	**6.7**	**962**	**8.3**	**1,586**	**13.3**	**1,120**	**9.4**
Canadian Citizen	16	0.1	8	0.1	6	0.1	10	0.1
Intend to land - CRDD	21	0.2	35	0.3	113	0.9	56	0.5
Intend to land - Others	27	0.2	27	0.2	14	0.1	23	0.2
Backlog	3	0.0	1	0.0	4	0.0	3	0.0
Deferred Removal Order Class	22	0.2	13	0.1	9	0.1	15	0.1
Dependents Abroad of Protected Persons	330	2.9	455	3.9	570	4.8	452	3.9
Humanitarian and Compassionate	5	0.0	11	0.1	114	1.0	43	0.4
Permit Holders (APR)	3	0.0	6	0.1	4	0.0	4	0.0
Post-Determination Refugee Claimants	3	0.0	7	0.1	1	0.0	4	0.0
Protected Persons Landed in Canada	128	1.1	170	1.5	369	3.1	222	1.9
PSR	215	1.9	199	1.7	263	2.2	226	1.9
Retired	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL	**11,571**	**100.0**	**11,538**	**100.0**	**11,918**	**100.0**	**11,676**	**100.0**



When the number of graduates and drop-outs in each immigration category is compared to the number of enrolled students in the same category, the resulting "graduation rate" and "drop-out" rates yield some intriguing findings. As Table 9 illustrates, the graduation rate is considerably lower than the drop-out rate for all students. However, this is especially pronounced among GARs, who have a 2% graduate rate an alarming 76% drop-out rate.

Table 9: Graduation and Drop-Out Rates of Students in Toronto's LINC Classes by Immigration Category, 2004-2006

	Graduation Rate	Drop-out Rate
Economic Class	6.4%	40.2%
Family Class	5.7%	48.7%
GARs	2.4%	76.5%

When comparing the average number of students enrolled in the LINC program under each of the immigration categories from 2004 until 2006 to the average number of students who withdrew from the program under each of those categories, the results suggest that 1 out of every 2.5 enrolled economic immigrants and 1 out of every 2.1 enrolled family immigrants withdraw from the program annually. Among GARs, the drop-out rate increases to 1 out of every 1.3 enrolled students. Noticeably, the drop-out rates of all immigration categories are very high, but because students who withdraw from LINC classes are allowed to return to the program, those recorded as withdrawn do not necessarily leave the program permanently.

8.1.5 Summary of Findings from the Statistical Records

The ARS data on immigrants who attended Toronto's LINC classes from 2004 until 2006 reveal some significant findings about GARs. A comparison between the GARs assessed for the LINC program as a proportion of all assessed immigrants and GARs who landed in Toronto as a proportion of all landed immigrants in the city during the three-year period reveals that assessed GARs are three times more prevalent. Similarly, the proportion of GARs enrolled in the LINC classes is on average over four times greater than the proportion of GARs out of all immigrants who landed in Toronto in the same time period. These finding suggests that GARs may be over-represented both among language assessments and in LINC classes compared to their prevalence outside of the LINC program. In addition, the records indicate that GARs are not only the least likely immigrant category to enroll in classes after being assessed, but also the category with the lowest graduation rate in the LINC program, with 1 out of every 41 enrolled

GAR students reaching graduation. Finally, the data imply that GARs also have the highest drop-out rate of all immigration categories. Overall, the records for all four categories into which the ARS statistics are grouped – assessments, enrollments, graduates, and withdrawals – suggest that GARs seem to be doing significantly worse than the other immigrants in the LINC program. Consequently, a more extensive exploration of how GARs are faring in Toronto's LINC classes seems highly relevant.

