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Examining the role of minority community spaces for enabling the performance of intersectional identities through occupation

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Introduction: It is well established in the occupation-based literature that people's engagement in meaningful occupations is reciprocally connected both to their identities and to the environments within which such occupations occur. However, less is known about how a lack of access to or exclusion from certain environments may restrict the performance of identities by constraining opportunities for occupational engagement.

Objectives: We examined the role of minority community spaces (e.g. schools, places of worship, community centres) for supporting participation in occupations among Francophone immigrants and refugees in Canada who settled in two Anglo-dominant cities.

Method: 56 immigrants and refugees from diverse countries participated in eight focus groups (four in each city) conducted as part of a larger four stage comparative case study. An intersectional lens was adopted for the theoretical analysis of verbatim transcripts.

Results: We present findings according to two themes. First we discuss the implications for occupation of living in a linguistic minority context, including issues related to feelings of isolation and challenges stemming from a lack of services in French. Second, we explore the role of minority community spaces for supporting occupational engagement. This includes the potential of such spaces for providing opportunities to build a social network and to participate in occupations that enable the performance of one's linguistic, racial, gendered, religious, and other identities.

Conclusion: Adopting an occupational perspective to deepen understanding of how intersecting identities are negotiated in minority contexts can inform the development of practices to support the social participation of immigrants and refugees.