PROVIDING REFUGE:
FAITH-BASED RESETTLEMENT ACTORS AND REFUGEE INTEGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

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DEDICATION

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.
To Him be glory forever. Amen.
Romans 11:36 (English Standard Version)

And, to my husband, best friend, and favorite person on earth, Clayton Frazier.

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A famous American essayist is said to have once remarked that he could no more remember the books he had read than the meals he had eaten; nevertheless, these both had formed him. I have now read a heap of books, and eaten many meals, but the most formative encounters in my life have not been with ideas nor cuisines but rather, with people. Both I, and this dissertation, are the sum of many people's investment, instruction, and sacrifice, of which I have been the most fortunate recipient. The little space I have here is insufficient to convey the thanks which I owe.

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ABSTRACT

As of 2019, the total number of forcibly displaced persons is recorded at 70.8 million, breaking global records for the seventh consecutive year. Only 25.9 million of these are formally recognized as refugees, a legal designation signifying an individual has fled their country and claimed international protection based on a fear of persecution due to membership in one or more of the five protected classes: race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Today, the majority of displacement occurs in the Global South; however, the United Nation's global resettlement program enables other countries to demonstrate their humanitarian commitments through the offer of third-country resettlement, thereby sharing a portion of the global responsibility for the protection of displaced persons. Since World War II, the United States has resettled more than 3 million refugees, and has historically led the global resettlement program in total number of refugees resettled. However, the election of Donald J. Trump as president ushered in a wave of reforms regarding immigration, restricting the admission of refugees and asylum seekers, limiting funding, and undermining the future of the U.S. resettlement program. This dissertation explores how resettlement and integration function for refugees through a case study of three resettlement organizations in the southeastern U.S. This research is situated at the intersection of geographic work on migration and refugees, the geographies of religion, and feminist geographic methodologies. This dissertation advances understandings of integration as a multi-dimensional process between newcomers and a heterogeneous host society. Further, it examines how faith influences the work of resettlement actors, advancing geographic scholarship on individual religious subjectivities through a focus on volunteerism as a form of everyday religious practice outside the bounds of what is traditionally considered "sacred". This dissertation also offers sustained reflection on the challenges which can arise in fieldwork with resettled refugees. This research builds upon existing scholarship by advancing understandings of refugee integration, faith-based volunteerism and religious practice, and methodological challenges in qualitative fieldwork with marginalized populations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

We live in a time of unprecedented human displacement. In 2019, 70.8 million people were recorded as forcibly displaced by conflict, with 25.9 million of these being formally recognized as refugees (UNHCR 2019a). These figures are the latest in a seven-year, record-breaking streak. The increasingly protracted nature of many modern conflicts has kept much of the world's displaced population in a prolonged state of limbo, while new displacement continues to accelerate (UNHCR 2019b). Though the majority of displacement occurs in the Global South (UNHCR 2019a), the United Nation's global resettlement program enables "Western" countries to demonstrate their humanitarian commitments, safeguard human rights, and share a portion of global responsibility for the protection of displaced persons.

Despite rising displacement, many states are revising their commitments to the UN's refugee resettlement program. Along with the United States, other top resettling countries such as Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom lowered their resettlement admissions in 2017, a trend that is expected to continue (Connor and Krogstad 2018). Reasons for this retraction can be attributed to the securitization of migration, a rise in nationalistic and xenophobic rhetoric across the West, and the fortification of borders. Though the United States has historically accepted more refugees through the UN's third-country resettlement program than any other country (Rose 2017), the 2016 U.S. presidential election saw recently unprecedented politicization of migration and refugee resettlement. The election of Donald J. Trump as president ushered in a wave of reforms regarding immigration, restricting the admission of refugees and asylum seekers. In January 2017, a series of executive orders suspended the refugee admission program for 120 days (White House 2017); subsequent orders cut refugee admission quotas from the FY 2017 ceiling of 110,000 down to 45,000 for FY 2018, and admissions for FY 2019 were set at 30,000 (Cepla 2019). At the time of writing FY 2020 admissions have not yet been released, but

recent reports indicate that the administration is considering proposals to lower the admissions ceiling even further – with one proposal reducing admissions to zero (Hesson 2019).

Refugee resettlement and arrival services in the U.S. are funded by the federal government based on the number of arrivals in a given year. As arrivals decrease, funding for the program also drops correspondingly. Across the country, resettlement offices are closing in response to projected cuts and current funding shortages (Alvarez 2018; Rosenberg 2018). Not only do these developments curtail the program's ability to provide services to already resettled refugees, but also jeopardize the future of the program by undermining the necessary resettlement infrastructure. Alongside government-funded resettlement agencies, an array of "refugee third sector organizations" (RTSOs) work to provide services and support for resettled refugees. In this dissertation, the term RTSO refers to any organization, both for- and non-profit, which supports resettled refugees in the U.S. and does not receive government funding to provide these services (Mayblin and James 2019, 376). These organizations are crucial to the function of the U.S. program; however, their ability to support the integration of resettled refugees varies geographically between resettlement locales and is largely dependent on volunteers.

In light of the global displacement landscape, retracting offers of resettlement, and the growing hostility towards refugees in U.S. policy, this dissertation explores how resettlement and integration function for resettled refugees. Through a case study of three organizations in the mid-sized, southeastern U.S. city of Kingston, I examine the ways in which resettlement actors shape possibilities for refugee integration. Many U.S. resettlement agencies and RTSOs are religiously affiliated; I explore how the work of these faith-based resettlement actors can be understood as religious performance and reflexive faith praxis. I also reflect on the

methodological challenges of conducting research with resettled refugee populations and resettlement organizations.

Aims and Contributions of the Dissertation

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to understand refugee resettlement and integration in the current United States context. To accomplish this purpose, I address the following research questions:

1. How do government-funded and refugee third sector organizations provide resettlement in the United States? How do expectations for resettlement shape ideals of refugee integration, and how do actors' conceptions of integration inform their resettlement work?
2. How do theology and religious identity inform the resettlement initiatives of faith-based, refugee third sector organizations? What role does religion play in motivating employees and volunteers of these organizations? How do they understand, perform, and negotiate their faith through volunteerism in refugee resettlement?
3. What challenges arise when conducting fieldwork with resettled refugees? How can such challenges be addressed? What can be learned from "fieldwork failure", and what is the productive potential of such failure?

Together, these research questions provide a nuanced perspective on refugee resettlement in the United States. I engage each group of questions in the three following chapters. Chapter II addresses the first group of questions through an examination of the resettlement actors operating in the U.S. resettlement context in order to understand how refugee integration is shaped by actors' expectations for resettlement. The third chapter engages with the second group of questions to consider how refugee resettlement work can be understood as a form of religious

praxis for faith-based volunteers. Chapter IV explores the third group of questions, reflecting on the challenges which can arise when conducting research with resettled refugee populations and resettlement organizations and offering lessons learned.

Rationale

The study of refugee resettlement reveals the contours of a nation's humanitarian and political commitments. In refugee resettlement, the integration discourses of a country become explicit, as the process of resettlement attempts to create "ideal citizens" when refugees are admitted to the country (Nawyn 2011; Grace et al. 2017). How integration proceeds in refugee resettlement tells us about the priorities of the society, and the imagined community in a given place (Anderson 2006). The United States has resettled nearly 3 million refugees since the inception of current resettlement program in 1980 (Connor 2017); given the country's resettlement history and large resettled population, it is crucial to document and consider the impacts of ongoing changes to resettlement policy and practice. While cuts to refugee admissions will negatively affect the country's ability to resettle refugees and the future of the program, these changes also undermine resettlement support for those refugees the U.S. has already admitted. Furthermore, studying the work of RTSOs vis-à-vis the government's official stance on refugee resettlement can shed light on the current divergent responses to refugee resettlement in the current U.S. context.

Statement of Contributions

This dissertation is situated at the intersection of geographies of religion, geographic work on migration, and feminist geographic methodologies, contributing to understandings of refugee integration, volunteerism and religious practice, and methodological challenges in qualitative fieldwork. This dissertation explores the implementation of refugee resettlement in the U.S. and aims to advance theorization of integration as a multi-dimensional process between newcomers

and a heterogeneous host society. Host society responses to immigration and refugee resettlement are heterogeneous, and integration (or alienation) occurs along multiple axes at once, beginning from the moment of arrival (Strang and Ager 2010). This dissertation answers calls to elucidate the relationships between government-funded and other resettlement actors, and examines relationship-oriented services provided by RTSOs (Garkisch, Heidingsfelder, and Beckmann 2017). Moreover, this dissertation advances conceptualization of faith-based organizations by examining how faith influences organizational work and shapes individual participation in refugee resettlement. This helps us better understand everyday religious practice outside the bounds of the traditionally "sacred", advancing geographic scholarship on individual religious subjectivities. The study also furthers understandings of faith-based volunteerism as a form of reflexive religious practice through a case study of refugee resettlement work in the United States (Sutherland 2017; Denning 2019). Through its geographic context, this dissertation also contributes to literatures on non-traditional, "new" immigrant destinations in the U.S. South; faith-based resettlement efforts in this region constitute an important facet of non-traditional immigrant destination responses to resettlement. Finally, this dissertation advances methodological considerations of participatory visual methods with vulnerable or hard-to-access populations such as resettled refugees through sustained reflection on the challenges which can arise in fieldwork encounters. The methodological contributions of this dissertation include an analysis of the productive power of fieldwork failure, urging geographers to closely examine failed fieldwork encounters to gain insight into their research sites, their chosen methods, and themselves as researchers.

Background Information

The term "refugee" does not refer indiscriminately to all forced migrants. Rather, it is a specific legal designation, enshrined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and its attendant 1967 Protocol. Together, these codify the rights of individuals who flee their country to claim international protection based on a fear of persecution due to membership in one or more of the five protected classes: race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. These statutes also state that signatory nations are required to provide protection for individuals claiming refugee status. While this definition excludes many who have been forcibly displaced such as internally displaced persons, "economic refugees", or those displaced by natural disasters, only those who qualify for refugee status are eligible for resettlement in a third country via the UN's resettlement program. Though only around one third of the world's displaced population qualifies for refugee status under international law, less than one percent of these approximately 25.9 million refugees are resettled in a third country (UNHCR 2019a). Because this dissertation focuses on refugee resettlement in the U.S., other displaced populations are outside the scope of this study.

After WWII, the U.S. began to resettle refugees in response to massive European displacement. For much of the 20th century, refugee resettlement was accomplished by loosely affiliated nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) assembled under hasty and reactive conditions (Brown and Scribner 2014). Later, the Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980 both codified the legal definition of refugee in the United States and initiated the federal resettlement and service program (Benson 2016). The U.S. has resettled more than 3 million refugees since 1980 via contracts with nine national voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) (Morken and Skop 2017). The number of refugee admissions is set per fiscal year by the President after consulting Congress

(Bruno 2018). The top countries of origin vary from year to year, reflecting an administration's geopolitical priorities and current global needs.

The Reception and Placement Program (RPP) is managed by VOLAGS through partnerships with local organizations to provide housing, clothing, food, medical and social services (Ives, Sinha and Cnaan 2010; Morken and Skop 2017). Funding for the RPP is tied to the number of arrivals, and the President retains sole authority to set admission levels, exposing the system to vulnerability from political fluctuations and election cycles (Brown and Scribner 2014). This precarity, coupled with already insufficient financial resources, has undermined agencies' ability to organize and recruit volunteers, provide services to already settled refugees, and plan effectively for the future, resulting in stress on the network and closure of agencies (Benson 2016).

Geographic Context

This dissertation is based on research conducted in the city of Kingston[1], located in a state in the southeastern U.S. Neither the city nor state is considered to be a traditional immigrant destination, and in terms of absolute resettlement volume, this state has not traditionally ranked among the top refugee-receiving locales in the country. However, several important measures demonstrate the impact of refugee resettlement in this state. First, this state is one of only 10 states in the U.S. that has resettled more than 0.2 percent of its overall state population in the last five years. Moreover, the population of resettled refugees constitutes more than six percent of the total foreign-born population in this state – the highest percentage in the southeast region of the U.S. This ranks the state as one of the top five in the country in terms of the refugee to total

[1] All names of individuals, locations, and organizations are pseudonyms in keeping with IRB requirements for participant anonymity.

foreign-born population ratio (Bose and Grigri 2018). These statistics indicate that refugee resettlement has significantly increased the population of foreign-born individuals in this state, and that this state's population has grown in a proportionately significant way as a result of ongoing resettlement. Both of these measures contribute to the visibility and heightened prominence of refugee resettlement in this state. Moreover, as of February 2019, this state ranked among the top ten refugee-resettling states in the U.S., even in the midst of Trump-era cuts to the program (UNHCR 2019c). The city of Kingston is the center of resettlement activity in the state, home to the State Office for Refugees as well as two government-funded refugee resettlement agencies. In addition to these state-affiliated organizations, the city is home to an array of refugee third sector organizations, many of which are faith-based or religiously affiliated. A self-proclaimed "welcoming city," Kingston has been receiving refugees since 1975, and is home to a large population of resettled individuals.

Methodology

This dissertation draws on empirical fieldwork conducted in Kingston between June 2017 and August 2018. I conducted 44 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with employees, volunteers and resettled refugees. In addition, I observed culture, work, and welfare orientation sessions, English language classes, caseworker consultations, and move-ins for new arrivals offered by the resettlement agency, Refugee Relief. I also attended English language classes, social events, and citizenship classes offered by Haven, and accompanied Shelter Resident Managers on home visits. Throughout the project, I took field notes in each of these settings, and wrote reflections on the content and conduct of interviews, as well as daily interactions and observations in the field (Dunn 2010; Vogt et al. 2014). These notes were transcribed after each return and analyzed.

The content and purposes of interviews and observations, as well as processes of analysis, are discussed below.

The research took place in three phases. During the first phase in June 2017, I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with resettled refugees, as well as employees and volunteers of the organizations Refugee Relief, Shelter, and Haven. This initial fieldwork generated a network of contacts with key actors and informants who were enthusiastic about the project and agreed to participate in the dissertation research. I then returned to Knoxville, transcribed all interviews and fieldnotes, and began preliminary coding. The second phase was designed to generate more data about the provision of housing for resettled refugees and the collaboration between the three organizations. In January 2018, I conducted interviews with employees and volunteers of Shelter, Haven, and the State Office for Refugees. I returned to Kingston in August 2018 and conducted semi-structured interviews with Shelter Resident Managers, Haven volunteers, and several employees of Refugee Relief.

Interviews with employees of the State Office and case managers at Refugee Relief explored a variety of topics, including how federal funds are received and administered, agency efforts to locate, procure, and obtain suitable housing for clients, and experiences with Shelter housing. Interviews with Refugee Relief, Shelter, and Haven personnel focused on meanings of integration, organizational structures and missions, and their participation in resettlement service provision. These interviews also focused on individuals' roles in providing services, their interactions and relationships with resettled refugees, and their insights regarding the local, national, and political contexts in which refugee resettlement operates. Interviews with Shelter personnel explored their experiences in Shelter properties as well as their personal interactions with refugee tenants and other volunteers. Interviews with refugee tenants focused on their

resettlement experiences, their current housing situations and neighborhoods, feelings of (un)belonging, and experiences with agency volunteers and reflections on integration. I used a standardized interview protocol to provide consistency between interview encounters and to allow for comparisons between interview responses (Baxter and Eyles 1997; Crang and Cook 2011); however, I was sensitive to participant responses, and pursued emergent issues and issues of interest to each participant. Interview protocols were amended over time as themes emerged or reached saturation (Saldaña 2015).

Observations were completed to understand the ways in which expectations for integration are communicated from agencies and service providers to refugees through English classes, culture orientations, and home visits. These (and other observed) events constitute important sites for the transmission of ideals and expectations regarding integration and are the primary moments in which employees and volunteers "work with" resettled refugees. Conducting participant observation during such events and encounters also allowed me to triangulate the information on resettlement services and interactions reported by employee and volunteer participants (Winchester 2001).

Planned Methods and Divergence in Fieldwork

Following a shift in geographic scholarship on migration from "borders to border crossers" (Ehrkamp 2017), the project proposal included methods designed to examine integration as understood and experienced by refugees themselves. I originally intended to obtain a sample of 30 refugee participants for interviews, and from this larger sample hoped to recruit at least 10 of these participants to the photo-elicitation portion of the project. In addition to more traditional qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation, the fieldwork was supposed to include mental mapping and participant-driven, photo-elicitation interviewing.

Grounded in feminist assumptions that participants are experts of their own experience, these methods were to be conducted with refugee participants in order to directly engage with refugee perspectives on settlement, housing, and integration in a reflexive and participant-driven way (Sutherland and Cheng 2009; Lapenta 2012; Fozdar and Hartley 2014; Dowling, Lloyd and Suchet-Pearson 2016). These participatory visual methods were designed to highlight refugees' settlement experiences and re-center analyses of migration around the accounts of migrants themselves (Ehrkamp 2017). The use of photos in interviews can circumvent participant apprehensions about answering questions and enhance responses by using photographs as a point of reference (Sutherland and Cheng 2009; Lapenta 2012). This method places cameras in the hands of refugee participants and allows them to direct the camera's gaze to situate and narrate their own stories of refuge and resettlement, countering dominant media narratives of refugees as victims or the subjects of devastating news coverage (Robertson et al. 2016). Pursuant to these aims, I planned to recruit a minimum of 10 participants into the photo-elicitation portion of the project; however, my attempt at implementing this method encountered significant obstacles (see Chapter IV). Furthermore, while visual methods are well-suited to topics like home-making, integration and lived experiences (Pink 2001; Berg 2012; Fozdar and Hartley 2014), they can also be time-consuming, and difficult to implement logistically. I address these challenges and lessons learned in Chapter IV.

Gaining access to organizations presented various challenges. After my attempts to contact resettlement agencies in southern states that were resettling refugees yielded few leads, I contacted a friend who taught English as a Second Language at one of the major resettlement agencies in Kingston. I had previously contacted both government-funded resettlement agencies in the city to request permission to conduct research; however, one organization declined my

request outright and the other remained nonresponsive. However, her recommendation provided an avenue by which I obtained permission to conduct research with Refugee Relief. After establishing this contact, I scouted other key organizational partners before entering the field, and made contact with the staff at Haven. Through their recommendation, I was introduced to the founders of Shelter.

All participants were recruited via purposive, snowball sampling generated from these initial contacts. Snowball sampling is considered an optimal method to reach participants in "hidden" or "hard to reach" populations such as resettled refugees (Dahinden and Efionayi-Mäder 2009, 103); introductions to participants through knowledgeable gatekeepers can overcome participants' potential apprehensions about outsiders (Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson 2011). However, snowball sampling can limit the reach of the study by producing biased samples and can compromise participant anonymity when participation is recommended by others, an important issue when conducting research with vulnerable populations such as resettled refugees (Ellard-Gray et al. 2015). In my case, snowball sampling was the most feasible mode of accessing participants in a city where I had few personal contacts, and required less time and funding than other more comprehensive sampling techniques (Ellard-Gray et al. 2015). After participants consented to the research, interviews were conducted in English, recorded with a digital voice recorder, and transcribed.

