Resettlement in Shared Spaces: Photovoice Insights from Ukrainian Women in Canadian Homestays

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Abstract:

Background: This study explores the lived experiences of displaced Ukrainian women hosted by Canadian families in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)—an underexamined dimension of refugee resettlement. Set against the backdrop of housing precarity and economic instability, the research examines host-guest dynamics, emotional adaptation, and social integration. Grounded in Feminist Standpoint Theory and guided by photovoice methodology, the study centers women's perspectives to generate actionable insights.

Methods: Eighteen Ukrainian women were recruited through community organizations and networks. Participants used photovoice to document their experiences, which were further explored through narrative interviews and photo-elicitation techniques. Thematic analysis, supported by participant validation, was used to analyze the visual and narrative data.

Results: Three central themes emerged:(1) *Host-Guest Dynamics in Shared Spaces*—addressing evolving trust, emotional labor, and negotiated boundaries;(2) *Adaptation Through Coexistence*—focusing on cultural exchange, learning, and integration into Canadian life; and(3) Reimagining Refugee *Hosting*—highlighting the need for structured supports, host preparedness, and inclusive policies. Participants expressed both gratitude and a desire for agency, revealing intersecting experiences of resilience and vulnerability.

Conclusion: The findings underscore the psychosocial complexity of homestay hosting and call for structured, culturally sensitive frameworks to support both hosts and guests. This research offers critical insights for policymakers, service providers, and practitioners aiming to enhance refugee integration and improve informal hosting programs.