8.2 Findings from Informant Interviews

A total of three LINC coordinators and seven LINC instructors were interviewed for the study. The informants were recruited from three different LINC service provider sites in the City of Toronto. The sites were chosen randomly, and the final sample included two non-profit community organizations in Scarborough and downtown Toronto and a Toronto District School Board service provider in North York. Therefore, the sites cover three different parts of the city. Two of the sites are relatively large, with classes offered at all five LINC levels, while one of the sites is smaller with a combined level 1, 2, and 3 class, and a combined level 4 and 5 class. A comparison of the responses of the coordinators as a group and the instructors as a group yields no significant differences in their answers. Although it is difficult to draw conclusions from a small sample, coordinators did generally seem to provide more elaborate answers than the instructors. In addition, there are no significant differences between the responses of the coordinators and instructors when the LINC sites are compared to one another.

All of the instructors chose to be interviewed at their respective sites, either during their lunch break or after school. The interviews with coordinators took place

whenever the coordinators were able to allocate approximately 30 minutes of their time. All of the interviews took place in a secluded area to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the answers. Although a comparable number of male and female informants would have been advantageous, all of the informants were female. However, this imbalance is not surprising, considering the fact that LINC instructors and coordinators in the general population are predominantly female (YMCA of Greater Toronto LINC Assessment Centre, personal communication, June 7, 2007).

The interview focused on six key areas of inquiry, including: informants' observations regarding attendance, withdrawal or graduation rates of GARs; the perceived needs of GARs compared to other immigrant categories in the LINC program; facilitating factors or barriers to successful language learning in the LINC program; GARs' performance in the program; effectiveness of LINC classes for GARs; and informants' experience with teaching GARs.

8.2.1 Observations Regarding Attendance, Withdrawal or Graduation Rates of GARs

Two out of three coordinators said they had noticed a difference in attendance rates, as well as dropout and graduation rates between GARs and other LINC students. The coordinator who did not notice any differences emphasized that her site did not collect any statistics on students' immigration categories and that they did not conduct any analyses of the attendance, withdrawal or graduation rates of the different types of permanent residents. Both of the coordinators who did observe some differences between GARs and other students agreed that GARs generally have poorer attendance

and are more likely to withdraw from classes. Interestingly, one of the coordinators had observed that many GARs are also more likely to return to the program, but said that they are still less likely to graduate than other students. Similarly, when LINC instructors were asked about the attendance, withdrawal, and graduation rates, five out of seven indicated that they did notice a difference between GARs and other students. They also indicated that GARs' attendance and graduation rates were poorer, while their withdrawal rates were higher.

When asked to what they could attribute the observed differences between GARs and other LINC students, the informants pointed to several possibilities. Three informants pointed to complex family dynamics and customs of some GARs at their sites. For example, they observed that GARs are often more likely to live in crowded apartments with extended family members, which was often a considerable burden for many of them, especially women. One of the instructors described her observations in more detail:

> *It depends on the family situation….For example, I've had many cases where female students live with their parents or in-laws and have to do housework. Some of them are like slaves. For example, I had a case where the family of one female student decided that she's not married and therefore should be the one in the family to look after everyone…So, she stayed home and never returned to class.*

Although this observation pertained to all LINC students, the informant believed that it was more readily applicable to GARs. In addition, one of the informants noted that traditional relationships present in some cultures between men and women play a role in

attendance and drop-out rates of female students specifically. She observed that some husbands prefer that their spouses stay home instead of attending classes because they are accustomed to their wives' roles as homemakers:

> *I've seen some women in my class who were quite happy with going to school, but they suddenly stopped coming. If their husbands are unhappy with the situation and don't want them to go to school anymore, they tell me that their wife is OK with staying home. The husbands often say that they'll teach their wives English at home and that [the wives] don't need to study at school.*

When the same informant was asked whether her observation was specific to GARs or whether it applied to any students with similar beliefs, she indicated that such scenarios can apply to anyone, but that GAR families are more likely to live in isolation, tend to have little contact with people outside their family and are consequently less likely to be persistent in attending classes if challenges at home arise.