Coding and Analysis

After transcribing all interviews and field notes, I developed a coding system via inductive open coding of field notes and interview transcripts (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011; Vogt et al. 2014; Dunn 2010). Initial coding prioritized informants' meanings and understandings (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011), and incorporated categories of analysis from the literature as well as emergent

themes (Cope 2010). All interview transcripts and notes were annotated and coded in MAXQDA software via an iterative process (Cope 2010). Examples of initial codes included definitions of integration, services provided by organizations, motivations of resettlement actors, and roles within the resettlement context. Through the iterative process of coding and analysis, I sought to understand the work of volunteers, agencies, and civil society actors, the experiences of refugees in their housing, and their reflections on their integration in relation to housing. After the coding reached saturation (Baxter and Eyles 1997), I developed in-process memos on major code groupings as the analysis progressed (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw 2011). From these analytical memos emerged the primary thematic groupings which form the core of the manuscripts in this dissertation.

Study Limitations

Several limitations of this study need to be addressed. The overall sample size of resettled refugees (12) was far below the targeted participant population for interviews (30), and thus was too small to adequately address the project's focus on refugee experience of integration and resettlement. Ultimately, I was able to access 32 American employees and volunteers who were eager to discuss their work in refugee resettlement, especially in light of ongoing political controversies. Another limitation was that all interviews were conducted in English; while this did not present a difficulty to interviewing American participants, it limited my ability to interview recently arrived refugees who were not comfortable speaking English. It was expensive to hire translators; refugee participants spoke a variety of languages, and several translators would have had to be hired. Moreover, many of the translators available for hire were also refugees and members of the same communities as the participants, which could compromise the anonymity of participants and constrain what they were willing to share.

Obtaining and maintaining access to refugee participants was an ongoing challenge throughout the project; particularly, negotiating access through gatekeepers and a limited amount of time in the field contributed to overall low recruitment of refugee participants for interviews, and the resultant fieldwork failure of the photo-elicitation technique (see Chapter III). Additionally, the limitations of my data include the unknowable implications of the ways in which results and findings are shaped by who does or does not agree to participate in the study (Crang and Cook 2011).

Feminist and Critical Geographic Positioning

The overall project of feminist geography is to "legitimate subjugated knowledge" by creating space for the perspectives and experiences of marginalized participants and seeking ways to empower participants in their own contexts (Rose 1993, 58). These emphases in the feminist literature rang true in my own understanding of social life and seemed apt portrayals of the marginalization that is exemplified in refugee resettlement. Initially, these feminist concerns influenced my choice of methods directed at resettled refugees; however, this same epistemological framing also centered my attention on participants' accounts of their own religiosity in their resettlement work. Concerns with critical methodologies and fieldwork based on reflexive engagement have remained central to feminist geographies from the beginning of the subdiscipline (Nast 1994; Kindon 2003; Caretta 2015). In the third chapter, I examine the ways in which my positionality, access, the participant population, and my own personal characteristics influenced field encounters to locate the productive potential of "fieldwork failure" from a feminist perspective.

Critical and feminist lines of inquiry have increasingly converged in geographic analysis over time, based on the two traditions' mutual interests in power, spatiality and social justice. In

a discipline historically dominated by more objectivist forms of social scientific inquiry, critical feminist geographers demand greater attention to power relations in fieldwork and recognition of the situated, partial nature of knowledge production (England 1994). Their scholarship is characterized by critiques of voice and authority (Kobayashi 1994), debates over the politics of representation, a commitment to critical reflexivity, and closer examination of "how our work affects and is affected by the communities and places that we study" (Nast 1994, 54). Such scholarship also espouses a commitment to expose and subvert the power dynamics in research processes, with a particular interest in "letting the voices" of marginalized groups be heard (Caretta 2015, 490). A critical approach to this dissertation project has allowed me to 1) develop nuanced perspectives on neoliberalism in integration discourses (Chapter I), 2) interrogate the complex commitments of faith-based resettlement actors (Chapter II), and 3) critically examine problematic field encounters and "failed" methods (Chapter III).

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in a three-manuscript format. Though each article addresses separate themes and bodies of literature, these manuscripts are complimentary facets of the same project and are intimately related. The first chapter of the dissertation includes a discussion of the researcher's positionality and negotiations in the field in relation to research participants. The three remaining chapters comprise the three manuscripts. In what follows, I describe the research agenda of each manuscript.

Chapter Two, "When 'Self-Sufficiency' is Not Sufficient: Refugee Integration Discourses of U.S. Resettlement Actors and the Offer of Refuge," addresses the purpose of third country resettlement and outlines the context of refugee resettlement in the United States. Though government-funded agencies are tasked with the delivery of resettlement services, their

ability to support long-term integration is curtailed by a programmatic emphasis on economic self-sufficiency, the legacy of trenchant neoliberal ideologies. To fill the gaps left by the retraction of the government in providing refuge, an array of refugee third sector organizations (RTSOs) have emerged to provide services to resettled individuals, and each organization produces its integration discourses in line with expectations for integration. This chapter explores the ways in which this patchwork of resettlement organizations works together to provide refuge to resettled persons in the United States.

The third chapter, titled "Understanding 'Faith' in Faith-Based Organizations: Volunteerism as Religious Practice in U.S. Refugee Resettlement," explores the role of evangelical faith-based RTSOs in the U.S. refugee resettlement program, especially in light of widespread evangelical support of the Trump administration's anti-immigration policies. This article addresses the role of faith in the resettlement work of "faith-based" organizations, employees, and volunteers of two evangelical RTSOs to better understand faith-based volunteerism as a form of reflexive religious praxis. Encounters between service providers and resettled refugees provide an opportunity for individuals to reflexively enact and transform their understandings of faith and practice. To these individuals, resettlement work is "more-than" an act of service, constituting a form of religious practice outside the bounds of "sacred" space.

The fourth chapter, "When Fieldwork 'Fails': Participatory Visual Methods and Fieldwork Encounters with Resettled Refugees," published in the *Geographical Review*, conducts a reflexive analysis of this fieldwork research. Through embracing the productive power of "failure", this manuscript considers the challenges of conducting fieldwork with vulnerable populations such as resettled refugees and offers lessons for future research. Ultimately, this chapter reminds that all research is fraught with opportunities for failure.

Comprehensively, these manuscripts unite geographic scholarship on migration and refugee resettlement, religion and faith-based organizations, and feminist methodological considerations.

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CHAPTER I: POSITIONALITY OF THE RESEARCHER

Situating Reflexivity

In this chapter, I examine my position as a researcher in relation to the research project and participants. This type of reflection on one's positionality has become widespread practice in human geography, motivated by critiques of aspirations to objectivity in research and claims to absolute, universal, or objective knowledge. Social constructivist and feminist scholars maintain that knowledge itself (and the process of knowledge production) is only ever partial, and always "situated," inseparable from the habitus and body of the researcher – "a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body," and the constellation of power relations which that researcher inhabits (Haraway 1988, 589). In order to avoid pretensions to objectivity and to situate knowledges produced in research, feminist scholars have urged researchers to implement rigorous and systematic reflexivity (Rose 1997). Reflexivity is understood as the "self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher" (England 1994, 82). It involves first locating oneself in relation to the work and then reflecting on the ways in which this positionality may influence how research is approached, conceptualized, practiced, analyzed, and written about (England 1994). Aside from such epistemological concerns, feminist scholars have also recognized that reflecting on one's role in the research can reveal opportunities for learning about and improving the research process itself, as well as critically evaluating one's own work (England 1994). Though feminist geographers regard reflexivity to be an essential aspect of critical geographies, many acknowledge that practicing reflexivity is far from straightforward (Rose 1997).

Following these critiques, many scholars "map out" their position in relation to the "so-called axes of social difference" to which social science has become most attuned, including the researcher's race or ethnicity, gender, sexual identification, socioeconomic class, and so on

(Matejskova 2014, 32). While thinking along the lines of such categories can be a helpful starting point, mere lists of a researcher's social characteristics should not be mistaken for productive reflexive engagement, or for meaningful analysis of one's position in relation to the research. Matejskova (2014) problematizes this approach, arguing that the axes of importance for understanding our positionality may not be those preexisting categories (race, gender, ethnicity) considered to be important in dominant social science, but rather, those structures or axes of difference that emerge as important in actual encounters in the field. She argues that scholars instead should consider the "processuality" of the social, rather than its "thingness" in formulating positionality, meaning that social phenomena, including research encounters, are constructed and processual (not static nouns). Such social matters are not able to be explained solely in terms of abstracted or essentialized social characteristics (Matejskova 2014, 32). In other words, positionality cannot be unproblematically declaimed in a few sentences. Moreover, declarations of positionality along the lines of static social characteristics cannot even be assured to elicit mutual understanding from the audience, as all such categories are dynamic and interpreted differently by readers according to their own social location and perspective.

Positionality Statement

In what follows, I attempt to describe my role as researcher vis a vis the research project. A researcher's biography directly affects the research in two primary ways: 1) one's personal characteristics both allow for certain insights and inadvertently prioritize some types of data over others, and 2) the researcher's biography may allow for access to information "that might not be given so willingly to a differently positioned academic" (England 1994, 85).

All analysis and commentary in this dissertation come from the perspective of a North American, white, middle-class female. I recognize that this background influenced the selection

of the field site and eased connection with the organizations in this study. For instance, when this dissertation was still in the conceptual stage, I contacted a friend with whom I had previously studied Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) who worked for a resettlement agency. Her position and personal recommendation opened the door for me to recruit employees of Refugee Relief into the study. My social connections, level of education, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class may have played a role in facilitating this easy access where other approaches to access had failed (see Introduction and Chapter IV). However, merely declaiming a "proliferation of categories" to situate myself does not accomplish effective reflexivity (Matejskova 2014, 31). Rather, such an approach implies a "certain belief in our representational omnipotence" – in other words, some researchers behave as if citing enough social characteristics or identity markers could somehow negate any undetected or partially unaccounted for subjective influences on the research process (Matejskova 2014, 31). Based on this critical perspective, I here unpack the axes of difference between myself and the participants that emerged as most pertinent in the field, not those which I initially expected to have the most salience or even those which are currently most popular in the discipline (Matejskova 2014).

Before unpacking my personal characteristics and their possible implications, I first must address the question: who are the participants in relation to whom I am narrating my positionality? This research involved participants from a variety of organizational and social backgrounds, spanning institutional and legal statuses, whose affiliation is most simply described by their role in the resettlement process. These affiliations can be grouped into three broad categories: 1) employees of government-funded agencies, 2) employees/volunteers of refugee third sector organizations (RTSOs) that do not receive government funding, and 3) resettled refugees. The differences between each of these groups illustrated the shifting and fluid

dimensions of researcher identity and positionality (Matejskova 2014, 25); in the field, my personal characteristics could have been used, perceived, and interpreted differently with individuals from each of these backgrounds. The following discussion considers a few social characteristics which marked my position in the field, arranged in no particular order.

Through encounters with research participants (described below), I began to notice the different ways that participants would implicitly or explicitly reference certain aspects of my biography in order to forge connections, elicit acknowledgements of allegiance, or attempt to situate my presence in the field. For example, with employees of government-funded agencies, I intentionally situated myself as a "student" rather than as a "researcher" to highlight my desire to learn *from* participants and take a supplicant position (England 1994). Several participants from the state resettlement office and local resettlement agency had earned graduate degrees; upon learning I was a PhD student, several participants began to make repeated tacit and ambiguous references to "the literature", answering interview questions on their work with statements like "I don't know, but the literature says…" Instead of answering questions based on their experiential perspective from their role in the resettlement agency, these participants continually deferred to my perceived expertise ("I'm sure you already know…"). At such times, I consciously attempted to resist signaling an understanding of what the participant was trying to communicate in an effort to encourage further elaboration and elicit more data (Matejskova 2014). Several of these participants also tended to doubt or question their answers, saying, "Is that what you were wanting?" Or, "Was that good enough?" Other participants asked me for interpretations of political events based on their expectations that I was a specialist in all matters concerning immigration and current events. This deference or references to my supposed preexistent knowledge led me to question my intentional positioning as a "student"; while I had hoped that

introducing myself as a student rather than a researcher would work towards prioritizing participants' expertise, this seemed to instead trigger preexisting expectations about what a "PhD student" must already know, and appeared to increase the unease and deferential behavior of some agency participants. With resettled refugee participants, I stressed my position as a student, my affiliation with my university, and attempted to distance myself from the resettlement agency by emphasizing the independence of my research project. Some refugee participants accepted this positioning and would ask about my classes or other "student"-affiliated topics. Others, however, seemed to lack a clear category for academic research in the context which I had presented it, and seemed confused about why a student would be "doing a project" about their lives. In some cases, it became clear that my disaffiliation from the resettlement agency had either been not well communicated or not understood. In more than one instance, after taking care to introduce myself, explain my purpose, and follow complete procedures to consent participants to the research, a participant or adjacent family member would associate me again with the resettlement agency, asking how long I had been working there or if I worked with their caseworker.

With government-funded agency participants, I also informally had disclosed that I had some familiarity with the day-to-day work of resettlement, as I had previously volunteered with a resettlement agency elsewhere. Given this prior affiliation ("Oh, so you know what it's like!") and the topic of my research, resettlement agency participants assumed that I was sympathetic and aligned with their political convictions; namely, against the current administration and in opposition to current policies. This assumption of my political allegiance may have provided an "insider" status, eliciting responses shared in a sense of commiseration based on assumptions that I shared their political position and understood (to some degree) the precarities of nonprofit

work. The above examples of participant responses are demonstrative of their attempts to "locate" me in their systems of understanding. These exchanges also created spaces of inclusion or exclusion, partially and temporarily situating me closer or further from a perceived "inside".

Insider research has been defined as "social interviews conducted between researchers and participants who share a similar cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national and religious heritage" (Ganga and Scott 2006, 2). Researchers who share characteristics with participants may take the social proximity for granted and underestimate the advantageous consequences that this (real or perceived) similarity may have; such a position can also obscure certain phenomena due to supposed similarities between researcher and participants (Ganga and Scott 2006). Matejskova (2014) addresses the shifting and constructed nature of "insider" status in research relations, arguing that all such understandings of the researcher are necessarily partial and largely artificial – "interpreted as lacking any 'real' basis, especially when we consider that as researchers we sometimes engage in manipulative actions to come inside of our interlocutors' personal spaces to gain trust and data" (28). Whether a conscious act of manipulation on the part of the researcher or not, all identifications between researcher and participant are, as she points out, constructed – by the researcher, by the participants, or by both.

The question of "insider" status rose again in research with the faith-based organizations Shelter and Haven. During the pilot research, I stayed with a friend and attended her church one weekend. While there, I met the founders of Shelter, and mentioned my interest in studying integration initiatives similar to theirs. We set up a meeting, and following that interview, they invited me to conduct interviews with their employees. This connection soon snowballed into other contacts. The significance of connecting in this way emerged later, when participants referenced my attendance at the church in justifying their readings of my religious identity.

Towards the end of the fieldwork, a Haven employee remarked that they believed that the faith-based organizations (implying both the founders and the other participants) would not have been as open in letting me access their organization if I had not also been a Christian. This comment led me to reevaluate the ways in which my religious background may have shaped both the research interactions and my interpretations of the field context.

With employees and volunteers of evangelical, faith-based RSTOs, I emphasized my own evangelical Christian identity and background in order to build rapport. This identity was advantageous for the research in several ways, for example, I am familiar with the scriptures referenced by participants in explaining their motivations, can implicitly understand many references to evangelical culture or political theology, and am able to make sense of the theological language and concepts employed in their explanations of faith-based motivations. While this background may have given me somewhat of an insider status with faith-based RTSO participants, I realized that this same identity would have a different effect with secular, government-funded resettlement agencies. The unease of many government-funded agency employees surrounding evangelical faith-based partners was palpable during interviews, and concerns about the role of aid and proselytization in evangelical resettlement efforts became a major theme in conversations with agency employees. This unease was reflected by agency employees' common interest in learning my personal opinion of Refugee Relief and Haven – did I think they were "legitimate"? Did I think they were doing good work? What did I think was their guiding ethos was? One agency employee in particular questioned me closely on why I had chosen Haven and Refugee Relief for my dissertation research – with all the other organizations in the city doing integration work, why would I chose two small and relatively unknown evangelical organizations (see explanation for selection in the Methods section of introductory

chapter)? Likewise, participants from faith-based RTSOs demonstrated asked me to share government-funded agencies' perception of their organizations – one remarked, "It may be interesting to see what she would say to you with us not in the room" (Interview, 01/14/2018).

It is also worth noting that not only my positionality in the field, but also my overall approach to the academic study of religion is shaped by my religious identity. I prioritize the meaning of religion and spirituality in my own life, and as a result, I began to pay close attention to participants' descriptions of their religion and spirituality during the fieldwork and data analysis process. My approach to the study of religion focuses on the ways in which individual attachments to and beliefs surrounding spirituality and religion transform and are personally transformative. My religiosity fosters a respect for the religiosity of others, and ultimately sparked an interest in faith-based organizations and religiosity that has become a focus in this dissertation (see Chapter III). However, this identity also presented certain difficulties during the fieldwork and into the analysis. For example, I could empathize with faith-based participants accounts of seeking ways to "live out" their faith while maintaining compliance with government-funded agencies' restrictions on "proselytization", narrowly defined. I took care to maintain fidelity in representing the beliefs of evangelical theology in explanations throughout the analysis, desiring that these be fully explained in the most complete manner possible.

However, I also found myself internally critiquing some responses of faith-based participants more harshly than I did those of the secular agency participants. When other participants expressed views that I as an individual considered concerning or problematic, those responses tended to bother me less than when an evangelical individual expressed a view that I personally perceive to be a wrong theological interpretation, or an uncharitable view. As I have my own theological positions in response to the issue of refugee resettlement, I hold positions on

the issue of immigration that informed academically, politically, and also by my own faith and religious views. As someone who identifies with the evangelical faith tradition, the reputation garnered by the group (particularly in the years since President Trump's election) chafes me on a personal level. I am vexed by those who identify as evangelicals and exhibit hostile positions towards immigration that I believe are morally wrong, particularly because, in my view, the Bible does not condone that hostility, and such reactions are asynchronous with the teachings of the Bible as a whole and the ethic embodied by the teachings of Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, I could also empathize with secular agencies' hesitancy, and even suspicion, of the faith motives of evangelical RTSOs; unfortunately, the history of faith-based efforts has been marred by coercion and even violence committed in the name of "sharing the Gospel", and I remained watchfully critical in my own evaluation of faith-based participants' accounts, on the lookout for anything problematic or troubling. Particularly, in the face of national, seemly hegemonic evangelical support for the administration's harsh policies against migrants and refugees, I too, maintained a critical stance in scrutinizing faith-based actors' activities, wondering if the political allegiance of participants aligned with their localized support of refugees.