Another instructor observed how the lack of financial resource connected to one's immigration status can also put male students at a disadvantage and noted a connection between class attendance and employment:

> *As far as refugee men are concerned, many of them stop attending as soon as they find a job. You see, refugees are very poor and any job they get is a jackpot, so men don't want to attend classes anymore, even if they can't speak English. Unfortunately, this also means that they'll probably be stuck doing menial jobs or work in abusive conditions, but there's nothing you can do. You just hope that things are going to turn out for the better.*

Although some of the examples shared by the informants may not be applicable to the

general GAR population, they did offer a glimpse of an array of issues affecting GARs in the LINC classroom. More importantly, most of the informants indicated that they did notice that GARs had lower attendance and graduation rates and higher drop-out rates than other LINC students. Thus, the information obtained from the interviews corresponds to the information obtained from the ARS records.

8.2.2 Perceived Needs of GARs in the LINC Classroom

All three LINC coordinators and six out of seven LINC instructors believed that the needs of GARs differ from the needs of other students. When asked to elaborate on the perceived differences, the informants shared similar observations. They most commonly reported the GARs' need for more extensive individual attention in the classroom. According to the informants, this need stems from various factors, ranging from the degree of GARs' familiarity with academic settings, their experiences of trauma or other health-related issues, and their ability to cope with the lack of financial resources or the frequently encountered lack of social support. One instructor shared her experience with some of her students' discomfort in the classroom:

> *Some [GARs] find it really challenging to sit in class. Many of them come from refugee camps, and some of them spend many years in those camps before they move to Canada. Some of them were even born in camps. Imagine someone like that coming to school – they've never even sat in a classroom, and we expect them to be able to spend the whole day learning English. On the other hand, you often have someone with a university degree or even an academic with a PhD sitting right next to them. I mean, what a difference!*

When the same instructor was asked how she handles such a variation in the students' needs, she responded:

> *It's a challenge for me as a teacher to accommodate both of those types of students, but sometimes it's just impossible. You see those [GARs] just staring at the board or sitting in the corner, and you do what you can with the time you have. You have to remember that there is a whole room of students, so you can't really spend that much time individually. I often feel bad because [GARs] are sometimes completely lost, but what can I do?*

Another instructor highlighted GARs' need for individual attention from a different perspective. Specifically, the instructor disclosed the psychological difficulties that some GARs face:

> *Last year, there was a lady in my classroom who was GAR. Her mind had closed down and she didn't say anything. She just wouldn't speak. [The coordinator and I] concluded that it was severe culture shock, so we decided to demote her to a lower level and we gave her time to learn. Unfortunately, she ended up dropping out of school.*

Similarly, a different instructor observed:

> *I believe that [GARs] are very depressed. Of course, I don't think all of them are, but definitely a higher percentage than other students. They fail to communicate and respond. I think they suffer from very deep emotional problems. They definitely need more intensive language help than we can offer in our classrooms.*

All of these perspectives point to the informants' consensus that GARs need for more individually focused language instruction. Two coordinators believed that opportunities

for individual tutoring after school would be very beneficial for GARs. Similarly, one instructor suggested that home tutoring would be a practical supplement to class instruction. Notably, most of the informants agree that there is no time to adequately address this need, which often leads to adverse consequences, such as higher drop-out rates amount GAR students.

8.2.3 Facilitating Factors and Barriers

When asked to identify any factors that might contribute to or hinder successful language learning of GARs in the LINC program, six out of ten informants observed that patience and encouragement on the instructor's part was crucial to the success of GARs in the classroom. As one instructor observed:

> *Students like GARs really need a lot of support. A lot of them don't talk much, but if teachers are persistent, they can make [GARs] feel more comfortable and get them to be more receptive.*

Another facilitating factor observed by some instructors was having the opportunity to form bonds with individuals from the same ethnic background. For example, one instructor observed how her effort to connect one of the GAR students in her classroom to another student from a different classroom helped both students achieve better results:

> *I have a GAR student who used to be very withdrawn in class, and I thought about the ways I could help her. I was talking to one of the teachers from our site and she told me that she had a student from the same country. During the break, I invited my student to go to the other classroom and meet the other lady. They became friends very quickly, and I could see a change in my student in a matter of*

weeks. She became much more involved in the lessons, and her overall demeanour changed as well. Also, the other teacher told me that her student also seemed happier.

A commonly reported barrier reported by both instructors and coordinators was the service provider's inability to provide GARs with transportation assistance. Although GARs who are participants in the Resettlement Assistance Program during their first year of settlement do receive money for transportation, many informants observe that transportation money is spent on other necessities. Consequently, GARs who need to commute to school often do not have the resources to pay for transportation. Many LINC service providers are able to provide students with bus tokens, but sometimes they do not have a sufficient number for every student in need. One coordinator provided a detailed account of how the lack of transportation assistance can be a barrier for GAR students:

LINC schools decide if they can give the tickets or not, and sometimes we're able to provide GARs with only one TTC ticket, which in turn decreases their attendance because they can't afford to buy the other ticket to return home every day. Therefore, many GARs either attend LINC classes every other day, or come for three days, and stay home for 2 days. You see, it's a catch-22 situation because if GARs don't attend LINC classes regularly, we can't provide them even with that one ticket. Because of their financial situation and not being able to buy an extra ticket to go back home, they can't afford to go to school everyday. Therefore, their attendance suffers and then they can't be given TTC tickets.

Another barrier reported by some instructors is not taking the special needs of GARs into consideration. Some of the examples included a scenario in which GARs are required to

do group work for which, according to the instructors, they may not be prepared because they are frequently withdrawn or not used to classroom settings. Overall, the informants agreed on several significant factors that may facilitate or hinder the progress of GARs in the LINC program.

8.2.4 Performance in LINC Classes

When asked about the performance of GARs in the LINC classes, eight out of ten informants indicated that they had noticed a difference between GARs and other students. Importantly, all eight informants observed that GARs need more time to progress from one LINC level to the next, and seven out of ten believed that it is usually more difficult for GARs to follow a lesson. As one instructor observed:

> *[GARs] need to stay in the LINC program for a longer time. How long they stay depends on many things, but many GARs I've taught had more difficulties than other students. It could be because they've had traumatic experiences in the past or because they are going through a difficult period, I don't know. But I know that they take more time to understand things.*

Furthermore, one coordinator observed that reading and writing skills are even more difficult to acquire for GARs than listening and speaking skills:

> *[GARs] generally learn more slowly and with more difficulty. Still, they pick up listening and speaking more easily than reading and writing, which is usually a disaster. Picking up their ABCs is different and takes a lot more time. Even in level 3 and 4, they still experience a lot of difficulties. Poor reading and writing usually keeps them at that level and doesn't allow promotion to the next level.*

The overall consensus among informants was that GARs experience more difficulties with the material and need more time to comprehend it. In fact, one of the coordinators noted that while most students take an average of three months or one session to complete one LINC level, GARs often take four sessions or one year to complete the same level.

8.2.5 Effectiveness of LINC Classes

In one of the interview questions, informants were asked to rate the effectiveness of LINC classes for teaching GARs, where 1 was not at all effective, 2 was somewhat effective, 3 was neutral or neither effective nor effective, 4 was effective, and 5 was highly effective. The average score for both the coordinators and instructors was 3.1. Some informants who rated the classes as neither effective nor ineffective were simply not sure how to evaluate the effectiveness of the program for GARs and indicated that they would need more time to take everything into consideration. One of the instructors who rated the effectiveness of the classes as effective (4) explained:

> *No program is perfect. I feel that LINC classes are effective because whatever [GARs] learn in class is sufficient for starting their lives.*

On the other hand, one instructor who rated the effectiveness of the classes as ineffective (2) observed:

> *I think that the program doesn't take into account students' emotional readiness for learning. How can students learn if they're suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or if they're so depressed that they don't even talk to anyone?*

I just don't understand how they can even be expected to attend. I certainly wouldn't be able to.