I experienced the most social distance vis-à-vis refugee participants in terms of my position as a white, native English-speaking, American citizen. Differences in socio-economic class, gender, and my perceived association with the resettlement agencies all likely impacted interactions with refugee participants in complex and subtle ways. The social marginalization of many recently arrived refugees and potential for vulnerability increase the need for sensitivity in research encounters (for further considerations of such complex interactions with refugee participants, please see Chapter IV) (Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson 2011). Regardless, mere

sensitivity to or awareness of power dynamics in research encounters does not automatically overcome them. While researcher reflexivity is necessary to unpack the potential implications of researcher-participant encounters, there remains a "continuum between the researcher and the researched" (England 1994, 85) – in other words, no exercise in reflexivity can ever completely elucidate the complexities of these encounters. Moreover, an exhaustive review of all the potential categories of difference between researcher and researched implies that one could ultimately obtain complete understanding of the research encounter, thus implying a belief in one's own reflexive omnipotence (Matejskova 2014). Instead of taking an exhaustive approach to declaiming reflexivity, I recognize that I can never know everything about myself and how participants perceive me in the field, or why they may respond (or not) to me or the research as they do. Following Rose (1997), I admit that the goal of reflexivity is not to fully understand or control research encounters but rather to inscribe researcher practice with "some absences and fallibilities", recognizing that the significance of researcher positionality cannot be fully determined by the researcher alone (Rose 1997, 319).

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CHAPTER II: WHEN "SELF-SUFFICIENCY" IS NOT SUFFICIENT: REFUGEE INTEGRATION DISCOURSES OF U.S. RESETTLEMENT ACTORS AND THE OFFER OF REFUGE

Chapter II, in full, is currently being prepared for submission for publication of the material. The dissertation author was the primary investigator and author of this paper, and Dr. Micheline van Riemsdijk is the second author. The first author conducted the fieldwork research and analysis, and the second author supervised the data collection and analysis. Thus, this article is written in the first-person plural throughout.

Abstract

Resettlement in a third country is fundamental in the protection of displaced persons; yet the offer of refuge encompasses more than mere admission into a country. In the U.S., various resettlement organizations provide arrival services funded by the government; however, the program's ability to support long-term integration is restricted by an emphasis on economic self-sufficiency. Resettlement efforts are shaped by the integration discourses of multiple resettlement actors. This article explores the cooperative yet diverging roles of government-funded agencies and refugee "third sector" organizations (RTSOs) by examining three organizations in a southeastern U.S. city. Moving beyond government expectations of "self-sufficiency," RTSOs enact a more holistic vision of integration. They provide opportunities for contact between volunteers and refugees and place a premium on the formation of long-term relationships. However, in reality these organizations not only contest but also reproduce neoliberal perspectives on service provision, ultimately constraining possibilities for refugee integration.

Introduction

Worldwide, human displacement reached an unprecedented high in 2018 with 25.9 million refugees (UNHCR 2019). Identified as one of "three durable solutions," resettlement in a third country has long been considered a fundamental component in the protection of displaced persons. However, increased concerns about security, heightened politicization of migrants and refugees, and entrenched neoliberal political-economic ideologies are increasingly eroding the foundations of political asylum and the promise of resettlement across the Global North (Ehrkamp 2017).

Historically, the U.S. has resettled more refugees than any other country in the UN's third-country refugee resettlement program (Rose 2017). However, the offer of refuge is not merely constituted by admission to a country. Refugee resettlement in the U.S. comprises an array of services provided by a patchwork of resettlement actors, ranging from government-funded resettlement agencies to independent civil society organizations. This study focuses on two types of organizations operating in the U.S. resettlement context: 1) refugee resettlement agencies, i.e. government-funded organizations that provide initial arrival services, and 2) refugee third sector organizations (RTSOs), including both for- and non-profit organizations that provide support to resettled individuals without government funding (Mayblin and James 2019).

Understanding how the process of integration is shaped remains crucial in light of turbulent immigration politics in the United States and beyond. This paper conceives of integration as a multidirectional process that involves multiple actors, moving beyond approaches that characterize integration as a two-way exchange between immigrants and a "monolithic" host society (Strang and Ager 2010).While the importance of third sector actors in migration and refugee resettlement has been established (see Garkisch, Heidingsfelder, and

Beckmann 2017), little academic attention has been devoted to the roles of local organizations in the formation and circulation of subnational integration discourses. A study of third sector actors provides insights into the ways in which the host society adapts and responds towards migrants, and how integration can be both a mutual and multidimensional process.

Shaped by neoliberal economic and political norms, the U.S. resettlement system prioritizes early employment for refugees. It does not provide long-term support, nor does it address social or affective dimensions of integration (Ager and Strang 2008); thus, these services are insufficient to support lasting integration. The offer of refuge in the U.S. comprises multiple actors, yet is conditioned by a "broader, nationwide governmental logic" of integration informed by neoliberal goals. These discourses structure not only resettlement actors' ideals and expectations but also the local, everyday articulations of integration (Matejskova 2013, 23). To better understand this complexity, this paper explores the cooperative and divergent resettlement work and integration agendas of three resettlement organizations in a southeastern U.S. city – a government-funded resettlement agency (Refugee Relief), a for-profit property management company (Shelter), and a local non-profit faith-based organization (Haven)[2].

We analyze a case study of refugee resettlement in the U.S. to better understand how refugee integration works, drawing on 32 in-depth, semi-structured interviews and fieldnotes. This article pursues the following questions: How do government-funded and third sector organizations provide an offer of refuge in the United States? How do varying expectations for resettlement shape and condition ideals of refugee integration, and how do actors' conceptions of integration inform their resettlement work? We refer to these expectations, ideals, and

[2] All names of individuals and organizations have been replaced with pseudonyms, and the study site has been deidentified to protect the anonymity of participants as required by the ethical review board.

conceptions of "ideal" refugee integration as integration discourses. To answer these questions, we first review literature on refugee integration and social connection, then explain the structure and function of the U.S. resettlement system. We then trace the influence of neoliberal goals on the U.S. resettlement system and consider implications of this development for refugee integration. This is followed by an empirical analysis of resettlement actors in a city in the southeastern U.S.

Answering calls to examine factors that influence the ways in which the concept of integration is implemented in different contexts, we explore subnational integration discourses generated by resettlement actors (Strang and Ager 2010). Despite the established importance of RTSOs in resettlement, little is known about the relationships between RTSOs and government-funded resettlement agencies; this article contributes to that gap (Garkisch, Heidingsfelder, and Beckmann 2017). Building on the established importance of social connection for refugee integration (Ager and Strang 2008), we nuance understandings of the types and significance of social connection enabled through relationship-oriented services provided by resettlement actors.

Literature Review

Refugee Integration and Social Connection

The reception and incorporation of migrants have long been topics of interdisciplinary interest and debate among migration scholars. Where once theories of assimilation held sway, there now exists a panoply of terms to describe the processes of migrant settlement. In response to critiques of assimilation as a one-way concession in which migrants are expected to adapt to the receiving society, many scholars now prefer the term "integration", emphasizing that it is and should be a two-way process of exchange and adaption between immigrants and the host society (Korać 2003; Phillimore and Goodson 2008; Korteweg 2017). While assimilation has tended to refer

only to the cultural dimensions of adaption during settlement, the term "integration" shifts the analytical focus to include the host society, as well as other aspects of settlement and adaption such as social and economic achievement, health and wellbeing, and affective domains of settlement (Kappa 2019). The field of refugee studies has taken up similar questions, producing a sizeable body of literature investigating the settlement and integration of refugees (Korać 2003; Phillimore and Goodson 2008; Ager and Strang 2008; Smyth, Steward and Da Lomba 2010; Sunata and Tosun 2018).

Ager and Strang's (2008) seminal study identified employment, education, health, and housing as key components of integration. While refugees' achievements in these domains can be considered a "marker" of progress towards integration, intervention in these areas can also be a significant "means" of supporting integration. Additionally, their framework identified social connections and a sense of safety and stability as fundamental for integration at the local level. In this framework, social connection takes one of three forms: social bonds (connections linking members of a group), social bridges (connections between groups), and social links (connections between individuals and state institutions). Strang and Ager's (2010) updated concept of multidimensional integration highlights the centrality of relationships between migrants and members of the host society and emphasizes the importance of meaningful engagement for integration. Social connection across difference is essential to facilitating integration into a society; however, creating meaningful social connections is difficult and does not necessarily happen without intentional interventions (Daley 2007).

Several pertinent threads of scholarship address the significance and formation of social connections in multicultural societies. Valentine (2008) examines how social connection is formed across social difference, pointing out that contact with "others" does not necessarily

translate into respect for difference or significant relationship. However, "meaningful contact" can alter values and norms, and can cultivate positive feelings that translate into mutual respect and even care (Valentine 2008, 325). Other scholars theorize that this type of meaningful contact can only take place within the bounds of "community", conceptualized as a simultaneously imaginary and material practice of "being with" that can generate affective and emotional attachments across social difference (Neal et al. 2019, 78). Such a relational understanding of community emphasizes the ways in which social relations are performed, practiced, embodied, and transgressed (Botterill 2018). Ager and Strang (2008) analyze the significance of social bonds, bridges, and links for refugee integration; however, we attempt to complicate such neat divisions by demonstrating the confluence of social connections with actors across groups and in multiple institutional positionings. Employing concepts of relational community and meaningful contact, we advance conceptualization of the types and significance of social contact for refugee integration through an examination of three actors in the U.S. resettlement context.

Recent scholarship has pointed to the temporal, continual, and gradual aspects of refugee integration (Smyth, Stewart, Da Lomba 2010; Strang and Ager 2010). Some view integration as a goal-oriented process that begins at arrival and ends when refugees achieve "an equal position" to the majority population (Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 309), while others see integration as a progression with no clear conclusion. Scholars assert the importance of integration as a process of mutual accommodation in which host country individuals and institutions must participate—not only the refugees (Korać 2003; Phillimore and Goodson 2008). Integration also takes place across geographic, spatial, and experiential scales, from the national level to experiences in local places and individual bodies (Nagel 2002; Smyth, Stewart, and Da Lomba 2010). Integration is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon, shaped by overlapping influences with

cumulative effects across structural, social, and personal levels (Strang and Ager 2010; Kappa 2019).

Understandings of and expectations for refugee integration differ between country contexts. Societal discourses surrounding integration often construct refugees (implicitly or explicitly) as "different" from citizens and in need of integration to become more like the majority, according to dominant norms and implicit social values (Dahinden 2016, 2209). A society's expectations for integration are shaped by national notions of citizenship (Ager and Strang 2008), geopolitical concerns (Nagel 2002), dominant economic regimes (Strang and Ager 2010; Korteweg 2017), and the interests and values of different societal actors (Kappa 2019). These normative conventions influence the formation, implementation, and eventual outcomes of integration policies. Beyond official policies, these discourses also shape deeper understandings of the expected responsibilities of both refugees and host society actors in the process of integration.

However, as host societies are not homogeneous, neither are the notions of integration which circulate within a society. Current theories of refugee integration recognize host society complexity yet have not sufficiently analyzed this heterogeneity; understanding the work of host society actors in producing different discourses of integration contributes to more nuanced conceptualizations of host societies (Matejskova 2013). While integration discourses have been analyzed at the level of the nation-state, less academic attention has been directed at local resettlement actors' visions of integration. A diverse array of private and public actors animates the receiving society and resettlement context, composed of a variety of groups, organizations, and individual actors that provide services to resettled individuals. Resettlement actors may hold different goals and expectations for refugee integration which in turn inform the discourses and

practices of these organizations. This article seeks to nuance understandings of refugee resettlement and integration through examining resettlement actors' roles and integration discourses in the U.S. context.

The institutional environment of a receiving society constrains and shapes the work of resettlement actors, and so must be considered in accounts of integration (Smyth, Stewart and De Lomba 2010). In the U.S., welfare state restructuring has led to the rise of the "shadow state", a "constellation of nongovernmental organizations…tasked with providing state-funded social welfare programs that remain under state control" (Trudeau 2012, 444). Federally-funded, local refugee resettlement agencies participate in this shadow state apparatus, delivering services to newly arrived individuals and shaping possibilities for social integration. These resettlement agencies "translate" the integration policy agendas of the federal government into everyday realities at the state and local level, shaping the parameters of resettlement and the experiences of resettled individuals (Trudeau and Veronis 2009). However, local agencies can negotiate and subtly resist federal agendas with their own priorities for resettlement, thus shaping the process of integration in localized, context-specific ways (Trudeau 2012, 443). Consequently, the study of these local contexts is critical to understanding the formation and circulation of subnational integration discourses.

In addition to the work of government-funded resettlement agencies, refugee third sector organizations (RTSOs) have long played a crucial role in the resettlement of refugees and formation of social connections (Mayblin and James 2019). In many resettlement countries, an array of civil society initiatives have emerged to foster relationships between local volunteers and newly arrived refugees (Sunata and Tosun 2018). RTSO initiatives such as conversation clubs, mentorship programs, and befriending schemes (Behnia 2007; Askins 2016; Kappa 2019)

have the potential to foster integration and relationships through the development of affective bonds, and can enable refugee participation in various domains of society (Ives, Sinha and Cnaan 2010; Askins 2016). However, efforts at establishing social connection are complex, and cannot be separated from the power dynamics inherent to organizational involvement in refugee resettlement (Erickson 2012). Issues of trust (Behnia 2007), mental health and past trauma (Konle-Seidl and Bolitz 2016), and individual agency all factor into refugee individuals' interest in participation and willingness or ability to invest in social connections. This analysis develops understandings of social integration in refugee resettlement by exploring the formation of relationships among individuals and voluntary, non-state actors involved in resettlement.

History and Structure of the U.S. Resettlement Program

In the post-WWII period, the United States began resettling refugees in response to mass displacement in Europe. Throughout the early 20th century, resettlement was largely the work of loosely affiliated nongovernmental agencies (NGOs) assembled in reaction to ongoing displacement events (Brown and Scribner 2014). The Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980 formally initiated the modern federal resettlement and service program, explicitly shifting authority from the newly created federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to the individual states and assorted local agencies (Benson 2016). Since passage of the Act, the U.S. has resettled more than 3 million refugees through contracts with nine national-level voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) (Morken and Skop 2017). The Act not only guaranteed federal support to help refugees transition economically to the U.S., but it also "positions refugees as dependents of the state", a position Nawyn (2011) identifies as precarious in the face of negative public opinion regarding welfare dependence (681).

The federal Reception and Placement Program (RPP) is administered by VOLAGS through partnerships with local resettlement agencies. The latter provide essential services such as housing, clothing, food, medical and social services during refugees' first 30 days in the U.S. The core goal of U.S. resettlement policy is for refugees to become self-sufficient within 90 days (Morken and Skop 2017); however, a narrow focus on early employment limits the value placed on other important aspects of integration (Brown and Scribner 2014). Though government-funded resettlement agencies play a significant role by connecting refugees to necessary services, providing housing, and fostering social connection in a locality (Behnia 2007), RTSOs fill crucial gaps in meeting the needs of new arrivals (Sunata and Tosun 2018). Moreover, government-funded agencies' ability to resettle refugees differs depending on such factors as the organizations' size and city context, unevenly shaping potential outcomes for long-term integration of resettled individuals (Morken and Skop 2017). For refugees without U.S. ties, integration support hinges solely on the capacities of local agencies and civil society (Ives, Sinha and Cnaan 2010). The context of local resettlement thus shapes and constrains the experiences and outcomes of integration for resettled refugees, contributing to a so-called "lottery effect" in resettlement due to differing levels of financial assistance, services, and community capacity or attitude towards resettlement (Bruno 2011, 19).

A Neoliberal Definition of Refuge

The passage of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980 coincided directly with the rise of neoliberalism as an economic and political ideology in the U.S. Neoliberalism is characterized by privatization, devolution of state authority, and the extension of market principles, economic rationales, and outcome-oriented metrics to social and cultural phenomena (Besteman 2016; Benson 2016). The Act established the modern resettlement program and imbued the system

with neoliberal ideological influence, evidenced by the contractualization of non-profits and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), dependence on volunteers, emphasis on refugee employment and self-sufficiency, decreases in welfare funding and limited federal responsibility for refugee integration outcomes (Nawyn 2011). Resettlement services are outsourced to NGOs, and the federal government dispenses resources on the basis of quantifiable local needs and outcomes in line with economic expectations of self-sufficiency (Besteman 2016; Benson 2016).

In refugee resettlement policy, governments make explicit the expectations, rights, and desired outcomes for "ideal" citizens (Grace, Nawyn, and Okwako 2017). Ong (2003) argues that within the U.S. resettlement system, citizenship is defined in economic terms, and individuals are expected "to reduce their burden on society and build up their human capital" to become an asset to the society (14). The government's emphasis on early employment seeks to limit the welfare dependency of resettled individuals and create economically "good" citizens in line with prevalent neoliberal logics (Erickson 2012). Ironically, refugees must present themselves as deserving and grateful recipients of charity to receive resettlement assistance but are expected to become economically independent and productive within 90 days with minimal support (Besteman 2016). In this system, the offer of refuge is characterized by a "sink or swim attitude... steeped in economic rationalities and valuations" (Besteman 2016, 137). This "neoliberal calculus" defines economic production as the only quantification of success and human worth, and inevitably holds up individual autonomy and American-style consumption as desirable goals (Trudeau 2012; Besteman 2016, 167). Besteman (2016) observes that given these circumstances, the offer of refuge in the U.S. is actually "defined only by geography," meaning that the U.S. will provide a "relatively safe physical environment in which refugees can attempt, with little assistance" to create a new future (135). This neoliberal definition of refuge has

profound consequences for the experiences of refugees, and the outcomes that are possible in such a system.

Study Background

This study was conducted in a mid-size city in the southeastern U.S. A self-proclaimed "welcoming city", this municipality has resettled refugees since the 1970s. Located in a Wilson-Fish[3] state, this city is home to two large resettlement agencies, and the State Office for Refugees (SOR) which oversees resettlement activities and dispenses funding to local resettlement sites. Historically, the resettlement capacity of both agencies has been comparable in terms of resettled population composition, arrival numbers, and agency staff size.

Both Shelter and Haven were established in response to perceived needs regarding refugee resettlement in the city. Formed in 2015, Haven is a non-profit, interchurch organization dedicated to coordinating the volunteer efforts of evangelical churches sympathetic to refugee resettlement. As arrivals increased under the Obama administration, the organization expanded programs for resettled refugees, offering English and citizenship classes. Haven's "welcome teams" program matches American families and individuals with refugees to provide additional support.

Shelter is a for-profit property management company that works closely with local resettlement agencies to provide housing for newly arrived refugees. Shelter is the brainchild of two local businessmen who had previously volunteered with resettled refugee families; noting that housing is a prominent issue in resettlement, they sought to create a business that could

[3] The Wilson-Fish Program allows U.S. state governments to contract their responsibility for refugee resettlement out to a specific NGO. In Wilson-Fish states, all resettlement activities within the state are overseen by the NGO operating on behalf of the state, but outside of the state government.

provide quality housing for refugees alongside "relationship-oriented" property management. This business model generates opportunities for contact between Americans and refugees in an effort to foster interpersonal relationships and promote integration. Their Resident Manager program places Shelter employees in apartment buildings to live alongside refugees and provide on-site assistance for resettled tenants. Resident Managers respond to minor maintenance requests, collect rent in person, and remain on-call for any additional needs. Shelter recruits Americans to live, voluntarily dispersed, in their apartments to create opportunities for contact in the neighborhood. Shelter also records tenants' payments to help build credit, as refugees arrive without a credit history[4].

Despite the different emphases of these two organizations, a close partnership evolved between these RTSOs and the local resettlement agencies. Describing the area where Shelter operates, one volunteer reflected:

> …The apartments were full of drug addicts, crack houses, all kinds of stuff. [The resettlement agencies] realized that was a neighborhood area where they could start putting in a lot of refugees… Shelter came in and started buying those, and making them a little bit more habitable. …It's been really nice to have Shelter…they saw an area of need and capitalized on it, knowing what they were doing (08/15/2018).

To the RTSOs, this expanded collaboration seemed like a natural fit. A worker explained, "… [the resettlement agency] is providing the caseworker and the furniture. Haven is supplying

[4] Building a credit history creates an economic record for resettled refugees. In the U.S., a credit history and good credit score is necessary for an array of tasks, i.e. to independently lease apartments, receive bank loans, buy cars, open credit card accounts, or subscribe to cable TV or phone service.

…volunteer teams to partner and move them in to Shelter apartment. That's like, one, two, three" (08/08/2018). Resettlement agencies procure and furnish the Shelter apartments where refugees are placed on arrival, and Haven matches arriving refugee families with a "welcome team" that partners with their caseworker to coordinate transportation and initial appointments, and provides tutoring, advice, and general support.

These three organizations developed their collaboration over time as arrival numbers continued to increase during the Obama administration, and public awareness of the so-called "refugee crisis" galvanized public support for resettlement. The director of Haven described the partnership this way:

> …It's progressed over time from being just an idea, to where they [resettlement agencies] realized, and we realized, this is just going to work better if we bring it together (08/16/2018).

One Resident Manager summed up Shelter and Haven's joint efforts to provide housing and available support:

> It's just a type of service that these refugees don't get, a lot of them are put into slumlord locations when they get to the States, and this is kind of a breath of fresh air for them…we want them to succeed. We want to help them in that transition, whether it's reading…their mail for them, or during that, [explaining] any kinds of misconceptions. (08/16/2018)

Shelter's high-quality housing services and relationship-oriented integration efforts earned a favorable reputation with local resettlement agencies. Through responsive property management, their Resident Manager model, and enhanced collaboration with Haven, Shelter

could both provide both quality housing for refugees and an avenue for further volunteer involvement. One of the founders described the role of Shelter as:

> …Building a 'table' in the city, where refugees come and sit down, and we can invite other people in the city…who want to help refugees to come and sit down as well. And that 'table', in our context, is an apartment complex (06/29/2017).

Methods

This article draws on empirical data collected during fieldwork conducted between June 2017 – August 2018. During the research, the first author conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 32 employees and volunteers of the State Office for Refugees (SOR), one government-funded resettlement agency (Refugee Relief), and two RTSOs (Shelter and Haven). The first author contacted two government-funded resettlement agencies to request permission to conduct research. One organization declined to participate in any capacity; thus, the first author established contact exclusively with the other resettlement agency (Refugee Relief). During the pilot phase, the first author investigated key organizational partners of this agency and thus identified the organizations Shelter and Haven. All participants were recruited via purposive, snowball sampling.

After participants consented to the research, interviews were conducted in English, recorded with a digital voice recorder, and later transcribed. Interviews focused on the "everyday practices as well as different meanings and imaginaries of what integration entails," including the structure and mission of the organizations, their role in the provision of services, interactions, and relationships with resettled individuals, and their perceptions of the local, national, and political contexts in which refugee resettlement operates (Matejskova 2013, 21). The first author also conducted extensive participant observation during cultural and work orientations offered by

the resettlement agency. After all interviews and field notes were transcribed, data was coded via an open coding method (Vogt et al. 2014). Examples of initial codes included definitions of integration, services provided by organizations, motivations of resettlement actors, and roles within the resettlement context.

Results and Discussion

Employees and volunteers in resettlement agencies and RTSOs both commented on the extent to which their services were (or were not) perceived to be effective and sufficient in supporting refugee integration. These reflections were closely related to notions of "ideal" integration and the perceived responsibilities of resettlement. We argue that potential outcomes for refugee integration are in part conditioned by the integration discourses and related actions of resettlement actors. Beyond the government-funded expectations of economic self-sufficiency, RTSO actors offer an expansive definition of refuge and a compassionate, more holistic vision of refugee integration including long-term support and social connection; however, these same actors both contest and reproduce dominant neoliberal narratives which ultimately constrain the possibilities for resettlement. In the following sections, we first examine the narratives and perspectives of government-funded service providers (The State Office and Refugee Relief), and then turn to those of the RTSOs (Shelter and Haven).

Government-funded Agencies: The State Office of Refugees and Refugee Relief

Local government-funded resettlement agencies, overseen by state resettlement offices, receive funding from the federal government to provide arrival services; this funding is tied to federal expectations emphasizing economic self-sufficiency. While discussing their work, resettlement agency employees acknowledged that the notion of "self-sufficiency," economically defined,

provides a constrained vision of resettlement that neglects other fundamental domains of integration such as social connection (Nawyn 2011).

On its face, the stated goal of "self-sufficiency" implies a desirable level of general competency and independence for resettled refugees. In practice, however, self-sufficiency is defined as early employment and freedom from welfare dependence. One resettlement worker cut to the core of the issue, explaining:

> The government defines it, just self-sufficiency, as people who are no longer dependent on cash assistance… like how soon people get off cash assistance and how soon then they go to work (01/09/2018).

Federal monies support limited assistance for recently arrived individuals, though this dependence is conflated with the neoliberal impulse to pathologize individual dependence on the state (Nawyn 2011; Erickson 2012).

The services offered by government-funded resettlement agencies vary between locales based on the size and capacity of an agency's staff; however, all agencies are responsible for basic resettlement services including housing, cultural orientation, initial language training, and connection to relevant welfare programs. According to the federal government, the most important of these early services is helping clients to find and retain jobs. Describing the goal of these initial settlement services, one case worker explained: "All those…orientations… the goal is to get them as rapidly learning English as possible, because they are going to work really soon" (06/26/2017). Other elements of support such as language-learning and cultural orientation are acceptable inasmuch as they support goals for early employment.

Government-funded resettlement agencies and state resettlement offices are accountable for monitoring and reporting resettlement statistics to the federal government, reflecting the

outcome-based orientation of neoliberalism (Grace, Nawyn, and Okwako 2017). Though state monies are used for a variety of arrival services, agencies' work is ultimately evaluated, valued, and measured by their clients' employment metrics. An employee of the state resettlement office explained the impetus of federal funding:

> …All the goals that we give to the government, and goal of the program, is self-sufficiency and employment. All the funds are like a regulated thing, saying the main thing we should be doing with these funds are employment-based (01/09/2018).

All other services that an agency offers must ultimately be justified by how they contribute to "removing barriers to employment" (01/09/2018).

The brevity of resettlement services is consistently listed as an obstacle to supporting more comprehensive integration. One agency employee explained: "Integration's a lot more than just the first 90 days of arrival, which is where most people get most of their support." This individual suggested that even though the information provided upon arrival is comprehensive, "Most people don't remember their first 90 days" (08/13/2018). Another employee remarked that though arrival services "have the potential" to facilitate more comprehensive integration, "people aren't able to participate in those services long enough to get there." Progress in some spheres is in competition with achievement in others:

> There's a lot of work going on in resettlement agencies – that's just the way it's designed… When someone goes to work, they don't have time to continue English classes (01/09/2018).

This requirement places most individuals at a disadvantage, as caseworkers' time and program funding are limited. Under the current system, comprehensive and early "self-sufficiency" is

only achievable for "the rarest of people" who have completed a degree and/or are fluent in English upon arrival (06/26/2017). As it currently stands, the U.S. resettlement program does not provide sufficient support across key domains such as development of social connection, furthering education, enabling effective transportation, or caring for mental health or trauma to help resettled refugees achieve integration (Strang and Ager 2010). Overall, it is unable to provide longitudinal support, and even often falls short of its own stated goal of economic self-sufficiency.

Despite the clear employment-oriented goal of government-funded services, agency employees have an expanded vision of what integration should look like. Employees of the resettlement agency and state office alike acknowledge that existing services are not enough to support the long-term integration of refugees and desired outcomes for clients (Nawyn 2011) They desire fully-supported integration initiatives that contest the dominant neoliberal narrative, but acknowledge that the resettlement system in its current form cannot achieve this expanded notion of refuge. In other ways, their expectations reproduce institutional constraints by reinforcing the centrality of employment as the dominant goal for integration.

Individually, employees offer a vision of integration which includes the practical, social, and affective domains of integration (Ager and Strang 2008). Contrasting the government-mandated reporting outcomes with her own standard of what integration should look like, one employee explained:

> The federal government isn't looking at indicators of integration, rather it's looking at, are they getting any cash, and are they working? I think true self-sufficiency is a lot more like, are they acculturated to the society? Can they

> navigate their home? Do they feel welcome here? Are they comfortable, like, not just, 'Are they working'? (01/09/2018).

This example reflects employees' concern for the affective and social domains of refugees' resettlement experience. Another employee observed that integration cannot be achieved by the efforts of government-funded actors and refugees alone:

> Fifty percent of [integration] is not on the shoulders of the people that are moving here…it looks like a welcoming community, it looks like multilingual options on the bus, it looks like multilingual staff at apartment complexes. It looks like…news that's representative of the full community and music…on the radio (08/13/2018).

By referencing the role of the broader community in the process of integration, this definition contests the implicit bias in notions of economic self-sufficiency, which places the onus of resettlement on the refugees themselves. Rather, this definition reflects a multidirectional understanding of integration that involves not just resettlement agencies, RTSOs, and refugees, but also institutions across the host society (Phillimore and Goodson 2008).

While many agency employees challenged employment-oriented definitions of self-sufficiency, they nevertheless emphasized that independence was important, arguing that a measure of self-reliance fosters positive affective and practical outcomes:

> …The benefits of having English, just to get ahead in your job, and to feel independent, that you don't have to rely on anybody else… I think honestly, having your basic needs met can create such a level of confidence and capability and belonging, if you have a safe place to live, and you can feed your family (08/13/2018).

In this example, the participant construes employment as the foundation of long-term integration, from which a basic level of comfort and safety can be achieved. Although agency employees desire to support holistic integration, they continue to idealize independence and self-sufficiency as an ideal condition, a defining hallmark of American neoliberalism (Trudeau 2012).

As agency employees produce dissonant integration discourses, government-funded agencies likewise negotiate their intermediate role in the shadow state as "translators" of government agendas (Trudeau and Veronis 2009). An employee of the state office for refugees explains this negotiation:

> What we monitor and report on to the federal government…are our employment numbers. …But us individually, as office, as a separate thing, how we view down… if we're 'talking up', it's employment. When we're 'talking down', we are looking at all of those components…and trying to justify those using the employment terms about it. If somebody has their mental health cared for, they can get a job, they can get off government benefits, and they can take care of their family - so kind of, employment (08/13/2018).

This employee demonstrates how state offices "inflect" federal resettlement agendas with other priorities, shaping their mandate to reflect local needs (Trudeau 2012, 443).

Overall, individuals in this sector acknowledge the limitations of the government-funded policy agenda for economic self-sufficiency, and wistfully envision a version of settlement that fully provides support for integration across the practical, social, and affective spheres of experience. However, they likewise reproduce neoliberal emphases on individual independence and occupy a tenuous position between "talking up" and "talking down".

Refugee Third Sector Organizations: Shelter and Haven

Volunteers and employees of refugee third sector organizations (RTSOs) shared their visions for integration alongside perceived gaps in government-funded services. These actors narrate their involvement in resettlement as "filling the gaps" in order to achieve a more holistic version of resettlement, refuge, and welcome which includes long-term support, fostering relationships, and developing community. While employees and volunteers engaged with third sector resettlement efforts generally praise the accomplishments of the resettlement agencies, they recognize that the government-funded services cannot meet all needs of newly arrived individuals. By supplementing government-funded services, these organizations expand the boundaries of refuge offered by U.S. resettlement (Besteman 2016), simultaneously contesting yet reproducing neoliberal expectations for economic productivity (Grace, Nawyn, and Okwako 2017).

Employees and volunteers from Shelter and Haven conceive of their work in resettlement as supplementary to government-funded services, targeted beyond early economic "self-sufficiency" (Sunata and Tosun 2018). Haven volunteers discussed how they shouldered duties untended by resettlement agencies:

> We're almost an extension of [RA], because we've been helping with rides to the doctors and reading mail and homework for the kids and taking them to the emergency room, different things like that. We're actually helping those case workers by continuing the care of the people here, because they can only do that for so long and then they need to move on to the next group of people that are coming in (06/30/2017).

RTSO actors emphasized that resettled refugees need more than just language help or better employment options. While RTSOs "continue the care" for resettled individuals, their main goal is to facilitate the development of relationships which they argue is crucial for successful resettlement. A Haven employee explained:

> You can have good development programs, the best ESL program in the world, that's going to help a lot of people – fantastic…We need all these things, and they're great. But for long-term sustainability, people need community, and the only way you can have community is relationship (08/16/2018).

By redefining the long-term need of refugees as "relationship," these actors frame their work as providing more than just services, moving beyond the capacity of what resettlement agencies could offer. This emphasis on relationship reveals these organizations' conviction that social connection is a key to long-term integration (Strang and Ager 2010). Yet despite acknowledging the gaps in initial services, RTSO actors move to fill these openings with "relationship" or "community" instead of advocating that the state provide more or better services (Erickson 2012). In this view, RTSOs "plug" rather than "fill" gaps in any substantive way, leaving inequalities and problems in the resettlement system unchanged and unchallenged (Sunata and Tosun 2018, 3).

RTSO actors believe that individuals will succeed through developing a community, the motivating factor behind their efforts to foster relationships (Neal et al. 2019). Community is described as a mutual, two-way exchange and formation of relationships between resettled refugees and American citizens (Botterill 2018). A Shelter employee explains their narrative of community and mutual adaption:

> So when we say community…mainly friendships between refugees and Americans, the hope that refugees would be integrated more into an American culture and that it would be successful for them. And for the Americans just to know that these are real people, who have real lives, and real struggles…So that's kind of what we mean by community (06/29/2017).

This account demonstrates the reciprocal understanding of relationships held by the RTSOs, a vision which reflects the two-way and mutual processes of adaption necessary for integration (Ager and Strang 2008). A Shelter employee explained:

> We think that relationship and friendship is the hinge on which success or failure will happen. And so we're trying to introduce them to friends who will walk alongside them and help them successfully integrate into American culture (06/29/2017).

In hopes of developing relationships between volunteers, employees, and refugees, Shelter and Haven create opportunities for contact. One Shelter Resident Manager explains, "With housing, I'm meeting a critical need, and when I'm interacting with these tenants, I'm in their homes…it just creates a lot of opportunity for organic conversation and relationship" (08/16/2018). Other volunteers recount examples of spontaneous friendship through everyday trips to the store, shared meals, and gestures of mutual assistance attesting to the emergence of reciprocal relationships between refugees and RTSO individuals. For example, a volunteer drinks tea and helps to translate the day's mail with a refugee neighbor each afternoon; one day, she was focused on the translation and looked up to realize her neighbor had put the volunteer's baby down for a nap. Such positive examples notwithstanding, this type of social "intergroup

contact" may be stressful for minority groups, and the same types of encounters "may be read and experienced very differently" by refugees and RTSO volunteers (Valentine 2008, 332).

Despite emphasis on relationship and holistic integration, RTSO participants also reproduce a vision of independence for refugees in line with neoliberal norms, as "expectations for self-sufficiency creep into the rhetorical strategies" of these organizations (Nawyn 2011, 680). These aspirations are contingent upon refugees achieving independence and taking charge of their own lives. One Haven employee explained:

> We don't want to build a dependency. …what we don't want is, this is where we just take care of all your problems and you don't have to be accountable…that's not what we're trying to do…What we want to do is say, 'Let us help you to be sustainable, and to make that transition' (08/16/2018).

One volunteer mused:

> How do I help someone become self-sufficient? …We teach them to drive and then we encourage them to get a car. We've started putting a limit on if they have the capacity to drive and to get a car, we'll stop taking them places (08/15/2018).

While avoiding dependence and making contributions are important for building self-esteem after resettlement (Strang and Ager 2010), in these examples, RTSOs position themselves as uniquely capable to judge "independence," not refugees themselves. Already, the discursive context of refugee resettlement positions refugees as victims and depreciates their own agency regarding initial settlement decisions (Nawyn 2011). While encounters between RSTO individuals and resettled refugees may afford opportunities for the development of relationships and support long-term social integration, they do little to destabilize dominant neoliberal

narratives or undermine top-down, patronizing tendencies which discount the agency of resettled individuals to self-determine their own level of sufficiency.

Such problematic tendencies notwithstanding, these RTSOs are expanding the definition of refuge from the services offered by the state into a comprehensive and compassionately oriented experience through offers of assistance, providing opportunities for contact between volunteers and refugees, and placing a premium on the formation of long-term relationships. Here, the offer of refuge is defined not only by "geography" but by the labor of RTSOs (Besteman 2016).

Conclusion

The long-term integration of refugees is a complex and multi-faceted process, as reflected in our empirical findings. While government-funded actors provide funding and employment-oriented services for the first 90 days, refugee third sector organizations provide essential services that extend beyond the initial job search. Having presented the (idealized) narratives of resettlement actors above, we present three critical reflections on this system.