When asked any suggestions on how to remedy this perceived inadequacy of the program, she responded:

I know that there are some counselors who meet with [GARs] when they come to Canada, but the [LINC] program needs to be in touch with these counselors and offer them feedback. You see, I can't decide that one of my students needs help and shouldn't attend any classes for a while. [The student] would just fall through the cracks. So, they keep attending, and they either take a very long time or eventually stop attending classes altogether.

Two other instructors believed that it would be beneficial for all LINC instructors to be aware of the services or individuals who can provide help for GARs if it is needed. For example, one instructor believed that LINC schools should "do more to make GARs feel less isolated," and another instructor thought that some GARs could benefit from having access to a network of counselors or community workers who speak their first language. Because LINC classes are the only point of contact that many GARs have outside their homes, GARs may be unaware of the services that are available to them. Consequently, the informants felt that LINC schools should establish a set of connections to community resources to which GARs could be referred if necessary.

8.2.6 Informants' Experience with Teaching GARs

When LINC instructors were asked to focus on their teaching experience with GARs and share any differences they have noticed in their teaching approaches, five out of seven instructors indicated that they usually modify some of the lesson plans to exclude material that could be distressing to students who come from war-torn areas of the world or low-income households such as GARs. For example, some instructors avoid lengthy discussion about their students' countries of origin, political or family affairs. One instructor observed:

> *Sometimes I need to adapt the material I'm teaching or I may need to deviate from a topic. Some students' past experience and possibly trauma can be a very touchy issue, and I try to avoid getting into those situations. For example, I don't talk about politics. I cover the basics of themes like "Canadian Political System," but I don't go into a discussion about the different issues around the world .*

Another instructor shared a similar approach:

> *GARs come from such difficult circumstances and they're often more sensitive to certain things. For example, when we do exercises in which students need to compare their countries and Canada, GARs may get emotional. I adjust by staying away from a topic or modifying the topic if I sense that some students are sensitive to it.*

In addition, one instructor described how complex the issues affecting GARs could be:

> *I've now learned that I have to be very careful about many things. It's not really just about staying away from talking about wars or conflicts. For example, I've*

learned that I should stay away from naming individual body parts because some refugees have witnessed dismemberment of their relatives or friends in their cities or villages. I just name some parts of the body, but not all.

Two instructors observed that placing GARs in small groups may be more effective than placing them in large groups. One of the instructors explained:

Smaller groups may be more comfortable for GARs because they can get more attention that way. Ideally, they should get one-on-one help, but they also can't be singled out. If I always put them in a larger group, I think it would take them even longer to get promoted to the next level.

Although the extent to which the LINC instructors felt they needed to make changes varied, it is important to note that most of them indicated that either the content or the facilitation of their lessons needed to be modified to accommodate the special needs of GARs.

8.2.7 Summary of Findings from Informant Interviews

The face-to-face interviews with informants yielded some significant findings. Importantly, these findings coincide with the records obtained from the ARS database and supplement the statistics with direct observations and experiences of LINC coordinators and instructors who interact with GARs on a daily basis. The ARS records indicate that GARs in Toronto's LINC program have higher drop-out and lower graduation rates compared to the economic and family immigrants, and most informants confirm these findings. Although the ARS records provide the information on assessments and enrollments, they do not provide any data on attendance rates. However,

the informants observed that the attendance rate of GARs is lower than the attendance rate of other LINC students. Thus, the informants' responses served as a supplement to the statistical records.

Most informants believed that the needs of GARs differed from the needs of other students. They most commonly reported the GARs' need for individual attention in the classroom, which could not be addressed because there was no opportunity both inside and outside the LINC classroom to obtain such help. When the same informants were asked for their suggestions on how the LINC program could be modified to better meet the needs of GARs, they responded that an opportunity for GARs to access individual after-school and home tutoring would be very valuable. Currently, there are no opportunities to receive such tutoring free of charge.

Although the average rating of the effectiveness of LINC classes for teaching GARs was 3.1 or neither effective nor ineffective, most instructors did indicate that they needed to modify their lesson plans to accommodate the special needs of students such as GARs. These modifications pertained both to the content of the lessons and to the way the lessons were delivered. The modifications to the content included the instructors' avoidance of certain topics included in the curriculum to which some GARs might be sensitive, such as a comparison of the Canadian political system and some political systems around the world, while the reported modifications to lesson delivery included placing GARs in smaller groups than other students.