First, the devolution of resettlement responsibilities from the government to third sector organizations contributes to an uneven landscape of service provision and undermines the potential for positive integration outcomes. Whether the crucial needs of resettled refugees are met or not depends strongly upon the ability and willingness of third sector organizations to act. Moreover, when the offer of refuge is contingent upon the efforts of third sector organizations in local contexts, long-term support for integration is not a right but a coincidence. The existing support aimed at economic self-sufficiency rings hollow, cheapens the foundations of protection

upon which the global resettlement system is predicated, and belies the United States' alleged humanitarian commitments.

Second, both government-funded resettlement agencies and RTSOs rely heavily on volunteers. With the current politicization of asylum seekers and refugees and the related media attention, volunteers are in high supply. But with diminishing media attention—and the possibility of waning volunteer commitment over time—this dependence is not sustainable in the long run. Additionally, as RTSOs operate independently, they are not contractually obligated to provide services. Such variability has the potential to re-open the systemic "gaps" that are currently filled by RTSOs if an organization were to disband or cease its service, rendering the recipients of these services without long-term support and increasing their precarity.

Third, there is a potential for coercion in RTSO programs. When volunteers aim to forge friendships with refugees, it is not given that refugees enrolled in these programs are willing and/or able to reciprocate. Thus, power inequalities are inherent in these relationships, and "contact" and friendship may not necessarily be possible. Far from assuming that "contact" and relationship is automatically positive, we temper our examination with the recognition that such encounters "never take place in a space free from history, material conditions, and power," all of which inevitably complicate social connections (Valentine 2008, 333). Likewise, the extent to which positive social connections at the local level can be scaled up to broader agendas for long-term integration is unclear (Valentine 2008). Many RTSOs are faith-based; the motivations and impacts of such involvement require further study (Mayblin and James 2019). Likewise, volunteers may not be well-trained in cross-cultural engagements laden with power inequalities, despite their compassionate intentions (Erickson 2012).

In order to address the issues above, we recommend further studies of RTSO roles in refugee integration from the perspective of the refugees themselves (Strang and Ager 2010). What are refugees' experiences with integration, how do they experience the initiatives of government- and third sector organizations, and how do they negotiate the integration process? While these questions are outside the scope of this article, these perspectives are crucial to give agency to refugees (Ehrkamp 2017). Further investigation of faith-based RTSOs is also merited to understand how responses to refugee resettlement may be informed by religiosity. Overall, the U.S. program's support for "self-sufficiency" is insufficient to effectively undergird refugee integration. As a result, the offer of refuge is circumscribed, reflecting variable integration discourses and primarily dependent on the effort and capabilities of RTSOs. We call for further research to understand the implications of this arrangement for refugee integration.

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CHAPTER III: UNDERSTANDING "FAITH" IN FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS: VOLUNTEERISM AS RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN U.S. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Abstract

Though the U.S. has historically accepted more refugees than any other country, the Trump administration has opposed resettlement and reduced national admission quotas. While these changes have been broadly supported by conservative, evangelical voters, others have publicly challenged the administration's decisions. This dissent is also evident in the expanding involvement of evangelical, faith-based actors in refugee resettlement. Drawing on a case study of two faith-based refugee "third sector" organizations in a southeastern U.S. city, this paper addresses the role of faith-based organizations, employees, and volunteers operating in the U.S. resettlement context. It examines how faith informs the resettlement work of these organizations and how individuals involved with these organizations understand, perform, and reinterpret their faith through their volunteerism. This article advances understandings of faith-based volunteerism; from the perspective of volunteers, resettlement work is an everyday form of religious practice, demonstrating that the "sacred" is not limited to certain spaces, places, or institutions, but rather can be carried out in the spaces of everyday life. Evangelical faith-based involvement is mobilized by inclusive theologies and Biblical commands to care for the stranger; however, encounters between refugees and faith-based service providers are complex, and meanings of this faith-based involvement are not well understood.

Introduction

The United States has a long history of welcoming refugees, having accepted more people through the UN-sponsored third-country resettlement program than any other country (Rose 2017). However, widespread concerns about migration and terrorism following the 2015 Paris attack catalyzed debates over refugee resettlement and security in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Once elected, President Donald Trump began to fulfill controversial campaign promises, initially suspending the refugee resettlement program via executive order and slashing admission quotas to the lowest set since 1980.

White evangelical Christians comprised a key electoral constituency for President Trump, and his administration has continued to receive broad support from the white evangelical Christian establishment (Schwadel and Smith 2019). While many continue to support the President's restrictive policies on immigration and oppose refugee admissions (Hartig 2018), some evangelical leaders have challenged the administration's actions, employing biblical arguments in support of refugee resettlement (Newman 2018). Despite this heterogeneity, sixty-eight percent of white evangelical Protestants believe the U.S. has no responsibility to accept refugees (Hartig 2018), and reports suggest that as a whole, "lay evangelicals are broadly opposed to allowing refugees to enter the country" (Newman 2018). At the same time, seventy percent of all refugees resettled in the U.S. receive services from faith-based organizations; without the involvement of faith-based groups, the U.S. resettlement program would "be impossible on the scale it exists today" (Eby et al. 2011, 587). Amidst raging national debates and broad evangelical opposition to refugee admissions, evangelical faith-based organizations across the country have increased their efforts to resettle and care for refugees (Morgan 2016). I argue that this plurality of response can be explained not just by variations in political opinion,

but also by the ways in which individual evangelicals deploy individual "theographies," defined as the reflexive process by which religious subjects make sense of their theologies (doctrinal knowledge plus affective experience of the supernatural) through religious praxis (Sutherland 2017). These differently located theographies in turn manifest divergent outcomes in religious and political praxis (Sutherland 2017).

Geographers of religion have studied political behaviors of religiously identified groups but have only recently begun to deconstruct broad religious categories in understanding these phenomena (Sutherland 2017). Likewise, geographers have contributed concepts of space, place, and institutions to the theorization of religion; however, recent scholarship has demonstrated that the "sacred" is not limited to spaces or places traditionally conceptualized as religious, but is carried out in the spaces of everyday life (Denning 2019). New analytical tools in the geographies of religion can help unpack supposed homogeneous religious identities, make sense of nuanced religious subjectivities, and account for divergent displays of faith praxis in the face of homogenizing forces. One such approach attends to the embodied, negotiated, and everyday manifestations of religious practice through a focus on "theography." Following Sutherland (2017), this paper recognizes that religion is not a static or homogeneous identity but is instead constituted by spatially situated, individual negotiations of theology and experience manifested through praxis.

This study focuses on the work of faith-based, non-state resettlement organizations in a southeastern U.S. city. To best reflect the diversity of non-state organizations involved in refugee resettlement in the U.S., I adopt the term "refugee third sector organizations (RTSOs)" to designate any organization, both for- and non- profit, which primarily focuses on supporting resettled refugees and which does not receive government funding (Mayblin and James 2019).

Drawing on 32 in-depth, semi-structured interviews and fieldnotes, I pursue the following questions: How do theology and religious identity inform the resettlement initiatives of faith-based RTSOs? How do employees and volunteers of these faith-based organizations understand, perform, and negotiate their faith through volunteerism in refugee resettlement with faith-based organizations – in other words, how do these individuals "do theography"?

Answering calls to "develop insights into the internal dynamics and practical outworkings of faith-based actors" in refugee resettlement (Wilson 2011, 560), I first examine the practices and motivations of two evangelically-affiliated, faith-based refugee third sector organizations to understand and consider the impact of their distinguishing religious characteristics – the "faith factor" (Bielefeld and Cleveland 2013, 461). Bringing together literatures on refugee third sector organizations in the U.S. and the geographies of religion, I seek to understand how people make sense of and enact reflexive praxis (theography) through faith-based volunteerism. This article contributes to conceptualizations of religion and the "sacred" as not limited to certain spaces, places, or institutions, but rather as carried out in the spaces of everyday life, like volunteerism (Denning 2019). Through a focus on evangelical involvement in U.S. refugee resettlement, this paper aims to advance understandings of faith-based RTSOs in refugee resettlement. From the perspective of evangelical volunteers in refugee resettlement, I show how volunteerism can be understood as "more-than" the act of service itself (Denning 2019, 7); for religiously motivated individuals, resettlement work is also religious performance and an enactment of faith practice beyond the words of a liturgy or the walls of a church building. For these individuals, resettlement work constitutes an everyday "site of religious practice beyond the 'officially sacred'" (Kong 2010, 756). This article advances geographic scholarship on individual religious subjectivities through an examination of religious volunteers,

and contributes to a growing literature on faith-based engagement with immigration in the U.S. South.

Literature Review

Geographies of Religion

Geographers have generated a growing body of work on the religious and the sacred, a departure from the "modernist academic gaze" and taken-for-granted secularism of decades past (Kong 2010; Dwyer 2016, 758). New geographies of religion have investigated religiosity across scales, from the level of the global to that of the individual, and in a range of different contexts, from the historical to the contemporary, across countries and sited within major world religions and alternative spiritualities (Holloway and Valins 2002; Yorgason and della Dora 2009; Kong 2010). Meanwhile, the geographic study of religion has matured, producing ever more sophisticated analyses which surpass traditional spatial or temporal bounds of the "sacred" (Yorgason and della Dora 2009). Instead, geographers increasingly recognize the multiplicity of ways in which everyday spaces and experiences are involved in religious meaning-making as having the ability to legitimate, enhance, or challenge religious beliefs and identities (Kong 2010, 757). In response to these heightened sensitivities, some scholars have incorporated religion into their analyses, arguing that research should understand religious faith as one more category of identity or difference in intersectional social inquiry (Dwyer 2016, 759; Tse 2014). This position urges geographers to "be open" to recognizing faith "as a legitimate social identity" in order to "incorporate religious identities into existing frameworks" for the analysis of social inequities (Dwyer 2016, 759). However, merely inserting religion into existing frameworks does not advance understandings of the nuances implicit in religious faith and practice. Moreover, some of this literature tends to portray religion and spirituality with broad strokes—a practice

which contributes to binary understandings of religions and communities of practice as either "progressive" or "regressive," masking the nuanced positions, subjectivities, and subversions enacted by religious individuals within broader institutional contexts (Sutherland 2017, 321).

In order to move beyond this binary, geographers have begun moving away from broad religious categories to instead attend to subjects' own construction of the meanings and processes of religious faith – in other words, to analyze "what it is to be religious through the everyday practices of religious people" (Sutherland 2017, 322; Tse 2014; Dwyer 2016). Mirroring broader trends in cultural and feminist geographies, recent work has analyzed the "embodied, everyday practices and performances of faith or religious practice," privileging the experience of religious individuals in accounts of religious subjectivities (Dwyer 2016, 760; Kong 2010, 769). In recognition of the fact that "religion is embodied, and bodies are religioned" (Yorgason & della Dora 2009, 634), Hopkins (2009) calls geographers to attend to the "more personal and profound accounts" of people's religious experiences from which they derive meaning and enact personal practice (10). This nuanced focus demands attention to the affective dimensions of faith and the ways in which it shapes the narratives and concrete practices of believers (Dwyer 2016, 759; Tse 2014).

Religious subjects negotiate theology and perform religious practice in and through their everyday lives, an understanding which is crucial to reframing monolithic conceptualizations of religion (Sutherland 2017). Sutherland (2017) proposes that geographers attend to "theography," a term he uses to refer to the reflexive process by which religious individuals reconcile their doctrinal and experiential knowledges of the supernatural with their everyday practice through a process of reflexive praxis (329). Framing religious subjectivity in this way allows scholars to understand "the subjective reproduction of theology as a technique of self" which enables

individuals to “dissent from and conform to religious hegemonies” (322); in other words, applying theography helps geographers to understand the ways in which religious individuals appropriate doctrine and reflexively combine it with their own affective experiences to make sense of, justify, or potentially alter their practices. While religious individuals have ideals about their beliefs and their circumstances, the “ideal and the implementation often misalign,” and religious subjects must find ways to practically reconcile this dissonance (325). Focusing on religious identity framed as praxis highlights the “subjective agency of religious people” and reframes religion not as a static identity but rather as a dynamic constellation of theology and affect that religious subjects “interact with in the day-to-day in order to make sense of and formulate a response to their circumstances” (325). Understanding theography contributes a sensitivity to the geographies of religion, highlighting the importance of the practiced, performed, and negotiated forms of religion which can manifest both in sacred, “religious” spaces, or in everyday life.

Geographers have begun to focus on religious performance in studies of faith-based organizations and volunteerism. Where religious faith motivates volunteerism, this involvement can be interpreted as an everyday performance of their faith (Denning 2019). Moreover, studying faith-based volunteerism presents an opportunity to understand theography, looking at the intersection between the ongoing theorization of faith couched in reflexive expression, as praxis (Sutherland 2017). Geographers have also argued that volunteer experiences can be interpreted as “a site of potential transformation and transcendence of inequalities” which arise under the conditions of power-laden volunteer-client relationships (Griffiths and Brown 2017, 680). These insights notwithstanding, little research has yet investigated how faith-based volunteers reconcile their preexisting theologies with encounters in “mixed-motivational ethicopolitical settings” such

as refugee resettlement (Sutherland 2017, 333) – in other words, understanding how the experience of volunteering with refugees can mean "more-than what is represented in the action itself" (Denning 2019, 7).

Refugee Third Sector Organizations

Scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the organizations that assist in the settlement and integration of migrants. Such settling organizations vary widely in their scale, capacity, scope, and purpose; many of these organizations are classified as "faith-based," but not all are voluntary or non-profit (Kong 2010). Generally, these organizations pursue one or more of the following goals: to (a) support migrants through practical assistance, (b) develop migrant skills, or (c) advocate on migrants' behalf (Garkisch, Heidingsfelder and Beckmann 2017). Particularly, these organizations fill a crucial role in assisting asylum seekers and settling refugees in third countries through providing initial services, and supporting inclusion and well-being (Garkisch, Heidingsfelder and Beckmann 2017; Sunata and Tosun 2018). While RTSOs can be interpreted as an extension of governments' capacity to provide services in an era of shrinking support for the welfare state (Wilson 2011; Sunata and Tosun 2018; Mayblin and James 2019), faith-based motivations can conflict with governments' secular directives (Nawyn 2007). The emergence of third sector organizations can also signify societal reactions to current events or political developments; third sector volunteerism represents a form of solidarity through which individuals may contest or express dissent towards current political trends (Sunata and Tosun 2018). Examining the third sector response provides an opportunity to understand how RTSO involvement can be interpreted as part of a broader reaction to empirical realities of displacement or government policy, shedding light on the deeper beliefs about immigration or refugee resettlement (Mayblin and James 2019).

Despite the integral role of settling organizations in immigrant integration, little is known about their capacities, capabilities, and cooperative relationships, especially at the local level (Garkisch, Heidingsfelder and Beckmann 2017, 1870; Sunata and Tosun 2018). Moreover, research on the volunteerism of migrants is available, but few studies investigate the perspectives and motivations of "citizens who serve migrants as volunteers" (Garkisch, Heidingsfelder, and Beckmann 2017, 1861). Refugee integration begins upon arrival and outcomes are influenced by social encounters with citizens and receiving organizations (Ager and Strang 2008); thus, to understand how migrant integration proceeds via interactions with volunteers, the perspective of host society volunteers is crucial. This paper brings recent geographic work on religious subjectivities to bear in the case of evangelical resettlement volunteerism, linking the "everyday" religiosity exhibited in faith-based resettlement work with a growing literature on RTSOs and migrant integration. This focus works to deconstruct monolithic conceptualizations of evangelical settling organizations and subjects through a consideration of individual "theographies."

Refugee Third Sector Organizations in the United States

The Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980 established the modern U.S. resettlement system in an era of welfare state restructuring; administration of the Resettlement and Placement Program (RPP) devolved from the federal government to the states, and nine national-level voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) were contracted to coordinate resettlement via partnerships with local agencies (Benson 2016; Morken and Skop 2017). These government-funded agencies provide housing, clothing, health services, and assistance with government benefits (Nawyn 2011). These services target early employment and economic "self-sufficiency," but this narrow focus precludes broader support of the resettlement process (Brown and Scribner 2014). An array of non- and

for-profit organizations provide services for resettled refugees; these third sector organizations "fill the gaps" by providing longer-term support for domains of integration such as health and safety, social connections, and citizenship (Ager and Strang 2008; Sunata and Tosun 2018).

Since the end of WWII, U.S. faith communities have advocated for and supported the nation's refugee resettlement efforts (Eby et al. 2011). Faith-based organizations are essential in providing welfare and supporting the integration of resettled refugees in major resettlement countries of the Global North (Wilson 2011). The majority of refugee-settling organizations in the U.S. are faith-based (Nawyn 2007), and government-funded secular agencies in the U.S. depend on local faith-based actors to increase their resettlement capabilities (Eby et al. 2011). Studies of U.S. resettlement have found that faith-based RTSOs increase refugees' prospects for integration by providing social connections (Eby et al. 2011), and that refugees sponsored by religious groups experienced better economic outcomes overall than those who were sponsored by family or only received assistance from a resettlement agency (Ives, Sinha and Cnaan 2010). Moreover, Wilson (2011) argues that faith-based organizations demonstrate a penchant for providing "hospitality" based on their "ability to relate to persons who hold strong beliefs, and a sensitivity to the spiritual wellbeing" of refugees (549). Nawyn (2007) found that the religious affiliation of faith-based organizations permeates their practice, rhetoric, doctrinal mandates and resources networks. Collectively, these studies point to "the faith factor" as the reason for success, demonstrated by positive outcomes for refugees; however, it is difficult to assess the impact of organizations' faith affiliations or to qualify what exactly is "faith-based" about the practice of religiously-affiliated RTSOs (Bielefeld and Cleveland 2013, 461). Additionally, federal regulations prohibit the spending of federal monies on religious activities (Nawyn 2007). While many faith-based RTSOs do not directly receive federal funding and thus are not

constrained by this requirement, federal guidelines can contribute to the reluctance of government-funded agencies to partner with overtly faith-based RTSOs (Interview 01/09/2018).

Despite the importance of these organizations in supporting refugee integration, they have been understudied and their involvement in resettlement has been under-theorized (Mayblin and James 2019). Scholars recognize religion as an important factor both in the experience of displaced persons and as a key motivation for those who assist them; however, the ways in which religious beliefs and practices shape humanitarian responses to displacement are not well understood (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011).

Christian Faith and Immigration in the U.S. South

Immigration in the South has long been a divisive topic; recent political controversies regarding the resettlement program swept refugees up into broader regional and national debates about immigration (Nagel 2016). In recent decades, the South has been transformed by contemporary immigration flows, and many mid-sized southern cities are "drawn onto the map of immigration" as new immigrant destinations (Winders 2012, 59). Refugee resettlement is directed not only to large cities but also to smaller, non-traditional immigrant destinations, and southern states and towns are increasingly taking central stage in national debates on immigration and refugee resettlement (Ehrkamp, Nagel, and Cottrell 2015). While scholars increasingly turn their attention to the changing dynamics of immigration in the U.S. South, few have sought to understand how this growing diversity shifts community, racial, political, or religious identities, particularly from the viewpoint of Southern community members themselves (Ehrkamp, Nagel, and Cottrell 2015). Mapping the current religious context of receiving communities is key to advancing understandings of community response to immigration and refugee resettlement.