When asked about the most significant facilitating factors in the success of GARs in the program, most informants identified patience and encouragement of LINC instructors and the opportunity for GARs to form social networks. It is important to note

that Simich (2003) also discusses the availability of social support as one of the key determinants of the overall well-being of GARs. In fact, many informants believed that LINC schools should establish a network of contacts in the community to which students in need, such as GARs, could be referred.

Another barrier discussed by informants was a lack of consideration for the special needs of GARs in the classroom. LINC instructors and coordinators frequently remarked that GARs require more time to progress from one LINC level to the next and generally experience more difficulties with the lessons. They identified a number of possible factors that could contribute to these difficulties, but emphasized that GARs require additional assistance in the classroom when compared to other students.

Lack of financial resources was frequently mentioned as a significant barrier to the success of GARs in the LINC program. For example, one informant discussed how inadequate transportation assistance from LINC service providers can not only decrease GARs' attendance rates, but also significantly contribute to higher rates of withdrawals from LINC classes. Additionally, another informant shared her experience with how opportunities to earn money contributed to some of her students' withdrawal from the LINC program even though their English proficiency was very low.

Importantly, the reasons given for the differences between GARs and other LINC students in all six areas of inquiry point to several disadvantages commonly attributed to GARs by most informants. These disadvantages include challenging domestic conditions, scarcity of financial resources, lack of employment opportunities, various cultural expectations, and relatively high rates of traumatic experiences and health-related difficulties among GARs compared to the other immigration categories. Clearly, the

interview findings reveal that most informants distinguish GARs from other LINC students in terms of their perceived needs, barriers, as well as their performance in the LINC program.

9.0 FURTHER RESEARCH

This study offered the first glimpse into the needs and barriers of GARs in the LINC program. Consequently, it has opened many avenues of research pertaining to the experience of GARs in LINC classes. Nevertheless, there are some specific suggestions that could prove beneficial for further research. Firstly, this study employed interviews with informants who were familiar with the daily experiences of GARs in the LINC program. Because GARs are likely best equipped to discuss their needs, expectations, and the barriers they face, future research should strive to conduct face-to-face interviews with GARs themselves. Provided that recruitment methods and interview questions are ethical, direct interviews with GARs will likely provide the most useful and comprehensive results.

Secondly, the ARS records compiled for this study did not take into account how many GARs were participants in the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and how many were not RAP clients. Because RAP recipients are obligated to attend LINC classes if their English language proficiency is considered low, it is possible that many GARs withdraw from the LINC program when they stop participating in the RAP. Consequently, it is possible that the assessment, enrollment, withdrawal, and graduation rates of GARs who participate in the RAP may be different from the same rates of GARs who do not depend on the RAP. Thus, it could be beneficial to collect and compare the

enrollment, attendance, drop-out, and graduation rates of GARs who are and are not RAP clients.

Additionally, while the ARS data did not provide a breakdown of male and female students, some of the informants revealed that they had observed a difference in attendance rates of male and female GARs. Future studies could conduct an analysis of any differences between male and female GARs with respect to their enrollment, attendance, drop-out, and graduation rates. These results could also be contrasted with an analysis of any differences between males and females in other immigration categories.

One of the areas that require attention from future research is an examination of the mental health issues among GARs. Interviews with informants have yielded several concerning findings regarding the psychological well-being of GARs. A few informants have identified a possible presence of depression or post-traumatic stress disorder among some of their GAR students, and this matter should warrant additional research.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LINC SERVICE PROVIDERS

Based on the findings of this study, several steps could be taken to address the unique needs of GARs in the LINC program. The first step should be to provide GARs and other students who might be experiencing difficulties in the LINC program with an opportunity to access free-of-charge, individual tutoring. This tutoring should be available for students after school on a daily basis. In addition, the hours during which the tutoring service is available should accommodate the needs of the students. For example, many GARs have family obligations and might not be available immediately after class. Consequently, tutors should be flexible and understanding of the

circumstances in which students find themselves.

Provision of two-way transportation assistance for commuting GARs by LINC service providers is imperative. Because many GARs experience a considerable lack of financial resources, they spend the transportation assistance they receive from the government on other basic requirements. Unfortunately, some LINC schools are unwilling to provide them with tokens to cover the expenses of the round trip. Instead, GARs may receive only one token or sometimes even none. Some informants have observed that this discourages and prevents them from attending classes because they simply cannot afford to pay for transportation. If LINC providers have the resources to cover the cost of transportation by giving GARs a token, they should not select recipients based on attendance. If they have the means, the schools should offer the tokens to all GARs in need.

It would be advantageous for each LINC site to establish a network of resource in its community. This network would be used to link students to appropriate services or programs that could help meet their needs or deal with any barriers they face. For example, several informants indicated that some GARs experience acute emotional difficulties, which significantly disrupt their ability to function. Although these individuals could benefit from professional help, such as psychologists or settlement or social workers who speak their first language, they often do not access it. Because many GARs often live in isolation and do not make contact with any other service providers other than LINC schools, they may not be able to learn about or locate the necessary resources by themselves. Consequently, if LINC schools formed connections with the organizations or individuals from the community, they would have an abundance of

resources they could suggest to individuals in need. Although these recommendations are not exhaustive, they are based on the findings from the interviews with informants and offer a potentially useful direction for LINC service providers to better meet the needs of GARs and assist them in their integration into the Canadian society.

11.0 CONCLUSION

The social inclusion perspective (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003), which calls for equal prospects and the eradication of obstacles that lead to social exclusion, provided the foundation and the framework for this study. Using this framework as an aspiration, the study provided the first glimpse into the perceived needs and barriers of government-assisted refugees in Toronto's LINC classes. An analysis of data on the number of assessments, enrollments, withdrawals, and graduations in the LINC program and interviews with a sample of LINC instructors and coordinators yielded some valuable findings and pointed to a number of significant barriers faced by GARs in the LINC program.

The statistical records on LINC students in the City of Toronto reveal that GARs are the least likely immigrant category to enroll in classes after having their language skills assessed. In addition, they have the lowest graduation rate and the highest drop-out rate compared to all other immigration categories of LINC students. Notably, findings from the interviews support the findings from the statistical analysis and also provide additional information about the factors that facilitate and impede successful language learning among GARs. For example, most of the informants observed that GARs had lower attendance rates than other students. Moreover, almost all informants believed that

the needs and barriers of GARs in LINC classes differ from those of other immigrant categories. One of the most frequently reported perceived needs was individual attention and encouragement from LINC instructors during classes. As a result, several informants suggested that there should be an opportunity for GARs to access individual tutoring after school or at home.

Another recurrently reported perceived need was GARs' access to social networks of both people and community resources. The importance of these networks for the well-being of GARs is reaffirmed in many research studies that examine the resettlement of GARs in Canada (Michalski and Habib, 1997; Danso, 2002; Simich *et al*., 2002; Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2003; Sherrell *et al*., 2005; Hyndman and McLean, 2006). In fact, the results of most of the studies conducted on GARs correspond to the findings of this study. For example, the lack of proficiency in English is repeatedly discusses as a significant barrier to the successful settlement of GARs (Michalski & Habib, 1997; Chiswick and Miller, 2000; Pendakur, 2002; SRDC, 2002c; Sherrell *et al*., 2005; Hyndman & McLean, 2006). Furthermore, the lack of financial resources and employment opportunities observed by informants is discussed in at least five studies on GARs in Canada (e.g., Michalski and Habib, 1997; Danso, 2002; Centre of Addiction and Mental Health, 2003; Sherrell *et al*., 2005).