Evangelical strains of Protestant Christianity have deep roots in the U.S. South. Evangelical theology is primarily characterized by belief in (a) the inerrant doctrinal authority of the Christian Bible, (b) eternal salvation of the individual believer through the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, (c) an imperative to share this "good news" with others, and (d) a "life of diligent service for Christ" manifesting these convictions (Bebbington 2010, 238). Care for "the needy," "good works," and active service testify to the experienced "reality of grace"; in other words, the tenets of evangelical Christianity compel believers to provide care for others because God has offered spiritual care and forgiveness to them (Bebbington 2010, 283). The history of evangelicalism in the United States is diverse, yet current iterations of this theological tradition maintain fidelity to these key points. Today, the U.S. South features "above average religiosity" in comparison to the rest of the country, and southern states now have the highest proportion of self-identified "evangelical" Christians in the country (Ehrkamp, Nagel, and Cottrell 2015, 1713; Nagel and Ehrkamp 2016).

In recent decades, contemporary American politics have witnessed the increased cooperation of the so-called "religious right" (a term used interchangeably with "evangelical") with conservative political groups, generating a concentration of evangelical political support for the positions and candidates of the Republican Party. Given these trends, the prevalence of evangelical Christians in the South is widely understood to signify support for Donald J. Trump's policies, including his stance on immigration and actions curtailing refugee resettlement (Nagel 2016; Hartig 2018). Nagel (2016) argues that the prominence of Southern evangelicals aligned with the Trump administration's policy goals has negatively impacted broader regional narratives about refugee resettlement and undermined the region's "hospitality" towards immigrants (285).

From this perspective, the regional response to immigration and refugee resettlement has been cast as broadly negative; however, many new forms of faith-based engagement have emerged in response to recent immigration. These include the efforts of individual congregations and immigrant-oriented, faith-based organizations which meet material needs and facilitate integration into society (Ehrkamp, Nagel and Cottrell 2015). Such efforts serve an important role in fostering the development of community ties for new arrivals by providing spaces of "interaction and encounter between immigrants and non-immigrants" (Nagel and Ehrkamp 2016, 1055, 1719). Nagel and Ehrkamp (2016) find that encounters with faith communities offer possibilities for immigrant inclusion in line with Christian universalist theology that acknowledges the intrinsic worth of human beings and the possibility of salvation for all people. Individuals involved in this work cite their faith as a direct motivator for their participation in immigrant outreach, and describe the ways that these encounters changed their perspective on immigration and ethnic difference (Nagel and Ehrkamp 2016). However, these encounters also reinforce dominant merit-based narratives about "good" immigrants in line with normative white, middle-class notions of citizenship (Nagel and Ehrkamp 2016). Ultimately, the outreach efforts of faith communities "challenge, but ultimately uphold distinctions and power asymmetries between immigrants and non-immigrants" in practice (Nagel and Ehrkamp 2016, 1044).

Research Context

The Organizations: Refugee Relief, Shelter, and Haven

This paper draws from research conducted in Kingston, a mid-sized city in the southeastern U.S. considered to be both a new immigrant destination (Winders 2012) and a designated "welcoming city." Kingston's two government-funded resettlement agencies are comparable both in size and

resettlement capacity. Though one agency declined my request to conduct research, I established contact with the other agency in the city (Refugee Relief). While Refugee Relief is technically affiliated with a faith-based national VOLAG and is housed in a former church building, the day-to-day operations of the organization are secular, in line with requirements accompanying federal funding. While conducting pilot research exploring the resettlement context of the city and the agency's key organizational partners, I encountered the two faith-based RTSOs discussed in this study, Shelter and Haven[5].

Between June 2017 and August 2018, I conducted 32 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants, including employees and volunteers of the government-funded Refugee Relief, the State Office for Refugees, and two faith-based RTSOs (Shelter and Haven). All participants were recruited through purposive, snow-ball sampling. Participants from the two RTSOs were from a variety of backgrounds, and ages, and all members of self-identified evangelical congregations. Shelter employs Resident Managers to live in each building to provide on-site assistance to refugee tenants through administration and maintenance. Haven employs a small administrative staff that recruits, trains, and coordinates volunteers. Haven volunteers assist refugees with day-to-day needs, including translating mail, transportation to urgent appointments, language help, and social networking. Interviews focused on the organizations' efforts to support refugee integration, their mission and structure, individual participant's motivations to volunteer and experiences with refugees, and their perceptions of the current political environment and politicization of refugee resettlement.

[5] Names of cities and organizations are pseudonyms in keeping with ethical review board approval.

As part of a larger project on civil society initiatives and refugee integration, the research did not explicitly focus on faith as a motivator for volunteerism or work in refugee resettlement. During the fieldwork, participants often referred explicitly and implicitly to their faith in explanations of their work and experience in refugee resettlement. The focus on faith reflected in this article emerged from participants' own accounts. This paper examines how volunteers make sense of their participation in resettlement efforts, how they justify or explain their work in reference to their faith, and how this relates to their expression of faith praxis.

Under the Obama administration, national refugee resettlement quotas steadily increased, in part a response to the heightened global attention to the ongoing "refugee crisis" (Eilperin 2016). During this time, Shelter and Haven were established to assist refugees and fill perceived gaps in local resettlement. Haven is a local faith-based, non-profit "interchurch" organization that recruits, trains, and organizes volunteers from sympathetic evangelical churches in the area. Volunteers staff Haven's programs for resettled refugees such as English and citizenship classes, and also participate in "welcome teams," a matching program between American and refugee families. Shelter, a for-profit property management company, was created to provide housing for recent refugee arrivals in cooperation with local resettlement agencies.

Over time, these three organizations developed an extensive collaboration: Refugee Relief procures Shelter-owned housing for an arriving refugee family, and Haven's "welcome teams" provide long-term support for the arrivals. The resettlement agencies valued the services these faith-based organizations provide. One case worker explained how Shelter had worked to find alternate payment options for clients who could not afford the deposit or first month's rent, and cited other examples of leniency and exemplary flexibility (Interview 01/09/2018). Though many alluded to concerns about the organizations' evangelical identities, employees of the state-

funded agencies recognized that the success of the resettlement program depends on the involvement of faith-based volunteers and organizations. One agency employee shared: "Our faith partners are by far the largest share…The majority of our volunteers are through…some sort of faith-based organization" (Interview 06/26/2017). A State Office employee commented: "I think it's important for church groups like that, whatever is calling them to do it, to fill in the gaps… [the resettlement agencies] don't have the capacity to do everything" (Interview 01/09/2018). Refugee Relief's volunteer coordinator concluded, "I have never heard anything at all, nothing but great things about the volunteers, from Haven, even evangelical…type churches" (Interview 06/26/2017).

Results and Discussion

Faith-Based Organizations

Though neither Shelter nor Haven explicitly offer religious content in their services, the evangelical Christian faith of the individual founders, employees and volunteers inform the organizations' practices. This influence is seen in desires to meet refugees' resettlement and spiritual needs, as well as the conviction that Christian believers are especially well-suited to participate in resettlement. Both founders are evangelical Christians, an identity which catalyzed the creation of Shelter. One of the founders explains:

> We both just had an increasing desire to meet the needs of our neighbors. Jesus clearly taught his disciples to love their neighbors as themselves…and so we were thinking how to do that, and how to use our skills and abilities in business particularly to love our neighbors… To do something that is good, provide a good service actually honors God. So business is this huge area where you can glorify God and love your neighbor as yourself (Interview 06/29/2017).

Shelter's founders had previously volunteered with Haven's programs; through this experience, they were inspired to create a business to provide quality housing and flexible services to assist integration for refugees. After volunteering, Shelter's founders desired to further align their actions with their theology – the belief that Jesus taught his followers to "love their neighbors." Shelter's genesis can be understood as a product of these individuals' reflexive faith praxis (Sutherland 2017); after experiencing the challenges of resettlement, they pioneered a mode of service (faith praxis) in greater alignment with their desires to "love your neighbor as yourself."

Haven addresses immediate, material needs during resettlement and also provides long-term support. When asked how faith plays into Haven's mission, one employee explained:

> It's a good mix of meeting basic needs in the resettlement process, and the Gospel – it's not solely one or the other, and we aren't doing this for the sole purpose of making everyone a Christian. It's just because we care… this is how everyone should be treated …that that's a command that Jesus gave…to welcome the sojourner and the refugee (Interview 07/31/2018).

These efforts are motivated by a combination of perceived gaps in the resettlement process, refugee needs, and Christian teachings. Participants from both organizations want to communicate the Christian message of salvation ("the Gospel") to resettled refugees, but this is viewed as an overarching or secondary goal in the day-to-day operations of the organizations. Shelter "loves [refugees] as tenants" by providing services with excellence and sensitivity to the challenges of resettlement: "…from reporting the rent payments [to a credit agency], to being punctual with taking care of their needs…sometimes making a lot of exceptions on rent" (Interview 08/16/2018). Through these services, the organization hopes to create opportunities for employees to share their faith: "Ultimately, we want to put ourselves in situations where we

can share the gospel, but…even if they never believe, there's no coercion" (Interview 08/16/2018). Similarly, a Haven employee explains that their efforts to support refugees through the process of resettlement are "really about relationship building, because we are a faith-based organization…we seek opportunities for the people that we encounter to hear the Gospel." Both organizations admit that creating opportunities to share the gospel is the overarching impetus behind their work, but are quick to qualify that this is not to take place "in a manipulative way, because… if they [a refugee] reject it [the Gospel] we don't say, 'Don't help them anymore.' We continue to help them, continue to love them" (Interview 06/27/2017).

Shelter and Haven also argue that Christians are particularly well-suited to the task of welcoming refugees because of (a) their theological convictions and (b) their social networks. A founder of Shelter explains:

> There is no one who's better equipped to show hospitality and welcome than a [Christian] believer, who has been profoundly impacted by the Gospel and have themselves been welcomed into a community of fellowship in the triune God… We believe that's transforming…The equipment in the power of the Spirit [of God] to show welcome is utterly unique… what a believer has to offer…is a long-term desire to live sacrificially towards another. Social programs, or other nonprofits, they can host events. But we just think that they don't have the capacity to do long-term sacrificial living like a believer does (Interview 08/01/2018).

Drawing from Christian theology, volunteers' capacity to show welcome is linked to their own experience of fellowship with God. According to evangelical Christian theology, people are inherently sinful, but God is righteous. Rather than punish people for their sins, God in-the-flesh

(Jesus) lived a perfect human life, died a sacrificial death, and was resurrected to atone for the wrongdoing of whoever would believe in him, thus granting them eternal life in heaven with God. When the founder of Shelter references "the Gospel," he is referring to the "good news" of this sacrificial atonement, meaning that Christian believers, have been personally reconciled to God and should live accordingly. Evangelical Christians believe that the Spirit of God equips believers to exhibit extraordinary attributes such as kindness and "sacrificial living" towards other people; it is these traits that this participant cites as enabling Christians to "show hospitality and welcome" to resettled refugees. A Shelter employee reiterates: "People who have been transformed by Christ are able to love people well" (Interview 08/16/2018). In this view, volunteers who share Christian beliefs will automatically or inherently possess the ability to sacrificially show hospitality. However, not all who profess to share these theological beliefs support the presence of refugees in the country, as evidenced by evangelical political support for the Trump administration's policies.

Haven facilitates cooperation between evangelical churches to mobilize volunteers for refugee resettlement. Haven's director explains this emphasis comes from the organization's conviction that "the greatest social network…is the church – all different gifts, skills, people from all different backgrounds." Haven seeks to "help equip" churches to engage in refugee resettlement efforts, believing that "we could really help a lot of people" (Interview 01/08/2018). By drawing on these faith-community networks, Shelter and Haven are able to tap into a large base of supportive congregations which provide lay volunteers, material donations, and financial support, amplifying and exceeding the effect that a single congregation could have on its own (Nawyn 2007; Snyder 2011). Compared to the limited financial resources and strict temporal constraints of government-funded agencies, these faith-based RTSOs are able to fill gaps in the

initial resettlement process and "journey with [refugees] long-term" to support integration beyond the purview of the government-funded services (Interview 01/08/2018). Following Ager and Ager (2011), faith communities are viewed not only as instrumentally beneficial to accomplishing the task of resettlement, but also as "dynamic, diverse, and complex civil networks" unto themselves (298). These resources notwithstanding, the emphasis on "filling gaps" in resettlement is merely an uneven patch for systemic holes in the resettlement system. Moreover, this type of reasoning echoes the move in the United States towards a more neoliberal, faith-based model in which the federal government has increasingly transferred responsibility for providing welfare to local, third sector organizations (Hackworth 2012).

Faith-Based Volunteerism

Volunteers and employees of Shelter and Haven provided a number of faith-based rationales for their involvement in resettlement, including a desire to imitate the life of Jesus, manifest a Biblical ethic of welcome and hospitality, meet material needs of refugees, and to share their faith as a strategy for the global spread of Christianity.

One employee related how living in apartment complexes near refugees holds spiritual meaning, explaining that "like the incarnational ministry of Jesus Christ, his living among the people," employees and volunteers could model Jesus' incarnational example of physically present ministry (Interview 01/08/2018). Other volunteers referenced "a Christian responsibility to care for my neighbor, to care for the sojourner," citing that the Bible "demands that [our] response to them be unique and distinct….I'm supposed to care about them and help them and serve them in any way that I can" (Interview 08/15/2018). Scriptures throughout the Bible draw on the Jewish experience of exile to urge that believers show hospitality and care for foreigners,

and the New Testament reminds that believers, too, are foreigners in the world because their true home is in heaven with God (e.g., Lev. 19:34; James 1:27).

Individual volunteers and employees also were motivated by a desire to share the Gospel with refugees. A Shelter employee explained his reason for resettlement work is ultimately to see the "salvation of people and the nations, that Christ's name may be known" (Interview 08/09/2016). A Haven volunteer elaborated:

> My ultimate goal is to see [refugees] become believers and take that back to their own countries, in their own heart language, and see the Gospel spread to the 10/40 window (Interview 07/31/2018).

The 10/40 window is a missiological term referring to an area between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator, stretching from North Africa to East Asia, that includes the largest number of "unreached" people. Shelter and Haven's efforts to resettle refugees are linked to larger evangelical goals of taking the gospel to "the nations"; in this case, that goal is advanced not by Americans carrying the message to other countries, but by converted refugees themselves spreading the Gospel message via their own language and a hoped-for future repatriation. Volunteer's desire to share can be understood to be a form of proselytization (McKinnon 2009; Eby et al. 2011), and the task of sharing with refugees is clearly tied to the larger evangelical project of global mission.

Proselytization is a sensitive topic in refugee resettlement, viewed by some scholars as inextricably entangled with problematic and unequal power dimensions between faith-based organizations and refugees (Wilson 2011; Garnier 2018). Evangelistic intentions notwithstanding, many employees and volunteers conscientiously and explicitly eschewed any notion of coercive proselytization (Wilson 2011). Directly invoking their faith, these participants

demonstrated sensitivity to the power dynamics inherent in their encounters with resettled refugees. Describing the services that Shelter offers, one employee discussed the importance of a sensitive approach to meeting new arrivals' material needs:

> …not being paternalistic… so recognizing weakness but not like talking about it rudely, and just – taking care of people's dignity [so as to] not shame them… This is very sensitive… I think the Gospel helps a ton with that, because we're all actually, in the end, utterly needy (Interview 08/02/2018).

This participant recognizes the importance of assisting resettled individuals with their immediate needs, whether that be material goods, language tutoring, or assistance finding a job. Individuals who come through the resettlement program often have pressing material needs and face hurdles in accessing basic services, both of which require help (Eby et al. 2011). However, this participant speaks of the importance of not denigrating peoples' needs or treating resettled individuals like perpetual victims, but rather emphasizing the strengths that they bring with them and taking care of people's "dignity." By linking this sensitivity to the Gospel, the employee reframes himself (and all people, according to evangelical doctrine) as "utterly needy" in the spiritual sense, dependent on the forgiveness of God. In light of the sacrificial intervention of Jesus at the core of the Christian Gospel, evangelical employees and volunteers see themselves as undeserving recipients of God's grace, a mutually humble status that carries the potential to catalyze empathetic and sensitive response to the material needs of other human beings (Elisha 2008; Snyder 2011). However, sensitivity to power dynamics in these encounters does not override the unequal relationship between those who provide and receive a service, and no amount of compassion can compensate for the material inequalities that exist, despite a recognition of spiritual "neediness."

Faith-Based Volunteerism as Religious Praxis

While the 2017 Trump administration executive orders cut funding for government-funded resettlement agencies, both Shelter and Haven experienced an uptick in volunteer interest and donations. As the "refugee crisis is more in the media…people have learned more about it and they're just more empathetic towards refugees…they're willing to give towards causes that help" (Interview 07/27/2017). Haven's volunteer coordinator explained how increased awareness of global displacement, the politicization of U.S. resettlement, and the 2017 "refugee ban" had the combined effect of catalyzing personal decisions for many evangelical Christians:

> The ban itself is not a positive thing, but…now people are like, 'Okay I have to make a decision now on how I feel about this, and I feel like I need to take some action' (Interview 06/27/2017).

Empathy for the plight of refugees and disagreement with the administration's actions catalyzed a wave of new involvement from Evangelical Christians in Kingston. The director of Haven noted that 55 new churches and more than 750 new volunteers had signed up with the organization in the last year alone (Interview 01/08/2018). Working with Shelter and Haven is understood by employees and volunteers to be a practical manifestation of the implications of the Gospel and the inclusive ethic of Biblical teachings. One employee argues that Shelter and Haven are doing the work that "the gospel implies" (Interview 08/02/2018). Faith-based action embodies true obedience to the teachings of Jesus, as one volunteer explains: "Jesus is pushing people to heal and to serve and all that. So, it's going to feel like flexing" – comparing service to the exercise of a bodily muscle (Interview 08/02/2018). In this sense, faith is understood as a defining "public consciousness," relevant to the task at hand, and volunteers justify their resettlement work in light of theological understandings (Ager and Ager 2011, 468).

Employees and volunteers also discuss how their work has affected them and transformed the way that they interpret their own beliefs. One Shelter volunteer explained:

> Of course, it's easy to get influenced by the news. Not that I'm scared of Muslims, but…hesitant to be friendly… but [living here] has changed me, the way to see that. These are people created in the image of God…[now] I don't even pay attention to the news...I don't want that to influence my perception of people…It gives more love and compassion for them, so I think, in that sense, it has changed me (Interview 06/30/2017).

This volunteer's account is echoed in the stories of other employees and volunteers who shared how their work with refugees has changed them. The belief that all people are created in the image of God is central to evangelical theology, known as Imago Dei; while this individual certainly held this belief before experience with resettlement, it is the experience and contact with refugees through volunteerism that has catalyzed her reevaluation of her previously held belief. This shift leads her to assert not only that all people are made in the image of God, but that these (Muslim) refugees also are included in this theological category; she has been endowed with "a radical compassion…[she] did not previously possess" or exercise (Elisha 2008, 169). As such, her praxis has changed (Sutherland 2017). However, these examples illustrate the individual and personal orientation of these theographies – by emphasizing one's individual response to conviction and personal change affected by interaction with refugees, these volunteers contain the transformative potential of their experience and resist applying these insights beyond the bounds of their own personal experience and perceived responsibility. Despite the profound changes wrought in the individual theographies of these volunteers, their

engagement in resettlement work did not result in any broader political advocacy or opposition to the administration's causal policies.

As some faith-based organizations or individuals work to deconstruct "established population attitudes and policies" which contribute to difficulties for newcomers (Snyder 2011, 572), so also some participants are moved to challenge the apathetic or xenophobic responses of fellow evangelicals based in reinterpretations of evangelical theology:

> There was a group of people here [at church] who heard me talk about [a female Muslim refugee], and they were astonished that I would go up and talk to her, and they were like: 'Were you scared of her?' 'I would never do that', and 'They [refugees] live too far from here'…They're Christians, and I was like, you guys want to talk about every weekend loving your neighbor… Your neighbor literally is [the Muslim refugee] woman (Interview 07/31/2018).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus teaches his disciples to follow the teaching of Jewish Law: "Love your neighbor as yourself." To illustrate, Jesus told the story of a man who had been attacked on the road and was aided by "a Good Samaritan". In her rebuke to fellow Christians, this volunteer invoked Jesus' command, inferring that Christians should show mercy to their refugee "neighbors" (Luke 10:25-37). However, this volunteer's reflexive interpretation of Jesus' teaching explicitly frames refugees as meriting mercy because of vulnerability and need. Though intended to inspire empathic action and care, this exchange instead reinforces the "continual (mis)recognition of refugees as full-speaking subjects" and power-laden dimensions of subjectivity between faith-based service providers and refugee recipients (McKinnon 2009, 325) The ethic to love one's neighbor offers the "potential for a politics build around inclusive understandings of belonging," but here finds itself in tension with portrayal of refugees as

helpless or vulnerable, feeding into unequal power dynamics (Nagel and Ehrkamp 2016, 1040; Eby et al. 2011).

Other volunteers openly criticize what they see as the broader complicity of the evangelical church for not condemning actions of the Trump administration that are contrary to Biblical teaching. Referring to President Trump's comments about immigrants from Haiti and certain African countries, one Shelter employee explained:

> The comments about those countries that came out, those are really upsetting to me, mainly because the church sometimes, I don't feel like there's an [appropriate] response to that…I think the church can speak more about the attitudes, the heart attitude that says those countries are inferior…The church can really clearly say, that's bonkers…that's not right. That's where we apply it (Interview 08/02/2018).

To combat the nativist or apathetic views of fellow congregants, one participant explained she intended to "start bringing refugees around them anyways because I know they [critics of resettlement] won't be mean to their face [to refugees directly]." By "making them [other evangelical Christians] be exposed to it [resettled refugees]," she hopes to confront fellow believers with the stories and physical, spatial presence of refugees as a way to change their minds (Interview 07/31/2018). Another volunteer explained that while certain people have already made up their minds, others can be convinced to welcome refugees by "getting involved":

> Our church is a very traditional… Trump-voting group of people. [But] I know I'm changing hearts when they see refugees come. I've seen it. I've seen people change attitude because they've got involved with refugees, and they've realized

> these are people created in the image of God and we have a responsibility to love and care for them (Interview 08/15/2018).

However, the notion that mere exposure to refugees will change the minds of people opposed to resettlement is problematic for several reasons. First, this type of exposure necessarily situates refugees as deserving of acceptance because their circumstances deserve compassion – a shallow form of recognition that strays dangerously close to pity. Snyder (2011) notes the tendency of some resettlement actors to portray refugees as "desperate victims" or people who "had no choice" but to flee in order to elicit support for resettlement and advocate on behalf of refugees (577). Second, the notion that "encounters" bridge difference predicated on the assumption that resettlement work will foster "profound interpersonal bonds that [will] transcend social boundaries and status hierarchies", which is not always the case – relationships between volunteers and refugees are complex and often contextually limited (Elisha 2008, 156). Such contact is not always positive, nor transformative. Third, "bringing refugees around" people who at best may be apprehensive about resettlement (and at worst, xenophobic) involves exposing refugees to the potential for harm in interactions; constructing interactions in this way "denies the ways relationships between refugees and volunteers can be disappointing, unhelpful, and even violent" (McKinnon 2009, 320). Finally, there is no account of refugees' agency to form relationships or ability to be negatively impacted by such interactions.

Despite the problematic implications, these accounts do attest to the individual's experience with shifting theographies: through their own experience with refugees, they have reflexively renegotiated their own faith praxis. They attempt to expose others to the affective and experiential dimensions of volunteerism that will result in a change in their faith praxis.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to contribute to understandings of faith-based engagement in U.S. refugee resettlement through a focus on two evangelical, faith-based RTSOs and their employees and volunteers. While geographers have begun examining the role and function of faith-based organizations and the provision of welfare (Denning 2019), less attention has been paid to the work of these organizations in U.S. refugee resettlement. Faith-based volunteerism and work in refugee resettlement means "more-than" the act of providing resettlement services to refugees; for religiously motivated employees and volunteers, this involvement is a form of religious performance and praxis. Through this work, these individuals are able to construct and enact divergent theographical responses in the face of hegemonic evangelical support for the President's policies.

The involvement of faith-based organizations and volunteers in U.S. refugee resettlement is motivated by Biblical commands to care for the stranger, and inclusive theologies such as the recognition of the Imago Dei offer the potential for expansive modes of inclusion that overcome in volunteer-refugee relationships (Nagel and Ehrkamp 2016). However despite faith-based individuals' consciousness about avoiding proselytization, encounters between refugees and faith-based service providers are always power laden, and the impact of this faith-based involvement is not well understood (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011). The faith-based ethos which drives these volunteers, employees, and organizations has the potential to generate personal action and change in religious praxis; however, these shifts do not accomplish any systemic change or advocacy on behalf of refugees in the public arena, nor do they challenge the politics or neoliberal model which necessitates faith-based involvement in the first place.

Future research should examine the involvement of faith-based third sector organizations and individuals from the perspective of resettled refugees themselves; how do refugees perceive the faith of these faith-based organizations and volunteers, and what are the implications of these interactions? Despite the importance of faith-based RTSOs in influencing government policy, providing services to migrants and refugees, and "filling the gap" between government services and the immediate needs of new arrivals, the impacts on migrant integration and overall effectiveness in meeting needs are not yet fully understood (Sunata and Tosun 2018). Additionally, while such faith-based RTSOs may be effective locally, they are often limited territorially, leaving gaps between the support of different congregations (Snyder 2011). In the absence of national reforms to the resettlement system, the work of faith-based organizations is a temporary solution, subject to the determination of individuals' theographies.

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CHAPTER IV: WHEN FIELDWORK "FAILS": PARTICIPATORY VISUAL METHODS AND FIELDWORK ENCOUNTERS WITH RESETTLED REFUGEES

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Abstract

While feminist scholarship has long recognized the inherent "messiness" of fieldwork, research encounters can easily mutate from messiness to "failure." As little work has been conducted on fieldwork failure, reflexive analysis of the complications and disappointments of fieldwork is crucial. Increasingly, human geographers are engaging in participatory and visual methods with populations characterized as "marginalized" or "vulnerable." Though touted as reflexive, possibly empowering, and culturally sensitive, these methods do not automatically overcome neocolonial tendencies of fieldwork. Realization of these methods varies between participants, sites, and the fieldworkers themselves. Drawing on field notes and reflections, this paper analyzes fieldwork failure in dissertation research involving participatory visual methods with resettled refugees. These encounters reveal complex and challenging circumstances that can arise in implementing participatory visual methods with marginalized or vulnerable populations. This analysis advances understandings of participatory visual methods, and answers calls for transparency in fieldwork reflections.

Fieldwork remains central to knowledge production in geography, characterized by a diverse array of technologies, epistemologies, and methods—in many ways, a far cry from the masculine, voyeuristic, and much-criticized fieldwork of ages past (Zelinsky 2001). Despite influential shifts within the discipline such as the quantitative and spatial revolutions and rise of critical geographies, many geographers continue to ask questions that can only be answered through direct interactions with places and peoples—the "dirty work" of fieldwork (Hyndman 2001; Zelinsky 2001).

Feminist, field-working geographers have long emphasized the messiness of fieldwork, yet geographers and other social scientists often downplay disorder or gloss over instances of "fieldwork failure" in finished products (Katz 1994; Crang and Cook 2007; Harrowell, Davies and Disney 2018). Elly Harrowell, Thom Davies, and Tom Disney (2018) define fieldwork failure as circumstances or incidents that divert the research process from "the intended or expected path" or affect it "in a manner perceived as negative by the researcher" (2). Minor diversions or the general unpredictability of field research are often cited as "messiness" inherent to the process; however, events may transpire in the field that exceed and transgress the bounds of mere messiness, instead qualifying as failure. A method or approach could be considered a failure in instances of repeated ineffectiveness leading to abandonment, intervening circumstances that decelerate or preclude completion, or when data generated is inappropriate for purposes of the study. Such failure can occur throughout the research process; every stage of fieldwork is susceptible to potentially detrimental diversions from the neat research plan submitted to thesis committee members and funding bodies. Transparency about perceived fieldwork failure is critical, a prerequisite to learning and improving research methods and outcomes – in this sense, failure should be treated as "everyday, emotional, and necessary to our

development as researchers and academics" (Hyndman 2001; Harrowell, Davies and Disney 2018, 1–2). After all, fieldwork, like any complex skillset, is "not innate but learned" (Delyser and Starrs 2001, 6).

Seeking to harness the productive power of failure conceived in this way, I analyze my dissertation fieldwork with refugees and resettlement actors in the United States. In line with feminist commitments to reflexivity, I aim to expose the "humanness" of the researcher by "pulling back the curtain," so to speak, on the decisions made before and during the fieldwork (Campbell and others 2006, 98; von Benzon and van Blerk 2017). Answering calls for fieldworkers to "write vulnerably," I, too, am a "fallible fieldworker" in this analysis of fieldwork failure, attempting to negotiate the realities of my circumstances but "not always with equal success and grace" (DeLyser and Starrs 2001, 6; Behar 2014, 16).

Following an explanation of the project design and methodology, challenges of participatory fieldwork with marginalized populations are demonstrated in three vignettes drawn from fieldnotes and interview transcripts. Rather than regarding failure as unconstructive, this article considers how such experiences can instead expand and improve knowledge of field sites, participant populations, methods, and as researchers, ourselves.

Situating the Fieldwork

Though scholars have long studied immigrant and refugee integration, contemporary debates over immigrant incorporation are inadequately informed by the perspectives of migrants and refugees themselves. This research understands refugee integration as a multidimensional process involving not only migrants but also actors across the host society (Ager and Strang 2008; Strang and Ager 2010). Geographers have recently argued to shift the focus in migration

studies from "borders to border crossers," and increase scrutiny of the integration experience as understood and experienced by migrants themselves (Ehrkamp 2017, 818). My dissertation project examines resettled refugees' experiences to understand refugee integration in the United States, how migrants create a sense of home and belonging after displacement, and how refugee integration functions in the U.S. context.

In line with this focus, I selected research methods designed to investigate refugees' experiences with integration and resettlement, including semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and participant-driven photography and photo-elicitation. Participatory visual methods were selected to foreground refugees' perspectives, both literally and analytically, allowing refugees to document important dimensions of their own experiences (Sutherland and Cheng 2009).

Project Design

Before launching the bulk of the fieldwork, I conducted a pilot study. This phase explored issues affecting the resettlement and integration of refugees via semi-structured interviews and participant observation with both refugees and host society members, such as service providers or volunteers at two resettlement agencies. Initial findings helped to refine my topic, and the cooperating agencies expressed enthusiastic support of further fieldwork. In addition, I amassed a list of key refugee participants and contacts who promised productive snowball sampling in the next phase of the project. Despite these encouraging results, pilot encounters with refugee participants demonstrated several ethical issues and challenges to be addressed in the next phase of the research.

Gaining access to refugee participants was an early challenge. Resettled refugees are often considered to be "hidden" or "hard-to-reach" populations, usually difficult to access in

terms of sampling because of their physical or social location (Bilger and van Liempt 2009; Ellard-Gray et al. 2015). In a diverse city with large immigrant and minority populations, identifying potential participants without the guidance of refugee-affiliated service providers would have been nearly impossible. Refugees also may be "socially invisible and wary of outsiders" (Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson 2011). Likewise, the heightened politicization of migration in the United States may contribute to an increased reticence of migrants to participate in research requiring direct access. To gain access to participants, I needed introduction from the agencies (Campbell et al. 2006).

Snowball sampling is a common approach when access to participants is limited (Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson 2011). Once the agencies were comfortable with my presence, I was then slowly introduced to refugee clients. These agencies and other service providers became important gatekeepers in the project, exercising particular influence over access to participants and the timeline of the fieldwork (Lund, Panda and Dhal 2016). Though necessary, working through gatekeepers can pose complex challenges, restricting methods and complicating the researchers' position in the field as experienced in this project (Campbell et al. 2006). Establishing good rapport took time, but delayed introductions to participants and eroded my limited time in the field (Dahinden and Efionayi-Mader 2009).

The social marginalization and related vulnerabilities of refugee populations can also pose challenges in research encounters. Recently arrived refugees are marginalized by the intersections of their legal status, ethnicity, linguistic proficiency, background, capital, gender, and religion, as well as by institutional and practical circumstances that can render newcomers economically unstable or dependent upon social services or other aid (Morken and Skop 2017). Refugees resettled in the United States may also be viewed as "vulnerable" based on experiences

of trauma, PTSD, or other serious bodily and mental health concerns (UNHCR 2018); such compounding circumstances can multiply dimensions of vulnerability (Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson 2011). In particular, refugee and migrant populations are routinely over-researched, and as such, may be subject to "research fatigue" (Pascucci 2017, 249). While feminist researchers recognize that power imbalances permeate all research encounters, engaging those participants considered to be vulnerable demands special ethical consideration, as unreflexive research can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities (Bilger and van Liempt 2009).

Such difficulties conducting research with transitory, marginalized, or vulnerable populations (such as resettled refugees) often prevent the perspectives and experiences of these groups from adequately informing academics' understandings (Aldridge 2014; Ellard-Gray et al. 2015). Particularly, attempts to investigate migrant and refugee experiences are often stymied by perceived and actual challenges conducting research with these populations (Maillet, Mountz and Williams 2017). Opportunities for fieldwork failure are exacerbated by the ethical and logistical challenges inherent in research with these groups (see Ellard-Gray et al. 2015; von Benzon and van Blerk 2017).

My pilot research revealed that negotiating access to and conducting ethical encounters with this population would remain important challenges for my fieldwork. The linguistic and economic marginalization of many refugees, coupled with their dependent stance toward resettlement agencies, complicates the nature of their participation in research and creates nuanced power dynamics particular to this population. However, understanding participants only as marginalized or vulnerable discounts participants' agency and their ability to affect the research process. Unable to fully address these issues, I sought additional methods that could

allow participants to express agency, overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, and equalize power dynamics through a less directive approach in subsequent fieldwork.

Visual Participatory Methods

An assortment of participatory approaches is increasingly applied with refugee and migrant populations, being championed as having the potential to empower participants, dismantle power relations between researcher and participants, and cultivate reflexivity (Kesby 2007; Sutherland and Cheng 2009; Sutton-Brown 2014). Visual participatory methods allow refugees to directly share and represent their own experiences, undermining portrayals of refugees as passive victims (Robertson and others 2016). Various participant-driven photography approaches are cited as empowering tools, creating visual narratives that speak back to "dominant…visual depictions of refugees and asylum seekers" as victims (Robertson and others 2016, 35). Refugees are often cast in a homogenizing narrative that obscures individual experiences; participatory visual methods can contextualize and reframe the lens through which we study arrival and integration (Lenette and Boddy 2013; Robertson et al. 2016). Moreover, some scholars contend that "the refugee experience" cannot be fully communicated through verbal or textual means alone, such as traditional interviews (Lenette and Boddy 2013, 72). The use of participant-produced photographs can also be more culturally sensitive and responsive to priorities of refugees themselves (Sutherland and Cheng 2009). These alleged benefits and less-directive nature of the method appeared well-suited to my participant population and study objectives.

However, participatory methodologies do not guarantee participant empowerment or to correct power imbalances in research. Despite purported advantages of visual and participatory methods, these approaches can also be intrusive, time-consuming for researchers and participants, and logistically challenging (Sutherland and Cheng 2009; Sutton-Brown 2014).

Ethical issues regarding the method include the privacy and anonymity of participants and intellectual ownership (Fozdar and Hartley 2014). Study participation is not typically prioritized among marginalized populations without prior commitment or interest in the research, an obstacle that can lead to attrition. The demanding nature of the method can overexploit the generosity of participants (Latz 2017). Finally, like most research, even participatory methods primarily benefit the researcher and not the participants (Lenette and Boddy 2013).

Vignettes from the Field: Encounters with Participatory Visual Methods

In the original research design, access to and recruitment of refugee participants was to be obtained via contacts with the resettlement agencies and snowball sampling (Dahinden and Efionayi-Mader 2009). I planned to first conduct an in-depth interview with each refugee participant, exploring resettlement experiences and reflections on integration; after the initial interview, participants would be invited to join the photo-elicitation phase of the project. Because not all potential participants have photo-capable phones or cameras of their own, participants would receive digital cameras. I asked participants to take photos of their daily life and routine that represented their resettlement experience, focusing on their experience of places and where they felt most like they belonged[6]. This guidance highlighted themes of interest for the project, but remained intentionally open-ended (Latz 2017). A follow-up interview was planned with each participant at their convenience to elicit deeper meanings associated with each photograph by its author. I planned to have multiple encounters with each participant via serial

[6] Per Institutional Review Board regulations on the study, all photos were to exclude facial and any identifying features of human subjects. This was explained to participants when they consented to the photography portion of the study.

interviewing in order to promote rapport between researcher and participant, creating "time, space and trust" (Crang and Cook 2011, 17).

The following vignettes showcase a representative assortment of challenges that stymied attempts to employ participatory visual methods during my research. These encounters demonstrate the ways in which nuanced issues of access, logistics, power dynamics, and participant vulnerability can complicate methods in the field. All participant names have been changed.

Vignette 1: Ahmed

After a few weeks in the field, I had experienced no difficulties recruiting Americans affiliated with resettlement agencies, but kept running into dead ends in efforts to secure participation from refugees. My desperation for refugee participants made this call to Ahmed particularly important. After I left a message explaining the purpose of the interview and my contact information, he called back, saying he was at work until the end of the evening shift—could he call again then? Negotiating around his busy work and school schedule, he selected a convenient time to meet. He arrived late to that meeting, remarking that if I had not texted him, he would have forgotten completely.

After the initial interview, I explained the photo-elicitation portion of the project and invited him to participate. He immediately agreed, seeming excited. He selected a time to discuss his photos four days later, allowing for his schedule and time needed to take photos. My time in the field was running short, and I was intent on keeping the window between the two interviews brief in an attempt to mitigate undue delays.

Despite this initial exchange, subsequent attempts to follow up with Ahmed about his photos proved fruitless. He did not attend our meeting, and repeated efforts to contact him failed

to elicit a response. Perplexed, but short on time, I focused on other participants and interviews. Many days later, I received a text from Ahmed containing only nine, up-close photos of himself ("selfies")—all of which were inappropriate for the purposes of the study. I thanked him for his help, but declined to pursue a one-on-one interview to discuss the photos, explaining that my time in the field was up and I needed to return to school.

This encounter illustrates several common obstacles, including difficulty scheduling meetings (Sutherland and Cheng 2009). Like many resettled refugees, Ahmed works a full-time job on the evening shift, attends classes, and is obligated to meet with his agency-assigned caseworker (Ellard-Gray et al. 2015). Refugees can exhibit high levels of attrition, be more difficult to schedule and follow-up with beyond initial recruitment, and may forget about or deprioritize research "when faced with other priorities and stresses of daily life" (Ellard-Gray et al. 2015; Latz 2017, 68). Ahmed's work and school obligations were negotiated during initial recruitment and scheduling, but may have contributed to his absenteeism and attrition.

Likewise, my limited time in the field created pressure to find and recruit participants, as well as a desire to capitalize on interview opportunities and hasten the completion of the photo-elicitation assignments—without participants, there is no material, and with no material, no dissertation (Kristensen and Ravn 2015). As a researcher, the practical tolls of recruitment and participant attrition are "time-consuming, and personally and professionally challenging" (Kristensen and Ravn 2015, 725). Additionally, I questioned the intent of the photos that Ahmed sent–As a woman working alone in the field, receiving only "selfies" from a single, male participant made me uncomfortably aware of how my gender might have influenced the encounter, and I remain unsettled on how to interpret these photos. This encounter failed to yield

data appropriate for the study, and the photo-elicitation remained incomplete with Ahmed at the end of my fieldwork term; these events certainly seemed like fieldwork failure.

Vignette 2: Mohammed and Batool

Before my meeting with Mohammed and Batool, I texted Jacob to confirm the appointment once again. An American participant and resettlement organization employee, Jacob was a significant gatekeeper mediating access to refugees. When I asked him to recommend participants, he felt that requests for participation would be best received coming from him as an intermediary, a common hesitancy for individuals affiliated with refugee-serving organizations (Campbell et al. 2006). Despite explaining that the conditions of my IRB approval required that I schedule interviews myself so as to avoid any perceptions that the resettlement organizations required participation in the research, he proceeded to intervene. His heavy involvement made me worried that Mohammed and Batool would perceive the research as an obligation tied to their continued good standing with Jacob's organization. Likewise, contacting and arranging participants via gatekeepers slowed sampling and recruitment.

After a series of delays, I visited Mohammed and Batool's apartment. We immediately established excellent rapport. This interview was ultimately one of the most nuanced, informative, and enjoyable that I conducted. These participants shared poignant struggles in their resettlement. After the interview was officially over, they asked me to stay, even inviting me to visit them again. Encouraged by the excellent interview and genial rapport, I invited them both to participate in the photo-elicitation phase of the research; however, they quickly but politely declined.

Though disappointed, I did not question their decision or put any further pressure on them to participate. A key dimension of participatory methods is that participants must be

interested and desire to participate; without this, the participatory ethic of the methodology has little import. After hearing their stories, I questioned my position in the research, recognizing my frustrating inability to affect change in the hardships that they faced. I felt it would not only be uncomfortable, but also unethical to pursue the matter further; guilt accompanied the realization that my project was the chief beneficiary, and I did not want to impose on their kindness (Harrowell, Davies and Disney 2018). The emotional, relational nature of this particular encounter left me conflicted over the neocolonial and extractive nature of the research I was conducting, burdened by the growing conviction that my research would not ultimately benefit these participants (Harrowell, Davies and Disney 2018). Afraid to transgress sensitive power dynamics, it was difficult to convince myself to pursue participation of reluctant participants after understanding their marginalized position and demands placed on their time (Ellard-Gray et al. 2015).

Vignette 3: Sonam

After several participants recommended Sonam for the project, I contacted him to ask if he was interested in participating. He immediately agreed and invited me to his home for our meeting. Unlike other refugee participants, Sonam did not work full time due to an accident. The interview was relaxed, smooth, and enjoyable. Encouraged, I invited him to participate in the photo-elicitation interview.

When he agreed, I reached for the photography consent forms and digital camera. As I searched my bag, he remarked, “So how long have you worked at [name of local resettlement agency]?” Dismayed, I froze; not once had I mentioned the agency, and I had taken care to explain my project and position as a student at the beginning of the interview. I worried that, incorrectly believing I was an employee of the resettlement agency, Sonam had participated in

the interview because he thought I was conducting official agency business. Though I explained the distinction, and reiterated that nothing he said would be repeated to the resettlement agency, he continued to conflate my presence in the field with the resettlement agency.

A few days later, Sonam contacted me to let me know he was ready to meet again. When he showed me his photos, he was apologetic, explaining that he did not capture new photos as we had discussed because he could not drive. I clarified that he could take pertinent photos in his daily routine and at his convenience, but he explained that he had instead selected a collection of old photos spanning his life. Though unanticipated, Sonam's interview narrated his accident and loss as topics of most importance to him in his resettlement experience, albeit tangential to my original research questions.

Sonam's confusion about my position and organizational affiliation was shared by other participants; researchers are frequently conflated with belonging to an official body or actor in the field (Dahinden and Efionayi-Mäder 2009; Bilger and van Liempt 2009). This can contribute to mistrust of the researcher among agency-dependent populations, or inadvertent coercion to participate in the research (Ellard-Gray et al. 2015).

Though Sonam's response to the photo-elicitation was different than anticipated or encouraged, his photos and persistent narration of his accident during his interviews prompted me to rethink the notion of "empowerment" in participatory visual research. While many participatory-oriented methods intend that the research have "empowering potential," few explicitly examine what this could, should, or does mean in practice (Block et al. 2012, 82; for further consideration, see Kesby 2007; Caretta 2016; Latz 2017). I naively assumed participants would experience "empowerment" through narrating their resettlement experience in the manner I envisioned; however, for Sonam, his resolute commitment to sharing his own narrative may

have been a more "empowering" experience than if he had completed the photo as originally expected.

Lessons Learned: The Productive Potential of Failure in Fieldwork

Together, the above vignettes showcase an array of challenges that arose during fieldwork implementing participant-driven visual methods. Ahmed, Mohammed, and Batool's stories illustrate issues with access to participants, complicated by negotiations with agency-gatekeepers that ultimately slowed the project. Likewise, my own internal conflicts over the purpose, benefit, and ethics of the project impacted my decisions and responses. Each encounter was also influenced by logistical challenges, retaining flexibility around participants' schedules while completing the fieldwork within the confines of my funding and available time. Nuanced power dynamics likewise figure prominently in these encounters; Sonam and Ahmed's stories suggest that a researcher's position may be easily misread, perhaps prompting inadvertent gender dynamics, or inducing problematic acquiescence to research because of participants' vulnerable or dependent stance towards agencies. A host of factors such as these can contrive to thwart a method in the field, but if analyzed creatively, can contribute to the productive potential of failure.

Though the original research design included thirty photo-elicitation interviews, only four participants responded to the participant-driven photography invitation. Despite numerous attempts, the low recruitment rate and the content of the photos received did not produce data appropriate for the project. This outcome contributed to my decision not to include the photos that I received in any final research products or analysis, and represented the ultimate failure of this method under the circumstances of this fieldwork.

Aspects of visual methods and participatory frameworks are increasingly incorporated into geographic research; however, these approaches are not applicable for every project. Field sites, participant populations, and researchers themselves may complicate or obstruct successful implementation. A substantial time commitment is required to generate effective rapport necessary for a participatory project, as well as to combat logistical challenges. Many studies with vulnerable or marginalized populations must negotiate access through gatekeepers; researchers should cultivate contacts outside of this initial association and strive to develop a neutral stance vis-à-vis gatekeepers alongside independent, relational contacts with potential participants. Participants must also be interested or invested in the research for the long-term success of these methods. Researchers may envision scenarios of participant empowerment aligned with the proposed methods, but participants exercise agency, counter uncritical conceptions of vulnerability, and exert their influence on the research process in unexpected ways. Scholars should think critically about what "empowerment" in the context of research should and could mean, and carefully evaluate claims of participatory approaches when selecting methods for their own project goals and ethical concerns. Rather than automatically creating empowerment, these methods should be understood as a resource for the exercise of participants' agency in ways that may or may not facilitate any lasting reflection, transformation, or empowerment (Kesby 2007).

Although attuned to power dynamics and ethical dilemmas, researchers engaging these populations and approaches must balance reflexivity with a certain assertiveness, following Hyndman's (2001) admonition to firmly "plant oneself in the field and wring one's hands about the politics of doing so at the same time—"Imperfect engagement is better than no engagement, or a paralyzing angst," she admonishes (267). Even imperfect engagement can create knowledge

and generate unforeseen opportunities for future improvement. Failures can also foster idiosyncratic revelations about a given site or study population. My experience suggests that spaces created between researchers and participants via fieldwork encounters are unpredictable, dynamic, and surprising—rife with opportunities for failure, but also able to reveal possibilities for the evolution of our current methods and approaches.

Just as field experience does not automatically legitimize knowledge, fieldwork failure does not automatically subvert the ability to produce knowledge from the experience. Instead, conditions in fieldwork that could be conceived of as limits or failures should instead be interpreted as opportunities to refine methods and approaches, providing insight into our study sites, populations, and our own strengths and weaknesses. Experiences of failure in fieldwork are normal, necessary, and crucial to "critically examine and share" in order to recognize our humanity and shared fallibility as fieldworkers (Harrowell, Davis and Disney 2018, 2). By undermining linear expectations about fieldwork, analysis of fieldwork failure prompts us instead to revisit our research from new angles, inspiring critical considerations of methods and catalyzing opportunities for progress.

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CONCLUSION

This dissertation research began in 2016, a year which was framed by the heightened politicization of migration in the Global North, then-recent terrorist attacks in Paris, Orlando, and San Bernardino, a tumultuous and unexpected U.S. presidential election, and record-breaking numbers of newly displaced persons for the fourth year in a row. Even while international debates around borders and security churned, and U.S. national policies were thrown into flux, refugees continued to arrive in America, welcomed at airports across the country by government-funded agency employees, RTSO volunteers, community groups, and collectives of committed individuals. People across the country struggled against sudden policy shifts and funding cuts to maintain a posture of welcome for resettled refugees, both those already present and those yet to arrive. The year 2019 witnessed increasingly restrictive immigration, refugee, and asylum policies from the Trump administration. As another U.S. presidential election approaches, global displacement continues to rise. Questions regarding the United States' stance towards the protection of displaced persons and participation in the UN's resettlement program have yet to completely unfold.

This dissertation has examined refugee integration in the current United States resettlement context from several complementary perspectives. Chapter II addressed the first group of research questions proposed, ("How do government-funded and refugee third sector organizations provide resettlement in the United States? How do expectations for resettlement shape ideals of refugee integration, and how do actors' conceptions of integration inform their resettlement work?") by examining the cooperative and divergent roles of government-funded and RTSO resettlement actors to understand how these actors provide and expand the offer of refuge in the U.S. for resettled refugees. Chapter III addressed the second group of research questions ("How do theology and religious identity inform the resettlement initiatives of faith-

based, refugee third sector organizations? What role does religion play in motivating employees and volunteers of these organizations? How do they understand, perform, and negotiate their faith through volunteerism in refugee resettlement?") by examining the motivations of faith-based organizations and individuals, arguing that for such actors, resettlement work and volunteerism is an act of reflexive religious practice. Chapter IV addressed the last group of research questions ("What challenges arise when conducting fieldwork with resettled refugees? How can such challenges be addressed? What can be learned from "fieldwork failure," and what is the productive potential of failure?") through unpacking three fieldwork encounters to reflect on methodological challenges in fieldwork with resettled refugees and vulnerable populations, and to offer lessons learned. Though each chapter addresses distinct research aims, the three chapters together shed light on different perspectives on U.S. refugee resettlement, and on the realities of conducting research in this context.

The major conclusions of this research are as follows: (a) Refugee integration is a complex, multi-faceted and long-term process (Strang and Ager 2010). While government-funded organizations provide initial services for resettled refugees, the devolution of responsibility contributes to geographic unevenness in the resettlement program. In the United States, the offer of refuge for resettled refugees is contingent upon the ability and will of RTSOs to assist in resettlement; long-term support for integration is not guaranteed, but rather is a coincidence. Current programmatic goals of economic "self-sufficiency" are not sufficient to support refugee integration, and as such belie the United States' humanitarian commitments to provide refuge.

(b) The nation's ability to resettle refugees is contingent upon the availability and willingness of volunteers to provide labor both for government-funded resettlement agencies and

RTSOs. This dependence is unsustainable and contributes to the overall geographic variability and precarity of the program. Moreover, the power inequalities inherent to refugee resettlement can lead to potentially problematic encounters between refugees and volunteers. While volunteers may be well-intentioned, expectations of friendship can burden rather than aid resettled individuals, and the impacts of faith-based volunteerism require further study.

(c) For evangelicals involved in U.S. refugee resettlement, their work means "more than" the act of providing services, and constitutes a form of everyday religious praxis (Denning 2019). Through their involvement in refugee resettlement, religious individuals construct and enact responses to current political realities based on their reflexive practice of theology (Sutherland 2017), challenging broader evangelical support for President Trump's restrictive immigration policies.

(d) Fieldwork failure is not the end to the project of knowledge creation, but rather is an avenue to generate new understandings of our methods, field sites, and of ourselves as researchers. The use of visual or participatory methods is not automatically empowering, and should be carefully selected, taking into consideration the interest and willingness of the target population to participate with such intensive and time-consuming methods. Fieldwork with resettled refugee populations presents an array of logistical and ethical challenges which may require more funding or time to navigate than a graduate student researcher may have. Researchers must be flexible to adapt to changing circumstances, including the lack of funding that one has applied for, or intervening events which shorten time in the field.

Directions for Future Research

This dissertation research suggests several avenues for further research. These potential research directions include: (a) As the foundations of refuge in the U.S. continue to erode under the

influences of neoliberalism and the Trump administration, how will refugee resettlement function in the expanding "neoliberal borderlands" (Besteman 2016)? To understand the future of U.S. refugee resettlement in this environment, future research should continue to examine the unfolding impacts of current cuts to the U.S. program in terms of funding, future capacity, and the ongoing integration of already-admitted refugees. (b) The extent of faith-based involvement in the U.S. resettlement program is not well-understood. Further studies could work to quantify the full involvement of faith-based actors, and to map the diversity of their theological underpinnings. Likewise, this involvement raises the following questions: How do the theological affiliations of these organizations affect their service delivery, ability to work with government-funded agencies, and the resettlement outcomes of their refugee clients? (c) Future research could link this research on faith-based refugee resettlement in the U.S. to other geographic scholarship on faith-based organizations in neoliberal service delivery contexts more broadly, including other religions beyond Christianity, and other national contexts (see Beaumont and Dias 2008; Atia 2012; Williams, Cloke, and Thomas 2012).

Given the low recruitment of refugees into the study, this research was ultimately unable to approach my initial interests in the process of refugee integration as understood and experienced by resettled refugees themselves. (d) Current conceptualizations of refugee integration are not adequately informed by the voices and experiences of refugees themselves. By emphasizing refugees' agency and participation, future research must emphasize how refugees navigate their resettlement context to participate in integration, adopting a "bottom-up" perspective to better reflect integration as two-way or multidimensional exchange, rather than a "medicine that refugees take in order to 'fit in'" (Søholt 2014, 1673). The perspectives of refugees should directly contribute to the ways in which integration is defined, facilitated, and

understood (Korać 2003). In order to address this gap in the literature, future research targeted at the integration experience of refugees is necessary. (e) Furthermore, future research should examine the perspectives of refugees on their own faith and religious beliefs as experienced through the resettlement process – how do these beliefs shape understandings of the refugee condition, and influence the process of resettlement? While many resettlement actors in the U.S. are faith-based, little research has sought to understand how resettled refugees experience and understand the religious belief (and practice) of faith-based employees, volunteers, and organizations that work in resettlement. What are the implications of this faith-based engagement in resettlement for the refugees themselves, and how do they engage with these faith-infused encounters? (f) Moreover, visual participatory methods with immigrant and refugee populations have been used to promising effect in other contexts (Sutherland and Cheng 2009); these techniques should be developed further, taking into account potential logistical and ethical challenges from failed attempts to strengthen methodological designs for future projects. (g) Finally, in light of ongoing political controversies regarding migration and issues of asylum both in the U.S. and abroad, the question of refugee integration and belonging remains salient: how do refugees create a sense of belonging (and make "home") in resettlement, especially in politically hostile and restrictive policy environments?

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VITA

Emily Blackard Frazier was raised in the great state of Arkansas, where she graduated from Russellville High School in 2012. She received her first introduction to Geography by way of an AP Human Geography course at RHS, and was hooked (Thanks, Mr. Gray!). At Arkansas Tech University, she went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies and Cultural Affairs with minors in Geography, Spanish, Religious Studies, and History and Political Science. After three years, she graduated *Summa Cum Laude* as the recipient of Arkansas Tech's 2015 Margaret Young Outstanding Senior Female Award.

Frazier began the Master's program in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages at Arkansas Tech University in Fall 2015, but soon realized her interests were better aligned with the geographies of migration. In Fall 2016, she began the Doctoral Program in Geography at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville under the direction of Dr. Micheline van Riemsdijk. Upon completion of this dissertation, Frazier will have completed all requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career incorporating qualitative research and migration-related issues.