Consequently, this paper expands on the current body of literature on the resettlement of GARs, but also provides a new perspective. Although the findings of this study merely offer a brief overview of the experience of GARs in Toronto's LINC program, they expose several avenues of research for future studies. Thus, this study

serves as a beneficial stepping stone for a more thorough exploration of any of the needs and barriers of GARs identified in the findings.

APPENDIX 1

Interview Guide for LINC Coordinators

Statistics indicate that government-assisted refugees in Toronto do not have the same drop-out rates as other newcomers enrolled in the LINC program. In addition, their graduation rate sets them apart.

- Have you observed any differences in attendance, drop-out, or graduation rates of government-assisted refugees compared to other students at the site(s) that you are responsible for coordinating?
  (If yes)
  - What are some of the differences that you have observed?
  - How would you explain (each of) these differences?

- In your opinion, do government-assisted refugees differ in their needs from other newcomers?
  (If yes)
  - How do you think their needs differ from other newcomers?

- Is there anything that you see as a facilitating factor to successful language learning of Toronto's government-assisted refugees in the LINC program?

- Is there anything that you see as a barrier to their learning?

- Based on your experience, how do Toronto's government-assisted refugees perform in the LINC classroom?

- On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the effectiveness of LINC classes in Toronto for teaching government-assisted refugees, if 1 is not at all effective, 2 is somewhat effective, 3 is neither effective or ineffective (neutral), 4 is effective, and 5 is highly effective?

<u>Coordinator's suggestions or solutions</u>

- Could the LINC program be modified to meet the needs of Toronto's government-assisted refugees more successfully?
  (If yes)
  - How do you think the LINC program could be modified?
  - Do you think there are any modifications that could be made from a curricular (content) perspective?
  - Do you think there are any modifications that could be made from a delivery (pedagogical) perspective?
- Do you have any other suggestions for or comments?

APPENDIX 2

Interview Guide for LINC Instructors

LINC level(s) taught by instructor**:** _____

Statistics indicate that government-assisted refugees in Toronto do not have the same drop-out rates as other newcomers enrolled in the LINC program. In addition, their graduation rate sets them apart.

- Have you observed any differences in attendance, drop-out, or graduation rates of government-assisted refugees compared to other students in your classes?

- Have you observed any differences in drop-out, attendance or graduation rates of government-assisted refugees compared to other students in your classes?
  (If yes)
  - What are some of the differences that you have observed?
  - How would you explain (each of) these differences?

- In your opinion, do government-assisted refugees differ in their needs from other newcomers?
  (If yes)
  - How do you think their needs differ from other newcomers?

- Is there anything that you see as a facilitating factor to successful language learning of Toronto's government-assisted refugees in the LINC program?

- Is there anything that you see as a barrier to their learning?

- Based on your experience, how do Toronto's government-assisted refugees perform in the LINC classroom?

- On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the effectiveness of Toronto's LINC classes for teaching government-assisted refugees, if 1 is not at all effective, 2 is somewhat effective, 3 is neither effective nor ineffective (neutral), 4 is effective, and 5 is highly effective?

<u>Instructor's experience with teaching GARs</u>

- Based on your teaching experience in the LINC program, is *teaching* government-assisted refugees in Toronto any different from teaching other immigrants?
  (If yes)
  - What are these differences?
  - Why do you think these differences exist?

  (If no)
  - What are some of the challenges associated with teaching <u>all</u> students in the LINC program?

Instructors' suggestions or solutions

- Could the LINC program be modified to meet the needs of Toronto's government-assisted refugees more successfully?
  (If yes)
    - How do you think the LINC program could be modified?
    - Do you think there are any modifications that could be made from a curricular (content) perspective?
    - Do you think there are any modifications that could be made from a delivery (pedagogical) perspective?

- Do you have any other suggestions for or comments?

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GLOSSARY

CIC:	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CLB:	Canadian Language Benchmarks
ESL:	English as a Second Language
GAR:	Government-Assisted Refugee
IRPA:	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
LINC:	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
RAP:	Resettlement Assistance Program
SLC:	*Standards linguistiques canadiens*
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees