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This critical qualitative study explores refugee women and higher education (HE), an understudied area, to establish a foundation within HE to trouble refugee women's educational exclusion. Despite 79.5 million refugees globally (UNHCR, 2020), mixed responses persist, particularly amid authoritarianism in the U.S. evidenced by decreased resettlement where in 2019 24,810 refugees applied and 21,159 were resettled (UNHCR, 2019). Furthermore, the U.S. prioritizes refugees' employment, or economic self-sufficiency" (Refugee Act, 1980) over consideration for their professions or possibilities for further educational advancement. The theoretical framework illuminates perceptual, sociological, ideological, political, and ecological dimensions of place (Greenwood, 2003). Explicitly, how do refugee women participant's forced migration journeys and resettlement in the U.S. south shape their thinking about higher education through the senses, social relationships, beliefs, policy, and placement in the social hierarchy? This exploratory multiple case study (Yin, 2018) considered elements of forced migration in conjunction with the U.S. as a place of resettlement and situated refugees' educational experiences through a temporal—time and place/space—perspective. This orientation accounted for processes and relationships that are relevant to higher education, across the multiple places and times of forced migration. Given this conceptual and temporal contextualization and outline of central topics, this study's purpose was to investigate the function of place of resettlement and the degree of influence on refugee women and higher education through localized relationships with people and places. Affordances and constraints of refugee law and policy as applied in the place of the U.S. south as a resettlement context are filtered through participants' closest affiliations, namely either federally funded resettlement agencies or refugee non-profits. Findings

suggest these relational spaces of refugee women's engagement structure their higher education beliefs along a continuum of essentializing-to-humanizing; essentialist approaches impose employment and foreclose education while humanizing approaches attend to refugee women as whole people worthy of higher education.

REFUGEE WOMEN AND HIGHER EDUCATION ACROSS SPACE, PLACE, AND TIME

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the refugee women who shared their stories, opened their homes to me, and remain dear friends; to the extended support network that has encouraged me; and to my grandparents both passed away (Evelyn and Raymond) and living (Milton and Wylie), for their labor, endless support for me to pursue education, and the examples they live(d) in building and supporting community.

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) officially recognized and established protections for refugees with the 1951 Refugee Convention. Importantly, this Convention, organized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] and the United Nations Refugee Agency [UNRA], also created a framework for global responses to forced migration and established a baseline definition for people affected as those "...unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR, 2010, p. 5). A list of key terms and definitions pertinent to this study is included in Appendix A. The 1951 Convention created this foundation, and the definition and framework were renewed in 2010.

Almost 70 years later, UNHCR (2021) estimated that 79.5 million people are among those accounted for in the original 1951 definition of a refugee, of which 80% were women or children. Despite further elaboration and expansion of rights and protections, refugees still encounter global contestation in pursuing asylum and refugee status as well as varied responses to their presence in resettlement locations. Mixed responses persist toward refugees and their personhood, as well as varied approaches within scholarly and practical implementations as demonstrated through policy, migration, and educational scholarship. Further narrowing the field of inquiry, from refugees globally to the U.S. as a specific refugee resettlement context, is beneficial in situating the present study. The U.S., the context for the present research, contains a continuum of lived experiences from the ideal goals of refugees' human rights to divergent protections or exclusions at the local level. The rise of authoritarianism and populism in the U.S., related to the emergence of a post-interventionist era regarding human rights violations

(Goodale, 2007), is a delimiting factor to human rights advancement. Refugee resettlement data corroborate this position. According to the UN Refugee Agency's most recent annual report (2020), in 2016, the U.S. received 108,197 refugee applications and accepted 78,761; in 2019, the last year of complete data, there were 24,810 submissions and 21,159 acceptances. The dates are important for these statistics; 2016 was the last year of President Obama's administration, which held a relatively amenable policy disposition toward immigrants and refugees. However, the 45th U.S. administration and executive office leader, recently replaced, implemented racist immigration and refugee policies under the guise of populist rhetoric appealing to an imagined common American ethos. Discourse meant to lure in those with majority identities who feel unheard and unrepresented dovetailed with the 45th administration's immigration ban of 2017 barring those from seven Middle Eastern nations from entering the U.S.

Despite a change in executive branch leadership in early 2021, refugees to be resettled to the U.S. at the time continued to encounter delays and barriers. Although President Biden raised the resettlement cap to 62,500 in May 2021, delaying this decision resulted in thousands of would-be resettled refugees stranded in international airports (Campbell, 2021). Relatedly, due to the time-sensitive nature of refugee resettlement documentation, many of those whose flights were cancelled by the State Department in March, 2021 are likely to have to begin the resettlement application process again, along with required fees (Campbell, 2021). In brief, the rise of authoritarianism and populism coincides with and inversely relates to decreased U.S. refugee resettlement rates. These factors of refugees' survival and livelihoods reinforce the exigency of furthering the scholarly agenda of understanding refugee experiences post-resettlement: political maneuvers such as these examples set the tone and legislative landscape that overlay localized implementation of services and expectations for refugees. The U.S.

resettlement context, and its sociopolitical dynamics, are just one facet of importance for a spatialized investigation about refugees' and education. Stated succinctly, education as a human right, which pertains to refugees, interrupted education during forced migration, and prioritization of employment for refugees in the U.S. coincide to shape refugees' conceptions of education broadly and higher education specifically.

Subsequent chapters provide full study details, including a review of extant literature (Chapter 2), description of methodology and methods (Chapter 3), details on findings from within-case findings (Chapter 4), findings from cross-case synthesis (Chapter 5), and a discussion of findings and conclusions in connection to extant scholarship and the theoretical framework developed through this study (Chapter 6).

Purpose of the Study

This study explored refugee women's thoughts about higher education with consideration given to their experiences of forced migration and the features of U.S. resettlement. The elements of forced migration, in conjunction with the U.S. as a place of resettlement, situated refugees' educational experiences through a temporal—time and place/space—perspective. This orientation accounted for processes and relationships that are relevant to higher education across the multiple places and times of forced migration. Given this conceptual and temporal contextualization and outline of central topics, this study's purpose was to investigate the function of place of resettlement and the degree of influence on refugee women's conceptualizations of higher education through localized relationships with people and places. Scholarship pertinent to this research purpose contends with global geopolitical and localized dynamics as well as the nexus of political, sociopolitical, and educational concepts across scholarly contributions. For example, many contexts view refugees' higher education as “a

pathway... to labour market and economic integration” (Slowey et al., 2020, p. 7). Importantly, this scholarly contribution directly addressed higher education with refugees as well as also conveyed an intrusion of financial or economic purposes.

Significance: Refugee Women in Higher Education

Scholarship is limited when the topics of refugee women, higher education, and the U.S. context are coupled. However, recent scholarly contributions pertinent to refugees and higher education do address the U.S. context, although not women refugees specifically (Abdo & Craven, 2018; Hailu, 2020; Koyama, 2015; Koyama & Ghosh, 2018; Saelua, et al., 2021; Unangst & de Wit, 2020). There is, however, an international corpus of scholarship on refugee women and higher education. Notably, these scholarly contributions addressed women refugees broadly yet also included education; however, each of these contributions were from outside the U.S., including a Eurocentric study of refugee integration (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018) and a call to Canadian higher education institutions to examine that default to assumptions of refugees’ inferiority and to instead promote policy and practices for their inclusion (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010). This area of the literature review highlighted a remarkable silence in U.S. higher education scholarship, which this dissertation research addressed. Regardless, these works generated a foundational perspective on refugee women and higher education, from which to theoretically extend findings.

As research about U.S.-based adult refugees’ further education is an emergent thread of inquiry, this research responded to the inequity of refugee women’s access to higher education in the U.S. This problem was situated within the complexities of global forced migration, inaccessible basic or continuing education, place-delimited public service access, and xenophobic anti-immigrant discourses in the resettlement context of the U.S., and, more

specifically, in new destination states, or states with more recent population growth, of which North Carolina is one (Terrazas, 2011). However, the study focused less on deficit positioning of refugees as a risk or at risk (Koyama, 2015), and instead foregrounded refugee women's power in the processes of grappling with their current resettlement realities and all of the necessary recreations of home, sociality, and community entailed with transnational mobility, which many refugees experience in multiple locations over time. Additionally, this study focused on the particular facets of refugees' places and how they interacted with refugee women's conceptualizations of higher education and, given time and support, could reinforce their intrepid responses to recurrent, systemic minoritization. Precisely, this study explored how refugee women make sense of higher education and how place—physical and affective or relational locations—and its ideologies influence women's conceptualizations of higher education.

The U.S. remains a resettlement location, which is deemed a durable solution by UNHCR because of the possibility of obtaining citizenship post-resettlement. In its most ideal form, the provision of citizenship also entails all the civic responsibilities, social rights, and protections pertaining to citizen status. Education conceptualizations and accessibility form an important inquiry from the perspective that education is a human right and that refugees, largely conceived, spend many years in juridical and transnational limbo, termed statelessness (UNHCR, 2010); many remain in this liminal status until achieving adulthood. Thus, for the purpose of this study situated within the U.S., adulthood was operationally defined based on the American conception of adulthood achieved at 18 years of age.

Theoretically, this investigation of refugee women and sense-making about higher education was framed by spatialized social theory and analyzed through dimensions of place (Greenwood, 2003). This purpose directly responded to a current gap in scholarship on women

refugees and higher education in the U.S. resettlement context, where children and youth educational opportunities and health interventions are prioritized for refugee women. In other words, the study addressed how place functions in the lives of adult women refugees post-resettlement, namely with regard to higher education. This study investigated how refugee women think about higher education and the underlying values that inform their thoughts, beliefs, and actions around pursuing education post-resettlement.

Relatedly this research contributed to the emergent scholarly conversation of equity in higher education for and with refugee women, specifically pursuing how place and refugee women are co-constitutive. In other words, this study shed light on refugee women's relationships, beliefs, values, and actions that inform their conceptions of higher education. The fields related to this central focus included disciplines of higher education and migration scholarship as well as traditions of critical, or critiquing, inquiry (Denzin, 2017; Denzin & Giardina, 2010; Guido et al., 2010). For example, the study garnered an understanding of if refugee women view higher education as beneficial, attainable, or foreclosed, and for whom, namely themselves or their children. Relationships among people, places, and the meaning created by and through them further contributed to understanding how higher education beliefs are influenced by time and location.

Research Questions

Primary concepts related to this study were: geographic place, affective connection to place, interrupted education, assimilation ideologies, economic self-sufficiency or workforce involvement, and educational beliefs. However, an over-arching intent of this study was to explore “processes over time” (Yin, 2018, p. 10). Investigating refugee women's conceptualizations of higher education required attention to how time and space were and

continue to be influential. At the outset of the study, I anticipated that the effect of the self-sufficiency, or workforce involvement, as a voluntary agency, or VOLAG, priority would present an essential foreclosing of higher educational access. Furthermore, I also expected that spatial separation from local residents, public service outlets, and higher educational institutions would also influence refugee women's conceptualizations of higher education. The main questions to be addressed by this study were:

- How do refugee women talk about higher education?
- To what extent do refugee women's forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?
- How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?

Methodology

Qualitative criticality broadly provided the philosophical foundation for this study, and spatialized social theory through dimensions of place (Greenwood, 2003) theoretically framed the inquiry. Criticality was operationalized in two forms from critical qualitative inquiry, or an intellectual advocacy agenda (Denzin, 2017). First, this study critiqued the reality that higher education is not sensitized to refugees' inclusion, and second, this study viewed refugees as well-positioned to be substantive participants in higher education and thus sought to trouble their limited representation in colleges and universities as of crucial importance to advancing a sociology of education relative to supporting a stable, just society. This research drew from traditions of critical qualitative inquiry to question how culture, and its related beliefs and values, shape participants' views on higher education. Critical qualitative and place-conscious methods applications directed findings and conclusions toward the cultural and ideological dynamics that inform how refugee women conceptualize higher education. A central element for the research

was understanding how participants made sense of higher education and what relationships to place inform their sense making processes.

Critical qualitative inquiry directed knowledge production toward critique of inequity. This research adopted a political and ethical stance toward refugee women and their inclusion in higher education. Extant scholarship has extensively covered higher educational inequity; this research contributed to that line of critical investigation with refugee women. Relevant to the realm of productive critique, a critical philosophical foundation promoted troubling the higher educational inequity of refugee women's presence in places of resettlement while also promoting and advancing refugee women's education beyond the priorities of language, culture, and cultural orientation. This research treated a topic that has not been yet well-covered in the U.S. as a refugee resettlement location and was situated within the disciplines of higher education, educational and migration policy, and movements for social and racial equity. Subsequently, and embedded with foundations of critical qualitative inquiry, the study's theoretical framework was comprised of five dimensions of place relevant to critical place inquiry (Greenwood, 2003).

Furthermore, this study also applied the methodology of exploratory, multiple case study (Yin, 2018). Defining the attributes *exploratory* and *multiple case* beneficially contextualizes this approach within the paradigm of critical qualitative inquiry as well as the place-conscious theoretical framework (Greenwood, 2003). In case study research, *exploratory* case study design is best suited to research contexts with multiple unknowns (Yin, 2018). Specified to the present study, higher education scholarship addressing adult and women refugees in the U.S. is an emergent area of study and knowledge production. Additionally, *exploratory* case study design is most advantageous when employed through robust connection to extant theoretical foundations (Yin, 2018). Thus, the present research reviews global and U.S.-based extant scholarship specific

to refugees and higher education; this approach functions to situation the exploration in conversation with extant scholarship. Additionally, the theoretical grounding in place consciousness (Greenwood, 2003) enables an orientation toward the intersubjective and dialectical relationships among people and the spaces that participants occupy.

Theoretical Framework

Spatialized social theory conceptually oriented the research and was operationalized through dimensions of place (Greenwood, 2003). Considering finite aspects and attributes of place further specified a politicized approach to spatial justice and narrowed the field of inquiry toward a systematic analysis of place. Greenwood (2003) presented place in five dimensions with potential to deepen understandings of the present topic: the perceptual, sociological, ideological, political, and ecological dimensions. These are elaborated on in Chapter Two. The purpose of considering refugee women resettled in the U.S. with a place-based lens was to illuminate how they conceptualize higher education refracted through the discursive relationship of people to places and vice versa (Greenwood, 2003).

Rationale for the Research

Foundations of critical qualitative inquiry aligned with place consciousness in intensive focus on the function and effect of the political realm. As an extension of this orientation, deconstructing research or social problems was not sufficient; rather, these foundations push scholarship to de- and re-construct. Succinctly, this research highlighted the educational inequity of refugee women' experiences and aimed to garner interest for scholarship and practice addressing the connection between equity agendas in higher education and minimally-represented populations. Relatedly, this study intended to “expos[e] a social inequity [and] injustice that merits public knowledge and action for righting the wrong” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 61).

The generative aspect of this critique was correcting the injustice of refugee women's limited access to higher education.

Additionally, several data collection activities within the case study method offered redress to entrenched U.S. policy that views economic participation, drawn from the Refugee Act (1980) on economic self-sufficiency, as the epitome of citizen participation. The policy ramifications of this critical perspective related to Denzin's (2017) call for an advocacy agenda that shows "how qualitative work addresses issues of social policy" (p. 14). Refugees, along with all categories of newcomers regardless of age, ought to have access to education and higher education; critical qualitative scholarship clarified the relational, lived experience level of why and how. When primary points-of-contact for clarifying administrative and cultural U.S. life are confined to a narrow scope of support services, refugees' knowledge of higher educational opportunities will also be limited. Methods of observation, interview, and reflective research memos were employed to develop a compelling narrative that advances the equity agenda in education.

Significance of the Study

This study employs methods situated within critical qualitative inquiry philosophy. The element of critique within this study emerges from anticipated findings that access to higher education for refugees may be complicated, confounded, or excluded; higher education is a low priority because of the realities of federal funding regulations which do not cover education for adult newcomers. The significance lies in addressing refugee women's experiences in relation to higher education equity. Findings demonstrated that current refugee support work needs more resources to expand higher education access and potentially generate suggestions for how to

achieve them. Thus, one contribution of this study is highlighting how refugee women create their own learning mechanisms to facilitate further and higher education.

Place-conscious inquiry centers affective, cognitive, and material effects of localities in shaping human experience. To enliven renewed responsibility toward multifaceted human experience in place, Greenwood (2003) offered five dimensions of place that emphasize accountability “to the connections between people, education, and places” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 603). Although this theory derives some of its theoretical tenets from phenomenology, the holistic view of place consciousness accounts for individuals embedded within multiple systems of power. This reorientation is not solely individualistic; rather, conceptualizing individuals within structures that shape their lives becomes a mechanism to identify and disrupt inequity. The dimensions are also not temporally or spatially bound and so offer a frame to recognize the interplay among individuals, places, and systems. As an exploratory case study, place consciousness affords opportunities to identify concepts important to participants in their higher educational thinking and to identify relational patterns among them.

One benefit of theoretically framing this study with place-based inquiry is that it promotes theorizing participants’ experiences without the necessity of artificially demarcating the spatial bounds of place. Rather a place-based framing recognizes that superficially bounding or applying an a priori definition of places of importance reductively omits real or symbolic meanings of multiple places of importance. Additionally, place-based inquiry enables a meta-analytic view that reorients thinking about places by rupturing “routines in space and time” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 622). Theorizing refugee women’s conceptualization of higher education with place-based inquiry elicits connections among people, places, and the world beyond the immediate, temporal, or localized notions of place. Importantly, this aspect is particularly

relevant to refugees as their educational experiences are “both internal and external to the nation-state” (Dryden-Peterson, 2017, p. 476). In other words, accounting for refugees’ educational access requires consideration of transnational socialization in diverse contexts. Specifically, refugee women experience education or interrupted education over time and their current dispositions and beliefs about higher education are an accrual of experience across time and space. Resettlement is not an end point which erases all prior educational experiences and encounters; rather, transnationally mobile refugees amalgamate cultures, languages, and dispositions across their migration experiences which influence the meaning they ascribe to higher education.

This study also aligns with philosophies and sociologies of education pertinent to furthering equity and social justice, specifically situated within the education for all (EFA) agenda. Although education for all is specific to children and youth to combat the underlying causes and challenges of children out of school, there is a direct link with this priority for adult refugees, too; the trajectory from fleeing violence or persecution to obtaining asylum to resettlement spans years and, for many, begins in childhood and culminates in adulthood, essentially robbing refugees of vital compulsory schooling years. Thus, understanding how refugees’ relation to the place of resettlement informs higher education access expands this body of knowledge to account for how the temporality of adults’ past disrupted education connects to present life chances. Furthermore, the study aligns with scholarship regarding EFA from an intergenerational perspective: advancing conceptual and empirical knowledge refugee women hold about higher education may also advance and contribute to scholarship about familial educational values. Also, the study provides indications of why refugee women hold these

attitudes or value ascriptions regarding higher education and how their relationships to place and people influence these beliefs.

Limitations

There were interpersonal and methodological limitations related to this study's design. One affective limitation was my personal proximity to the families over the past five years. As a volunteer instructor, I have come to know refugee women, their children, and the conglomerated groups of friends and extended kinship networks with which they have built connections post-arrival. This was beneficial yet also a possible limitation. As a limitation to theorizing refugee women's conceptions of higher education, I was (and remain) close with the population included in this study, and I connected with the topic and population on a deep affective level. It required diligence on my part to remain focused on the research questions and purpose. Relatedly, observations within a case study design may have also limited the analytic potential. Yin (2018) articulated that observation may produce unintended bias over the interactions and relationships included within a single case. In other words, familiarity in this space is not the same as purposefully seeking out answers to research questions framed by critical place inquiry. Furthermore, the multiple case design presented a possible limitation. A case may be faultily identified, thus indicating that the participants or data collection procedures are misdirected (Yin, 2018). Attention to this limitation required careful attention to the research questions as well as how participants elucidated their experiences and identities.

Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter gives an overview of this proposed dissertation research and addresses some of the most prominent points of significance. This study is important to further higher education's pursuit of equitable access and to redress social injustices, especially those

that impinge on the goal of equity. Namely, this research engaged the problem space of equity in higher education specific to the place-based experiences of post-resettlement refugee women. Framing this study with a theory of place (Greenwood, 2003) aided in exploring how refugees' past disrupted education and their relationships to past and present places converged to constitute present conceptualizations of higher education. The research questions previously named sought to parse these idiosyncratic relationships toward the purpose of contributing the philosophies and sociologies of education that promote refugee women's equitable access to and inclusion in higher education. This purpose is significant because extant scholarship on higher education access and refugee children and youth education largely omit the experiences of adult refugees, much less those who are also women. The next chapter will review this literature and further the argument that an investigation of refugee women's conceptualizations of higher education is timely and beneficial.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature on refugee women and higher education. However, higher education scholars are just beginning to give attention to this population in the U.S., so additional empirical work is also reviewed about the topic from comparable contexts (e.g., Australia, Canada, and Germany), although the higher educational systems and structures, and their approaches with refugee women populations, are not identical. Thus, findings from non-U.S. scholarship provide insight more on paradigmatic, methodological, and thematic orientations than country- or institution-specific findings. Additionally, this review begins with background literature to situate the topic of refugee higher education beginning with the global landscape of refugee geopolitics and education as a human right. the following section, the conceptual orientation, begins with specifics of U.S. refugee resettlement. These background sections contextualize the study overall as it is a place-conscious research in the U.S. South. Because refugee women have transnational migration trajectories, their lives—and educational experiences or lack thereof—are shaped by the particularities of international and localized, to the U.S., refugee policy, practice, and sociopolitical dynamics. The purpose of beginning the conceptual orientation with three sections outlining U.S. resettlement policy, sociopolitical context, and approaches to self-sufficiency is because the following topical sections include both U.S. and international scholarship specific to refugees and higher education.

Furthermore, incorporating international context refugee higher education scholarship provides theoretical and empirical foundations to explore and theorize the topic refugee women and higher education in the U.S. The inherent transnationalism of forced migrants, the central population of consideration, ruptures the notion that any one geographically bounded

investigation through place could fully encompass the totality of refugee experiences, including in higher education. Thus, refugees' transnational subjectivities additionally substantiate the inclusion of non-U.S.-based scholarship in this review. Transnational subjectivities additionally warrant contextualizing refugees amid the global geopolitics that inhere on their lives and, ultimately, which facilitate refugees' resettlement in the U.S. As argued herein, the bureaucratic and highly-structured governance of geopolitical refugee recognition and resettlement additionally structure education both pre- and post-resettlement.

The literature review begins with background literature on global refugee geopolitics to demonstrate, through human rights scholarship and policy document review, the inter-governmental forces of refugee recognition and resettlement as well as the variability in contemporary human rights implementation (Belden Fields, 2010; Bottici, 2014; Clark-Kazak & Thomson, 2019; Coffie, 2019; Glasman, 2020; Goodhart, 2019; Merry, 2001; Smith, 2019; UNHCR, 2010; 2014; 2019a; UNRA, 2020). The review continues by addressing operationalizations of education as a human right to link implementation targeting children and youth as generative for future refugee adults but that omits current refugee adults, especially those whose educations are disrupted through their forced migration journeys (Arvanitis et al., 2019; Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017; Bajaj et al., 2017; Capps & Fix, 2015; Damaschke-Deitrick et al., 2019; Dryden-Peterson, 2016a; 2016b; Koyama, 2015; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017; Ong, 1996; Smith, 2019; UNHCR, 1951; 2019b; Waters & LeBlanc, 2005; Wesley Bonet, 2021).

Then, the review transitions to the conceptual orientation. These section address scholarship specific to the U.S. refugee resettlement context pertaining to policy and law, sociopolitics, and the deployment of self-sufficiency (Allyn, 2019; Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce, 2019; Dykstra-DeVette, 2018; Karas, 2019; Harding & Labman, 2020; Mathema &

Carratala, 2020; Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017; Roth et al., 2018; Shaw et al., 2021; UNHCR, 2018; 2020; U.S. Refugee Act, 1980; U.S. State Department, n.d.; Watson, 2021). Then, the review turns to scholarly treatment of refugee higher education as informed by and through policy guidance (Arvanitis et al., 2019; Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce, 2019; Dryden-Peterson, 2016a; 2016b; 2017; Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010; Hailu, 2020; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018; Slowey et al., 2020; Unangst, 2020), sociopolitical dynamics (Bragg, 2021; Hailu et al., 2021; Koyama, 2015; Mangan & Winter, 2017; UAARM, n.d.; Unangst & de Wit, 2020), and the effects of higher education for and among refugees (Acker, 2006; Abdo & Craven, 2018; Bajwa et al., 2017; Crea, 2016; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2021; Hailu et al., 2021; Kezar, 2014; Khadkha & Rinker, 2018; Koyama & Ghosh, 2018; Laker & Davis, 2015; Mazon, 2010; Roberts et al., 2018; Saelua et al., 2021; Tienda, 2013; Tsu, 2021; Unangst & Crea, 2020; Zhao et al., 2005). Addressing the global and localized, to the U.S., political and procedural background of refugee recognition demonstrates the tenuousness of educational access before and resettlement.

Finally, this literature review concludes with the present study's theoretical framework of dimensions of place (Greenwood, 2003). The global geopolitical landscape shapes processes culminating in refugee status and educational access prior to resettlement; because of the linear, cumulative nature of prerequisite compulsory education, refugee geopolitics also influence higher education access. Importantly, this body of scholarship addresses the discursive element of "place" and its reciprocal relationship among people and places of relating. The present study is particularly interested in how place influences refugee women's conceptualizations of higher education, so essential facets of spatialized social theory provide context to situate the study's findings within extant scholarship.

Background Literature: Global Refugee Geopolitics

Based on the most recently published data, UNHCR (2019a) estimated 70.8 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide; refugees accounted for 25.9 million and asylum-seekers 3.5 million (Appendix B). According to the UN Refugee Agency (2020), in 2016, the U.S. received 108,197 refugee applications and accepted 78,761; in 2019, the last year of complete data, there were 24,810 submissions and 21,159 acceptances. Displaced people, or forced migrants, are not guaranteed access to fundamental rights as they depart countries of residence and citizenship. Yet the UN coordinates global geopolitical initiatives to facilitate human rights intended to mitigate the harm and disruption of life that refugees face. However, human rights are contested and variably implemented. Relatedly, the U.S. is not a cooperating or endorsing nation-state with the UN human rights instruments and conventions specific to refugees' political, civil, economic, or social rights (Belden Fields, 2010). Regardless, human rights provide a generative grounding for theorizing refugee women and higher education because they provide a legal and humanizing foundation for establishing a minimum standard for rights to services and supports, particularly across geographic contexts. Contrasting the goals of human rights for refugees and education with localized approaches especially highlights implementation variability and the capacity for refugee hosting countries to achieve the full measure of human rights policy guidance and law.

Human Rights' Origin and Variable Implementation

Human rights in global geopolitical law and policy originate from the General Assembly Resolution 428(V) (1950), which convened due to the fallout following World War II, including fascism and the Nazi regime's culpability for the Holocaust and genocide against people who were Jewish, Polish, disabled, LGBTQ+, mentally ill, and even children (Sheffer, 2018).

Although groundbreaking for its multi-national establishment of codified recognition of human rights, the 1950 Resolution presented two key limitations pertinent to contemporary refugees' experiences: nation-state cooperation and the expiration date of the first human rights policy document.

First, the original 1950 Resolution is a policy *guidance* document, meaning it is not required. The General Assembly Resolution 428(V), (1950) "calls upon governments to cooperate with the UNHCR in the performance of his functions concerning refugees falling under the competence of his office" (Smith, 2019, p. 492). Given the UN's inability to enforce its mandates and protocols, this language evokes human rights' dependence on cooperative states and constitutes an additional layer of political determination (Belden Fields, 2010). Second, the 1950 Resolution had an expiration date, and the original co-signing nations were not obligated to continue their support of human rights and protections for refugees. The Convention (1951) specified protections for refugees that would apply to those affected by "events occurring before 1 January 1951" (Smith, 2019, p. 459). Importantly, the original 1951 Convention only afforded refugee rights and protections for Holocaust survivors and only for a specified period of time. When the 1951 Convention expired and was proposed for re-ratification, no nation-state was obligated to abide by the original agreements but rather, could opt-in or opt-out without penalty. Consequently, nation-state compliance and the optional continuation of human rights support remain essential factors in achieving refugees' rights and protections.

These cooperative and time bound limitations result in variable implementation of refugee rights. The UN relies on nation states in upholding and enforcing implementation of refugees' rights, which results in varied implementations. Relatedly, Merry (2001) clarified that "the concept of rights is an historical and social process based on the interaction of

representatives from a wide variety of cultural traditions working through the UN and transnational NGOs” (p. 39). Substantively, the framework and instruments guide global human rights, yet the interpretation and enactment of them is filtered through disparate cultural and juridical traditions at the nation-state and local levels.

Despite a long-established history, international human rights (IHR) is contested and variably implemented. Belden Fields (2010) theorized human rights’ relational and political processes of “co- and self-determination” (p. 73). Relational processes refer to the “co-determination” aspect of human rights involving connections with neighbors, family, friends, and communities; specific to human rights, individual people and advocacy groups are the ones to interpret and implement human rights law. Considered collectively, this mosaic of relationships constitutes a social arena. At this level, political dynamics enter the social area to mediate the relational processes among people and advocacy groups as they interpret and implement human rights, in the form of policy, law, and governance. The political dynamics intersect the relational realms of human rights implementation and produce nationally and culturally variable guidance for how, where, or with whom to enact human rights. The import of Belden Fields’ (2010) theorization for why human rights undergo contestation resulting in varied implementation is why, through human, historical, and political interpretation, human rights are not uniformly applied. Human rights are filtered through each place’s multi-layered cultural, linguistic, political, and interpersonal systems.

Through tracing the earliest origins of proto-human rights to their contemporary codification and diverse global implementation, Bottici (2014) argued that human rights are variably applied based on determinations of full- or less-than-humanity. This theorization aids in explaining how human rights is, in theory, a strong framework yet few countries achieve full

implementation. Hierarchical and variable rights implementation predicated on the binarized notion of fully human or sub-human results in disenfranchisement and exclusion of forced migrants:

the fewer rights they are recognized as possessing, the more likely they are to find themselves in dehumanizing conditions. ...applying human rights means, in the first place, breaking such a vicious circle and reestablishing an image of full humanity. (Bottici, 2014, p. 175)

Historicizing the political context of fascism that generated multiple nation states' endorsement of the 1950 Resolution, which named and afforded human rights to refugees, contrasts with Bottici's (2014) analysis of contemporary human rights modalities where dehumanization is a precursor to deny human rights. Juxtaposing the context of human rights' origins with Bottici's (2014) argument of the effect of contemporary classifications of people as human or sub-human indicates the tenuousness of human rights. Specific to refugees, this tenuousness has tangible effects as they encounter multiple nation-state governments systems along their forced migration journeys; relatedly, they encounter varied adoptions of human rights specific to their status as refugees.

Refugee Rights, Resettlement, Repatriation

As forced migrants, refugees' options for geopolitical recognition parallel the contestation and variability that pervades human rights implementation. A successful claim for asylum can lead to obtaining refugee status; however, not all asylum seekers are successful. Those who obtain refugee status may or may not be resettled. Even those refugees who are resettled may face repatriation or forced return to their country of origin (Smith, 2019). First, establishing key terms (Goodhart, 2019) provides the technical language. Then, charting the

possible trajectory of the refugee process enables critique and highlights connections among the variability in human rights implementation, refugee rights, and educational access. The depiction in the following paragraph summarizes the trajectory from fleeing violence or persecution to obtaining refugee status, including the possible outcomes for those who are successful in their claims for asylum.

Violence and persecution, or the well-founded fear of either, are why people make the unfathomable choice to leave their homes. The alternative to leaving, specifically remaining in the place of violence and persecution, is untenable. A preliminary juridical step to obtaining refugee status and protections is first being granted asylum. This process requires the application for asylum take place in a country different from the applicant's home country. Asylum seekers are those who "seek international protection... [and] whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted" (Goodhart, 2019, p. 421). Those fleeing violence or persecution must lodge a formal claim that establishes the context and circumstance which forced their migration. Specific to the U.S., which has an individualized procedure distinct from the United Nations protocols and processes, asylum seekers in the application stage are in the process of obtaining refugee status. Applying for asylum does not require paying a fee; it does, however, require paying the physical and psychological costs of survival by fleeing violence and persecution as well as the travel required to depart one country and enter another.

To critique processes of identifying asylum seekers and refugees, Glasman (2020) used historical inquiry to comprehensively review forced displacement and related international or non-governmental organizations' (I/NGOs) responses in Central Africa. Glasman (2020) analyzed the effects of big datafication and increased reliance on quantifiable data to explain that

refugees are classified and filtered through various processes that “stand for different ways in which international organizations connect the ‘problem of refugees’ at the global level with the specific fate of individuals” (p. 71). Glasman (2020) argued that a shift to quantifiable data in humanitarian crises juxtaposed international organizations with the lives of forcibly displaced persons; this had the effect of dehumanizing the humanitarian response to refugee-creating circumstances. Importantly, this criticism of the implementation of humanitarianism also highlights the challenges of forcibly displaced persons as they flee violence to pursue asylum along with the multiple geopolitical, juridical, and labeling layers they encounter and through which they are filtered.

Refugees are those who are successful in their asylum applications. To reiterate, refugees are persons “...unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2010, p. 5). Because the 1951 Convention is optional for nation-states, processes of asylum seeking and obtaining refugee status are not uniform across countries. Disparate political and cultural norms result in varying asylee acceptance policies or even denial of entry. However, the human rights normative framework outlines that refugee status should also guarantee “basic rights ascribed to all individuals, ...similar to those guaranteed as a minimum standard of treatment to aliens” (Smith, 2019, p. 481). Explication is necessary for Smith’s (2019) reference “basic rights” and “aliens;” these terms derive from the United Nations General Assembly Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals who are not Nationals of the Country in which they Live (Resolution 40/144, 1985 as cited in Smith, 2019, p. 481). “Basic rights” include “the right to life and security..., to be equal before the courts, freedom of thought... and religion, ... to language, culture and tradition;” the

term “alien” refers “to any individual who is not a national of the State” (Resolution 40/144, 1985 as cited in Smith, 2019, p. 481-482). Similar to variability in human rights implementation and asylum processes, countries’ interpretations of basic rights, and if refugees are eligible, are equally diverse.

Finally, processes of resettlement and naturalization or repatriation are potential culminations of refugees’ geopolitical trajectories. Resettlement refers to “the transfer of refugees from the country in which they have sought asylum to another state that has agreed to admit them” (Goodhart, 2019, p. 434). In some cases, resettlement is succinctly the movement of refugees from one nation to another where responsibility for asylum seeking applications is also transferred. Some refugee receiving countries additionally afford pathways to citizenship, which UNHCR (2010; 2014) refers to as a durable solution because of the perception of this as a long- rather than short-term solution. Conversely, repatriation, also termed *refoulement*, refers to returning refugees to their countries of origin. The Fourth Geneva Convention (1949 as cited in Smith, 2019) established a policy of non-*refoulement* for protected persons, such as refugees, due to “natural disaster... [and] conflict” (p. 486). As an issue of basic human rights, this Convention (1949 as cited in Smith, 2019) codified State responsibility for the protection of those fleeing violence, including not forcing their return to violent circumstances.

Additional scholars have highlighted the discrepancies among UNHCR and the international normative framework, intentions, and local interpretation for intervention strategies. As an example, Coffie (2019) engaged critical policy analysis and multi-site critical qualitative data collection. This work elaborated on the dissonance among key stakeholders specific to an instance of proposed repatriation; circumstances leading to the Liberian refugee protest demonstrated the conflicting “preferences of refugees, UNHCR, and the government of Ghana...

when refugees protested to UNHCR against the repatriation package and demanded a say in the range of solutions being offered to them” (p. 230). This example of historicizing a specific refugee and global nation-state decision making process elucidates refugee agency (Coffie 2019). The Fourth Geneva Convention (1949 as cited in Smith, 2019) established the policy of non-refoulement, yet UNHCR presented the Ghanaian government a plan for repatriating Liberian refugees. This example signals the complexity of forced migration, especially among disparate stakeholders, yet the Liberian refugees subjected to an unwanted repatriation package conveyed their preference in the form of protest (Coffie, 2019).

Furthermore, Clark-Kazak and Thomson (2019) additionally argued that refugee policy debates customarily rely on depersonalized treatments of resettlement with “very little attention... paid to refugees themselves. Rather, the focus is on intergovernmental and state processes to identify, evaluate, and process” (p. 212). International human rights law is permeable and variably implemented through local processes. Scholarship that outlines this variability conveys the complexity of circumstances surrounding the people who are refugees and critiques the shortcomings of interventions that dehumanize asylum seekers and refugees.

In parallel to dehumanizing processes of refugee resettlement, conflating the rights of people within the different categories of asylum seekers and refugees erroneously assumes sameness among people in the two groups with vastly different statuses. Obtaining asylum is a precursor to refugee status. Becoming a refugee and having access to refugee rights requires first seeking asylum and then case review by an immigration or customs official – dependent upon the nation of first asylum. Only after adjudication and asylum application approval may someone claim refugee status. Despite the relationship of seeking asylum as a prerequisite to refugee

status, this study focuses on those who were successful in the asylum application process and, as refugees, are resettled in the U.S.

Education as a Human Right

Education as a human right is derived from the international normative framework developed from the 1950 Convention (UNHCR, 1951). Contemporarily, education as a human right is primarily implemented for children and youth, which is a laudable effort, especially considering the linear structure of educational attainment where compulsory schooling is a prerequisite for higher education. The status of education as a human right by targeted age and temporal-spatial location is relevant to an investigation of refugee higher education, given that literacy and compulsory education are prerequisites for higher education. Broadly, education as a human right is primarily deployed for refugee children and youth as beneficiaries (Arvanitis et al., 2019; Smith, 2019; UNHCR 2019b).

This section first addresses education as a human right, provisioned for children and youth or those under the age of maturity in their respective locations. Additional uptake for education as a human right addresses educational affordances in temporary or pre-resettlement locations (Arvanitis et al., 2019; Dryden-Peterson, 2016; UNHCR, 2019b). Subsequently, this section also covers scholarship that addresses the affordance and contours of education prior to resettlement. This section concludes with scholarly treatment of interrupted education, or the systemic factors of violence or persecution entangled with forced migration which render education unavailable.

Children and Youth

The primary beneficiaries of education as a human right are children and youth. Primarily, efforts to afford education as a human right to displaced children and youth are

responsive to the reality that accessing education is less pressing than survival in places of active conflict or during forced migration when access to schooling is widely foreclosed. As a human rights matter, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989 as cited in Smith, 2019) notably specified protections for forcibly displaced children and youth to education. Thirty years since the human rights codification of children's human rights to education, a UNHCR (2019b) report indicated that "3.7 million refugee children are out of school" (p. 4). Especially in contrast to the timing of the affordance of children's human rights to education, the rate of educational enrollment of children and youth compared by refugee and non-refugee is staggering. Refugee child and youth school enrollment has increased from 61% to 63% for primary schooling and from 23% to 24% for secondary education; these proportions are considerably less than non-refugee peers at 91% and 84%, based on 2017 and 2018 data respectively (UNHCR, 2019b, p. 6). Over time, more refugee children and youth are accessing compulsory education, but the rate of enrollment is significantly less when compared to non-refugee students' enrollment. Although not the focus of this dissertation research, education for refugee children and youth is both laudable and pertinent to longitudinal positive outcomes for refugee education overall and for adults because of the linear nature of contemporary schooling.

These data summarize the inherent transnationalism of refugee youth confronting multiple cultural contexts and, where and when available, educational landscapes. In the context of U.S. public high schools for international or newcomer student populations, Bajaj and Bartlett (2017) addressed transnationalism to propose a critical transnational curriculum to support migrant youth, including immigrant and refugee students. This scholarship emphasized an assets-based framing on the function of transnational student experiences, through which migrant youth are simultaneously students along with multiple other roles, and the necessity of recognizing

these subjectivities to enhance compulsory schooling experiences (Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017). To demonstrate a transnational sensitivity to migrant youth students, Bajaj and Bartlett (2017) argued how their critical transnational curriculum has a dual function of supporting migrant youth while also simultaneously disrupting the hegemonic norms of the pedagogical practices that reinforce a “homogeneous national identity” (p. 33). While the notion of transnationalism is inherent to this research, this focus on curricular innovation for migrant students, although generative, is beyond the scope of this research focused on adult refugees.

Based on a two-year ethnographic case study of U.S.-based immigrant and refugee youth, Bajaj et al. (2017) examined human rights education (HRE) in a newcomer after school program. Contributions to fields of HRE and anthropology of education included that the HRE program enabled youth participants to make sense of the human rights abuses predicating their migratory experiences and advanced the newcomer schools’ goals of reinforcing “critical and engaged global citizenship” (Bajaj et al., 2017, p. 136). Enhanced awareness of human rights, as Bajaj et al. (2017) argued, cultivates critical lenses essential to refugees grappling with the trauma of forced migration, displacement, and, for some, resettlement. Regardless, the next section further considers refugee education in temporary or pre-resettlement contexts.

Temporary or Pre-resettlement Education

Temporary countries of asylum or, broadly, pre-resettlement locations are globally disparate and essential to understanding the trajectory of refugee education (Arvanitis et al., 2019; Dryden-Peterson, 2016a) in practical approaches to refugee education. For example, some countries implement schooling of national and refugee children together in the asylum countries’ language, referred to as integrated schooling. Out of 14 common countries of first asylum, 11 practice integrated schooling (UNHCR, 2014b). Refugees who seek asylum in nations that have

not adopted integrated schooling may create their own educational spaces for children and youth in their languages and within their cultural traditions (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a; 2016b). Within contexts of disparate compulsory education access, however, refugees are not guaranteed education access. When schooling is available, it is conditioned by refugees' circumstances of forced migration. For example, with Nuba refugee youth in the displacement context of Egypt, Wesley Bonet (2021) drew from ethnography within the disciplines of anthropology and education to propose resettlement tunnel vision, theorized as a triadic relationship of co-occurring relationships among refugee youths' desire for education, systemic inequity, and educational quality. With displaced refugee youth, resettlement tunnel vision resulted in dissimilar outcomes where some youths left school entirely while others' commitments to education were enhanced through the belief that education would provide for better lives upon resettlement (Wesley Bonet, 2021).

From an international and historical comparative analysis, Waters and LeBlanc (2005) outline the inherent political nature of schooling with particular emphasis on the implications for refugees, when understood as stateless for a considerable portion of the forced migration phase. Notably, Waters and LeBlanc (2005) foreground the reality of refugees' longer-term statelessness during residence in temporary locations (e.g., refugee camps), which can last decades. The entanglement of schooling with political, social, gendered, and religious ideologies and the extremely long duration of refugees' statelessness culminate in an uneven distribution of educational access and exposure to curricula that are likely to constitute a form of alterity from refugees' prior or imagined future cultural contexts (Waters & LeBlanc, 2005). Essential for the purpose of this review, is Waters' and LeBlanc's (2005) theoretically substantiated paradox of refugee schooling deployed in stateless third spaces, between and permeating through nation-

states, termed “pseudo-states” to refer to the international conglomeration of refugee relief and aid organizations and INGOs that operate within refugee receiving countries albeit apart from and superseding them.

Collectively, Wesley Bonet (2021) identified educational motivation as hedged on an investment in an uncertain future while Waters and LeBlanc (2005) substantiated that refugee schooling in temporary resettlement locations is a continuation of the citizen-less disjuncture of refugees both from their prior homes and a “new” place of citizenship when they are held, interminably, in limbo of juridical recognition. A result of refugee schooling in such state-less contexts is what Dryden-Peterson (2017) referred to as “education for an unknowable future” (p. 15) whereby the language of instruction, educational affordances (or not) for girl children, and the political-historical ideologies of schooling are likely to be mismatched with both refugees’ pasts and futures (Waters & LeBlanc, 2005; Wesley Bonet, 2021). These contributions certainly inform refugees’ lives overall and educational trajectories, specifically. However, the focus of this research had a particular focus on the influences of the place of resettlement on women refugees’ higher educational perceptions.

Interrupted Education

Pre-resettlement or temporary educational offerings for refugee children and youth collectively demonstrate strategic efforts to mitigate the rates of asylum seekers, forced migrants, and refugees who are unable to access compulsory schooling. Specifically, given increased rates of interrupted education among refugees, these experiences delimit further educational access throughout refugees’ lives. This literature contextualizes the largely positive impetus for and results of education as a human right for children and youth. However, scholars additionally problematize the singular operational focus on education for children or youth signals a gap in

educational scholarship and practice. Adult refugees may experience interrupted education as children or youth; targeted education for refugee children and youth will certainly benefit them when they are adults. However, excluding adult refugees as eligible beneficiaries of education presumes that their capacity for or interest in education is already foreclosed by their past educational access and attainment.

Adult Basic and Higher Education

The geopolitical context has historical and modern threads of racism and xenophobia that complicate resettled refugees' ability to successfully participate in American life (Koyama, 2015; Ong, 1996). Many refugees arrive with basic English language proficiency gained from short pre-arrival instruction. Confronting the intricacies of English communication is especially challenging without literacy in a familiar language (Koyama, 2015). Formal compulsory schooling in pre-arrival locations is also not guaranteed or consistent, especially given that refugees may relocate more than once between leaving home and being resettled; even those with previous schooling may not hold citizenship or educational requirements for university/college admission or financial aid. These factors contribute to an additional complicating layer for refugees in accessing higher education upon arrival. However, from the international law framework enshrining education as a human right in conversation with movements for equity in U.S. higher education, there are pathways to reinforce and substantiate refugees' rights to tertiary learning in an American resettlement context.

Of refugee education scholarship, the comparative analysis from Damaschke-Deitrick et al. (2019) stood apart for its gendered emphasis on refugee women enrolled in higher education in Germany, Kyrgyzstan, Egypt. Through the theoretical framework of a capabilities approach, women refugees in each international case reported a variety of positive and salient features of

their postsecondary education experiences; for example, Damaschke-Deitrick et al. (2019) reported that the women's "networks were the greatest facilitators of access to information, resources, and support" (p. 183). Refugee women leveraged their relationships to gain pertinent knowledge about their higher education trajectories. Furthermore, this capabilities approach, an assets-based framing of refugees, findings demonstrated that women refugee higher education students' experiences of forced migration were central to their commitments to access higher education (Damaschke-Deitrick et al., 2019). Especially regarding findings from Kyrgyzstan, the capabilities approach reinforced an intergenerational gendered asset of women refugees' higher education, namely the concomitantly stronger dedication to ensuring younger generation girls' access to schooling (Damaschke-Deitrick et al., 2019). As a noted limitation, Damaschke-Deitrick et al. (2019) only included women refugees who were successfully enrolled and pursuing higher education, which is a call for future scholarship addressed by the present study that is inclusive of women refugees enrolled in higher education as well as would-be students.

On Belonging

Pertinent to compulsory schooling for newcomer youth, belonging conceptualizes the sensation akin to the comfortability of home (Yuval-Davis 2006) or a relational space of shared experience (DeNicolò et al., 2017; Rodriguez, 2019). Within critical migration scholarship, belonging is deployed as antithetical to assimilationist ideologies, or sociopolitical dynamics that place an onus of change or abnegation of one's culture to "fit in" to a host society on newcomers (Malsbury, 2014); specifically, critical migration studies have critiqued the assimilationist paradigm by foregrounding migrant youths' definitions of belonging from their own perspectives (Rodriguez, 2019). This application of belonging is a generative attribute of schooling and education adjacent spaces for newcomer youth. As argued by Rodriguez (2019) through

presenting the qualitative findings of a mixed-methods investigation of library partnership with schools, belonging is advantageous for im/migrant youth as it contributes to a relational space for connection to counter the harsh realities of xenophobia they face within the sociopolitical environment of the U.S. In these cases, critical migration scholars demonstrate belonging with newcomer school-aged youth as aligned with awareness of structural inequity and as antithetical to assimilationist ideologies toward immigrant and refugee groups. As Okinomidoy (2007) argued through a critical qualitative investigation of Somali refugee youth, belonging is contested and negotiated whereby for Somali refugee youth to “...create a sense of belonging among their classmates, the students had to overcome the pervasive influence of the stereotypical notions of them” (p. 24). Related to refugees, when deemed as racialized others, belonging is a process of encounter and contestation. By extension, the following examples demonstrate how a discursively monolithic and heterogenous application of belonging result in negative effects on historically minoritized students, distinctive by uncritical stances toward belonging.

Belonging takes on a different timbre within higher education that diverges from the advantageous criticality and anti-assimilationist perspectives evident in migration scholarship and anthropology and education studies with newcomer youth. For example, (Flint, 2021) applied a feminist decolonial spatial lens to trace the material and spatial entanglements (Barad, 2013; 2017 as cited in Flint, 2021) of campus monuments and racially minoritized students’ experience. Findings of this research noted the distinctly uncritical deployment of notions of belonging circulating within higher education and the deleterious effects of imposing belonging without redress for systemic racism, for example, on minoritized student populations in higher education (Flint, 2021). Additional scholarship specific to national or nation-state considerations of refugees (McKinnon, 2008) and migrants (Schweppe & Sharma, 2015) has also problematized

belonging. These studies specifically highlighted how discussions of belonging elide the racialized and racist conceptions of in/exclusion. This strand of scholarship highlights how deployments of belonging can directly reinscribe assimilation and ignorance of structural inequity.

Cumulatively among these strands of scholarship, the uptake of belonging outside the discipline of higher education has an evidenced corpus of literature to demonstrate its advantages with refugee and other groups of im/migrant youth in schools or school adjacent spaces (Malsbury, 2014; Rodriguez, 2019). Although, additional scholarship situated within critical transnational studies also problematized belonging by mapping the concept's capacity to be decoupled from an anti-assimilationist stance (McKinnon, 2008; Schweppe & Sharma, 2015). Specific to higher education, however, belonging demonstrates a tendency toward minimizing and invalidating structural inequitable social systems that are replicated within institutions of higher education (Flint, 2021). The following sections, as an extension of this background literature, turn toward the U.S. refugee resettlement context with a particular focus on pertinent concepts to this study's investigation of refugees and higher education.

Conceptual Orientation: Refugees and Higher Education

Refugees and higher education are the central issues of this research. However, these topics are entangled with education's function within the politicized realm of refugee rights. American public education, as governed by U.S. national and state governments, is informed by politics, policy, and society. Aside from the global geopolitical landscape on refugees, the U.S. maintains its own refugee resettlement practices, described through policy and law. However, the place-specific idiosyncrasies of U.S. refugee resettlement, reception, and placement echo the global variation of refugee rights implementation, evidenced through detailing the unique

sociopolitical context. Additionally, the cumulative effects of U.S. refugee resettlement policy reveal connections, especially regarding the prioritization of economic individualism—termed self-sufficiency—and the influences of the sociopolitical context on local level implementation. These three features of the idiosyncratic U.S. response to resettled refugees provide a foundation for the conceptual orientation on refugees and higher education that follows.

Statistics on resettlement and higher education access are essential to this portion of the review of literature that demonstrates the broad global landscape of refugee higher education. Based on data from 2016-2020, UNHCR (2020a) received 108,197 resettlement applications and, of those, only 78,761 were resettled to the U.S. during this four-year period (Appendix C). Relatedly, UNHCR (2019b) indicated that in 2018, 87,833—only 3% of refugees—were enrolled in higher education, while 37% of the global population was enrolled. Pertaining to refugees, educational access is particularly politicized and socio-culturally inscribed given the multiple bureaucratic processes that must be navigated for survival. Yet, extant scholarship argues that refugees' higher education has generative outcomes that exceed traditional metrics of college student success, such as continued enrollment and degree attainment. This section of the review focuses more narrowly on refugees and higher education and is outlined to parallel the previous sections specific to the U.S.: policy and law influences, sociopolitical influences, and effects of refugees and higher education.

Influences of policy and law, treated in the first of three sections to follow, include the variability of education as a human right, (Dryden-Peterson, 2016b; Unangst, 2020), neoliberalism (Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce, 2019; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018; Slowey et al., 2020), and transnationalism (Arvanitis et al., 2019; Dryden-Peterson, 2016a; Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010; Hailu, 2020). As related concepts, education as a human

right is an ideal conditioned by how it is implemented; more specifically, neoliberalism is a threat to the promise of education as a human right while transnationalism is a refugee mechanism for expanding positive outcomes of education throughout non-country-specific networks. This area focuses broadly on non-gender specific studies of refugees' experiences; refugee women's higher educational experiences are an emergent strand of U.S. scholarship.

Specific to sociopolitical influences, scholarship describes the effects of self-sufficiency related to risk (Koyama, 2015; Rodriguez, 2018) and promotes higher education finance alternatives (UAARM, n.d.; Unangst & de Wit, 2020), as well the realities of pervasive othering and misrecognition of refugees in higher education (Bragg, 2021; Hailu et al., 2021; Mangan & Winter, 2017). This area of scholarship establishes a baseline for experiences of othering, approaches in navigating geopolitical systems of citizenship and related rights, the liminal and fluctuating realities of moving and attempting to re-establishing normalcy in non-home countries, and the exigencies of establishing life in a new context, including negotiating educational access amid U.S. prioritization of economic self-sufficiency.

Lastly, the effects of refugee education amid scholarly treatment include transnational community uplift (Bajwa et al., 2017; Crea, 2016; Khadkha & Rinker, 2018; Saelua et al., 2021; Tsu, 2021), supports and assets through transnationalism (Abdo & Craven, 2018; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2021; Koyama & Ghosh, 2018), and intersectional equity with and for refugee higher education (Acker, 2006; Hailu et al., 2021; Kezar, 2014; Laker & Davis, 2015; Mazon, 2010; Roberts et al., 2018; Tienda, 2013; Unangst & Crea, 2020; Zhao et al., 2005). Collectively, this corpus of literature pushes educational ideology beyond the notion of *economic* or *social* mobility to, instead, reflect higher education access and attainment as an element of transnational community shared among refugees. Importantly, the relational redirection away from money and

toward shared resources, assets, and betterment disrupt neoliberal ideologies pervasive in higher education and in the U.S. hegemonic implementation of economic self-sufficiency.

U.S. Resettlement Policy

Refugees selected for resettlement in the U.S. encounter policy before even entering the country. U.S. refugee resettlement entails a stringent series of screenings, batteries of tests, and multiple bureaucratic applications and forms that take place in a country of asylum but are conducted and reviewed by agents of the U.S. state. These interactions serve as an introduction to the enforcement of U.S. refugee resettlement policy and law. A brief overview of the resettlement process to enter the U.S. enables further critique on the effects of policy and law on refugees and educational access.

The following description is highly sanitized and omits significant exposure to homelessness, hunger and dehydration, violence, or death. Also, the path from displacement to resettlement entails a series of transitions that are not always linear, as presented here (U.S. State Department, n.d.). First, violence or persecution begins in a home country. Then, those targeted must depart and enter another country. Once another country is reached, targets of violence and persecution may apply for asylum; as a caveat not all countries will admit or support asylum seekers' applications. Next, is a period of waiting in temporary resettlement locations, colloquially referred to as refugee camps. Some refugees are born and live decades, if not their entire lives, in temporary locations (Waters & LeBlanc, 2005). If the asylum application is accepted, the applicant is no longer a refugee. If the refugee is selected for resettlement to the U.S., they undergo an additional battery of surveillance including biometric data collection (with a fee), translation of documents into languages other than English, and medical and psychiatric evaluations. Then, they must schedule and attend an appointment for case and biometric data

review. If approved, refugees are referred to the U.S. Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) and are assigned to one of nine voluntary agencies (VOLAG) with international and U.S. offices. USRAP administers an additional medical exam and preliminary culture orientation. VOLAGs provide additional cultural orientation and assist in the physical relocation of refugees from a country of asylum to the U.S. VOLAGs arrange travel plans once USRAP approves, and the VOLAG loans refugees the money, to be repaid post-resettlement, for short-term travel day hotels and airfare. Refugee resettlement in the U.S. is described as a durable solution because refugees are eligible to obtain citizenship.

VOLAGs are an essential feature of U.S. refugee resettlement policy and law. These agencies provide a bridge between refugees' countries of asylum and arrival. Once refugees enter the U.S., other typical VOLAG-offered reception and placement services include airport reception, a hot meal on arrival, and transportation to a minimally furnished apartment. Then, within three months post-arrival, VOLAGs additionally support social security applications, public health screenings and vaccinations, children's enrollment in compulsory school, and acclimation to the local community (U.S. State Department, n.d.). Some VOLAGs offer English and job skill classes and basic immigration law support. Relatedly, VOLAGs are only able to offer a limited range of services within the confines of funded activities through the U.S. State Department.

Beyond the initial three months post-arrival, refugee support is coordinated and partially funded through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (n.d.) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Matching Grant Program funds case work, employment services, basic education training, and administration for a period of up to 180 days post-arrival (Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.). Funds dispersed to VOLAGs through this mechanism must be

matched with in-kind donations of time or supplies from local communities. Correspondingly, many education-related topics are coordinated through local networks on a voluntary basis; classes in basic English, civics for the U.S. citizenship exam, job skills, and cultural orientation comprise some areas delegated most frequently to volunteers.

Voluntarism in refugee resettlement processes presents a range of effects. Drawing from qualitative methodology and interview research methods, Harding and Labman (2020) reported on increased community mobilization in concert with refugee resettlement agencies in response to heightened awareness of national-level awareness of anti-immigrant sentiment “representing one manifestation of citizen action to counter what many Americans see as unjust policies” (p. 248). Voluntarism in refugee support can provide beneficial cultural and knowledge exchange between refugees and locals; additionally, volunteers may have more flexibility in how they engage with refugees where, for example, VOLAG employees are constrained to specific topics and time periods. However, the reliance on voluntary participation in refugee resettlement support in the U.S. also presents potential challenges. Volunteers may have incomplete knowledge or inconsistently convey interpretation of refugee resettlement policy. An additional possible challenge is volunteers’ decreased commitment to engagement over time (Harding & Labman, 2020). While this study drew a connection between volunteers’ commitment to disrupting injustice with refugee resettlement support, funding is another factor that influences the networks of people working or volunteering and the types of services available.

U.S. Sociopolitical Context

Beyond the realm of policy, society and politics additionally shape refugee resettlement in the U.S. The contemporary U.S. political climate of xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment threatens processes of refugee resettlement and the lives of refugees already resettled (Allyn,

2019; Karas, 2019; Mathema & Carratala, 2020; Watson, 2021). Positioning education as a better or, at least, parallel means to achieving economic self-sufficiency reductively assumes more education results in better employment, as troubled by Koyama (2015) in a U.S. investigation based in VOLAG-based education classes and by Rodriguez (2018) in a study on newcomer im/migrant youth in the U.S. This disposition elides notions of higher education as a process of developing critical thinking skills and, relatedly, contributing to knowledge production. Embedded within these lines of logic – employment as primary and education as a means to employment – are notions of refugees as helpless or drains on public goods and services (Koyama, 2015). Refugees in the U.S. are precariously positioned in this juxtaposition which evokes notions of risk from foundational cultural studies (Beck, 1992). Risk is an enmeshment of globalization with its uncertain consequences, or “incalculability of their consequences” (Beck, 1992, p. 22). Specifically, deficit positioning of refugees is a byproduct of assuming their risk to others’ employment and a manifestation of xenophobia pervasive in the U.S. sociopolitical context (Koyama, 2015; Rodriguez, 2018).

As a global convening on refugees, the Global Refugee Forum (2019) demonstrated limitations of well-intentioned international human rights law (IHRL) and how the U.S. sociopolitical context, including deficit views of refugees, are legible. The Global Refugee Forum (2019) was broadly attended and featured many nations’ endorsements of renewed vocalizations of refugee support through the Global Compact on Refugees (UNHCR, 2018). This outcome is an indicator of nations’ intentions to meaningfully acknowledge and ethically respond to refugees. However, a limitation of this event and its products is that the Global Compact on Refugees is not law (UNHCR, 2018). Additionally, this text does not entail the creation of a treaty body, which is essential for monitoring and reporting on the values, ethics,

and actionable tenets of IHRL. Thus, the Global Compact (UNHCR, 2018) is soft human rights law. The phrase soft human rights law refers to the reality that human rights offenses are not arbitrated like criminality in individual nations' legal systems; rather, human rights offenses customarily lead to sanctions or other forms of geopolitical pressure when a nation-state is found to have committed or allowed abnegation of human rights.

The event also evidenced the facets of unwelcome and deficit positioning toward refugees that is endemic to the U.S. sociopolitical context. For example, the U.S. is not a co-signer of the human rights law for refugees and instead opts to follow its own policy. Subsequently, U.S.-based human rights violations are much more difficult to bring to international attention. Furthermore, the U.S. response during the Global Refugee Forum (UNHCR, 2020) demonstrated the sociopolitical dynamics present in the U.S.

Specific to U.S., American officials' decisions pertaining to refugees and human rights violations clarify the limited reach of human rights as soft law. For example, U.S. Ambassador Andrew Bremberg (U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva, 2019) addressed the forum and pledged \$125 million toward UNHCR's 2020 goals. These funds were earmarked to fund VOLAGs that facilitate resettlement and early-stage refugee support. By comparison, the U.S. executive office of the president of the United States (2018) budgeted \$14.2 billion for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and \$8.3 billion USD for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In total, the allocation for CBP and ICE is \$22.5 billion USD. CBP and ICE are notorious for targeting and forcibly removing asylum seekers from the U.S., including those arriving at the southern U.S. border with Mexico. Comparatively, the funds for acceptance of those fleeing violence were 55.5% less (\$22.375 million USD) than those funds budgeted for CBP operations to deter asylum seekers at the southern U.S. border. These budget allocations

indicate a twofold U.S. political purpose: to provide a modicum of federal funding toward refugee resettlement through a high-profile and highly visible European context, namely where a European state is a successful refugee's country of first asylum. A second purpose is to surreptitiously provide more robust funding to deter asylum seekers at the southern U.S. border. Essentially, this juxtaposition highlights the hierarchical and differential American governmental approaches to groups of people unified by a similar motivation to leave their homes to avoid violence and persecution. The differential valuation of the European versus Central and South American contexts is central to this financial difference. Would-be refugees (seeking asylum) through Central and South America are deemed "illegal" in striking contrast to people similarly fleeing violence and persecution who are vetted through a different country of first asylum.

Another example of the U.S.'s official stance on refugee rights challenging human rights law was evident during The Global Refugee Forum in 2019. This forum of many U.N. member and non-member nation-states was widely attended and directed renewed attention to state responsibility for refugees. However, the U.S. representation demonstrated a sociopolitical and geographical stance toward refugees that contradicts refugee human rights law. In an address to the Global Refugee Forum, U.S. Ambassador Andrew Bremberg (U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva, 2019) stated the U.S. government level priority is to "establish the necessary conditions that will allow people to return to their homes" (para. 1). This is important because the United Nations requires, via International Human Rights Law (IHRL), that states provide support, rights, and protections to refugees based on refugees' country of domicile or residence (Smith, 2019). Additionally, the 1951 Convention codified a law of non-refoulement, or not returning refugees to their home country unless it is absolutely safe and the refugee in question so chooses to return. Subsequently, this speech to an audience of nation-state

representatives functioned to clarify that the U.S. priority toward refugees is to primarily pursue their return. This matters because the statement directly flouted codified human rights law, which specifies that the right of return, or repatriation, is not the ultimate decision of nation-states but rather of individual refugees. The statement further unsettled the perception of refugee resettlement to the U.S. as a durable solution, which entails pathways to citizenship, not removal.

Immigration and policy advocacy scholars further elucidate the sociopolitical dynamics embedded within Ambassador Bremberg's statements at the regional level. An example of the profound effects of the sociopolitical is present in scholarship from Roth et al.'s (2018) study conducted in South Carolina, a new destination state (Terrazas, 2011). The phrase "new destination states" refers to specific places within the U.S. that are considered nontraditional locations for immigrants and includes "14 states primarily in the southern and central regions... South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Delaware, Arkansas, South Dakota, Nevada, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina Wyoming, Idaho, Indiana, and Mississippi (listed in descending order of growth)" (Terrazas, 2011, para. 5).

Roth et al.'s (2018) study qualitatively investigated the advocacy and policy change intentions of people who worked in immigration support and demonstrated how xenophobic and discriminatory sociopolitical dynamics in the region resulted in structural and systemic factors that affectively and materially impacted immigrants and refugees. This study did not disaggregate the migration trajectory types of clients served by the participant employees, but Roth et al. (2018) did report the regional origin of immigrants in South Carolina at the time of the study, including people from Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Participants worked in immigrant serving agencies and reported that they understood immigrant rights and protection to be particularly vulnerable in South Carolina, yet did not have sufficient time, knowledge, or

resources to be proactive in contesting the situation; others expressed fear of political retribution, which they described as “risky for the organization” (Roth et al., 2018, p. 692). The strong influence of the sociopolitical context is essential to unpacking these sentiments. When a pro-immigrant advocacy stance is understood as contested and politicized, some with potential advocacy power do not exercise it. An important takeaway from this study is that migrants resettled in “receiving contexts with harsh, anti-immigrant laws such as South Carolina may be in even greater need of support” (Roth et al., 2018, p. 696). Additionally, Roth et al. (2018) did not include immigrant or refugee participants in their study.

Refugees navigate multiple and overlapping layers of policy and the effects of policy that determine sociopolitical landscapes. These findings from a new destination state (Terraza, 2011) indicated how people in positions of power for advocacy felt uncomfortable with leveraging their power (Roth et al., 2018). In comparison with Former Ambassador Bremberg’s (U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva, 2019) statements prioritizing repatriation for refugees, findings from Roth et al. (2018) demonstrated a localized manifestation of uncertainty that mirrors the national-level sociopolitical subtext of refusing refugees. At the national level, public officials representing the U.S. promote refoulement or repatriation, which is explicitly barred by other multinational agreements on refugees without the assurance of safety in the home country and refugees’ explicit consent; meanwhile U.S. new destination states compound this othering with their own policies and practices that further complicate refugees’ life experiences. The relationship among people, their beliefs, and places is evident in this matrix of multilayered oppression produced through the sociopolitical context.

U.S. Approaches to Self-Sufficiency

The U.S. Refugee Act (1980) established law and policy pertaining to resettled refugees, and this section addresses the aspect of self-sufficiency outlined for refugees. Self-sufficiency is established and codified in the U.S. Refugee Act (1980) in the following terms:

...sufficient resources for employment training and placement in order to achieve economic self-sufficiency among refugees as quickly as possible, provide refugees with the opportunity to acquire sufficient English language training to enable them to become effectively resettled as quickly as possible, insure [sic] that cash assistance is made available to refugees in such a manner as not to discourage their economic self-sufficiency, in accordance with subsection (e)(2). (Sec. 411. [8 U.S.C. 1521] paras. 7, 8, 9)

Notably, this law does not explicate “sufficient resources,” “self-sufficiency” related to finances, or the word “sufficient” as it pertains to English training. Akin to the disconnection between the normative framework for human rights and local implementation thereof, interpretation of sufficient is broadly conceived among voluntary agencies throughout the U.S. However, Section B of the Refugee Act (1980) additionally states Congress’s intent for U.S. resettled refugees to “be placed on jobs as soon as possible after their arrival in the United States” (Sec. 411. [8 U.S.C. 1521], para. 12). An overemphasis on economic self-sufficiency eclipses other features of refugee resettlement outlined in the Refugee Act (1980). Subsequently, while the degree of English training remains vague in refugee resettlement work, the localized deployment of self-sufficiency is widely understood and implemented as getting refugees into

work, of any kind, and deterring refugees from seeking public assistance, although they do qualify under specific circumstances.

The Refugee Act (1980) explained that cash and medical assistance are available to refugees “during the thirty-six month period beginning with the first month in which such refugee has entered the United States” (Sec. 412. [8 U.S.C. 1521], section (e)4/ 1, (2)(A)). The Refugee Act (1980) names the phrase “economic self-sufficiency” 10 times, frequently as a condition for maintaining refugee status in the U.S. or receiving specific services, rights, or protections; yet the law is silent on higher education except for one section that stipulates that “cash assistance shall not be made available to refugees who are full-time students in institutions of higher education (as defined by the Director after consultation with the Secretary of Education)” (Sec. 412. [8 U.S.C. 1521], Section (e)4/(1)(2)(B)).

Two insights particularly relevant to investigating refugee higher education are present in these components of the Refugee Act (1980). First, the law is insufficiently clear in guidance on the definition or operationalization of sufficient resources for training and economic self-sufficiency. This ambiguity opens the law the various degrees of interpretation and implementation at the local level. For example, one VOLAG may view economic self-sufficiency as placement in a profession of previous skill and training and sufficient education and training on the basis of opportunities afforded to U.S. citizens (e.g., free and publicly available kindergarten-12th grade at minimum and/or the full array of technical and higher education options); another agency may implement economic self-sufficiency as any job, regardless of skills or expertise, and sufficient training as a one hour webinar on U.S. culture. Second, the Refugee Act (1980) specifies a binarized option for refugee higher education students also eligible, and thus in need of, cash assistance. Refugees in this situation can either

opt to enroll full-time in higher education, which precludes assistance, or keep the necessary cash assistance for essentials like food and utilities and either only enroll in higher education part-time or not at all.

Additional refugee policies present more specific guidance than the law. Resettlement agencies primarily aim to secure employment for new arrivals, ideally within the first six weeks. VOLAGs are charged with emphasizing basic professional skills, English, and cultural orientation in alignment with State Department-funded activities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement [DHHS ORR], 2012; Office of Refugee Resettlement, n.d.). Due to high caseloads, constant threats to defund refugee resettlement networks, and minimal existing funds to maintain operations, VOLAGs are not realistically able to account for a holistic view of refugees' integration, especially due to funding and policy constraints on approved activities. VOLAG funding is limited to essential resettlement and placement services, employment preparation, and rent and utilities assistance for the first three months post-resettlement, and then a much more limited version of these services for up to five years (DHHS ORR, 2012). This is remarkable and essential to the present study, though, because VOLAGs are also the most authoritative and familiar bodies providing newly resettled refugees with information about navigating their new context.

Access to education for adult refugees is overlaid by the economic priorities of employment: the U.S. prioritizes refugees' economic self-sufficiency (Koyama, 2015). Thus, refugees receive basic instruction in English language, U.S. cultural norms, and rudimentary job skills, yet within six months at most, must become gainfully employed. As a result, only 5-10% of adult refugees in the U.S. access further or higher education (Capps & Fix, 2015 as cited in Perry & Mallozzi, 2017, p. 511). Similarly, Rodriguez (2015) problematized the positioning of

refugees as subjects of economic worthiness through a genealogical framework to analyze the Refugee Act (1980) and its impact on teacher education.

Resettlement Workers' Role in Self-Sufficiency

Scholarship on refugees' educational experiences indicates there is a relationship between resettlement workers, who implement resettlement policy, and refugees' higher education access. Perry and Mallozzi (2017) argued that pervasive policy for U.S. resettlement challenge refugee education, specifically, "a primary goal of the resettlement program is for refugees to become self-supporting within a few months; toward that end, refugees in the US are provided with English language classes and job training" (p. 511). This argument links U.S. resettled refugees' presence in higher education with how self-sufficiency is deployed. The essential and relational link here is resettlement workers: people who work with refugees influence their relationships to place, including what services and supports are made available to them and those that are not. Perry and Mallozzi (2017) continued this line of argumentation by stating that "social workers, educational gatekeepers, and others who work with refugees would benefit from increased awareness of their own (and their institutions') worldviews and how they compare with those of prospective refugee students so that they can better support their education" (p. 511). Although little literature explores the intersubjectivity among refugees, resettlement workers, and place, these relationships that may constrict or empower refugees in higher educational access are important. Specifically, the sociopolitical context does not exist on a plane beyond people; rather, the ideological and political rules, whether tacit and softly enforced or legislated and rigorously monitored, are expressed to refugees through interactions with people in the place of resettlement.

In another such example from the field of social work, Shaw et al. (2021) interviewed 88 refugees resettled in the U.S. from 2015-2020 and found that participants prioritized safety, education, and social connections, which extends beyond the economic self-sufficiency as codified in U.S. law. To contextualize these findings Shaw et al. (2021) also introduced and argued that integration “varies by context... [and] the US prioritizes indicators of economic success” (p. 2). Furthermore, U.S.-resettled refugees’ priorities are not in full alignment with U.S. policy codified in the Refugee Act (1980). Shaw et al. (2021) further argued that “neoliberal social welfare policies in the US are unlikely to change in the near future, and economic realities that limit people from advancing in employment opportunities and education will persist” (p. 14). Integration operationalized as economic self-sufficiency (Refugee Act, 1980) at the federal, juridical, and local levels relegates all non-economic facets of refugee life as unimportant.

More specific to the role of refugee non-profits, Ramos and Sarubbi (2021) examined power and agency among Burmese and Nepalese refugee parents in Colorado who were all involved with “RISE,” an education non-profit. Through qualitative community based research (CBR) and six focus groups, Ramos and Sarubbi (2021) presented findings that participating refugee parents experienced less positional power than school leaders; they also demonstrated agency evocative of Gaventa’s (1980) third dimension of power, especially “elevated consciousness about concerns, resources, and development of specific strategies to seek change” (p. 39). Importantly, the authors noted the essential empowering role of the affiliated non-profit in facilitating the manifestation of power, specifically transforming refugee “communities’ agency into recognized power” (Ramos & Sarubbi, 2021, p. 39). In essence, this work empirically documents how refugee non-profits are capable of and are already advocating

alongside refugee communities to leverage their collective mobilizations for recognition, especially in educational spaces.

Neoliberal Grounds of Self-Sufficiency

Policy on refugees' education is ambiguous and, coupled with the primacy of economic self-sufficiency (Refugee Act, 1980), the lack of clear policy protections for education exacerbates inequity and contributes to refugee disparities. Toward clarification of neoliberalism regarding U.S. refugee resettlement, Dykstra-DeVette (2018) advanced the position that the implementation of U.S. refugee resettlement policy results in a dynamic where "interpretations of empowerment as economic participation reify neoliberal values, in this case inaugurating refugees into the role of consumers playing an important part in the daily maintenance of Western economic dominance" (p. 184). Neoliberalism is the introduction of market ideologies into non-economic matters. The neoliberal "disciplinary apparatus" (Harvey, 2000, p. 312) that ameliorates the inconsistent and hierarchical purposes of capitalism, has become a parallax for so-called successful refugee placement and resettlement in the U.S. Harvey (2000) continued this theorization of neoliberalism's form and function in modernity by explaining how class status is a "positionality within space in relationship to capital accumulation" (p. 310). Thus, the politicized space wherein bodies – such as refugees' – produce and consume capital is altered by neoliberal applications of free market ideologies and privatization. Especially in the U.S. where economic self-sufficiency takes primacy, neoliberal tensions emerge that condition refugees' value and possibilities for integration in U.S. society.

In a comparative study of the U.S. and Germany, Damaschke-Deitrick and Bruce (2019) argued that "federal actions and funding guidelines lead state and local education systems to develop and implement programs adhering to... criteria but with a degree of flexibility,

impacting students including refugees” (p. 34). U.S. refugee resettlement policy purports to prioritize integration; practices that prioritize employment and economic self-sufficiency, while placing an implicit deterring effect on further education, only fulfill a limited form of integration. Scholarship on refugee resettlement and integration has well-documented the underlying assumptions and values of neoliberalism and individualism that forcefully determine prioritization of economic self-sufficiency (Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce, 2019; Dykstra-DeVette, 2018; Shaw et al., 2021). Official U.S. policies and practices mediated through the state assist refugees in establishing themselves only up to a predetermined and finite point: employment.

As a consequence of (inter)national- and regional-level othering, multiple sociopolitical contextual layers cumulatively overlay refugees’ individual geographic trajectories and lifespan outcomes. Global geopolitical, national law and policy, and regional sociopolitical dynamics have recognizable effects in individual lives. Regardless of the realm or level of sociopolitical ideologies that structure refugees’ lives and how they are perceived, politics and social dynamics directly mediate lived experience. Also, politics inform localized social systems and structures specific to refugees’ places of resettlement. Although international law, the Convention on the Status of Refugees (1951) and the Office of the Higher Commissioner for Refugees (OHCHR) outlined clear criteria to define those eligible for refugee status along with their rights and protections, without requisite power to regulate or enforce them; because of optional nation-state participation in the soft law of human rights, the broad uptake of these ideals is limited largely at the discretion of participating U.N. nation states and those non-member states that co-sign to the Convention on the Rights of Refugees (1951).

The following section addresses how these dynamics present variability in self-sufficiency. Specific to the U.S., these status protections for refugees are further delimited in the current U.S. sociopolitical context. At the policy level, refugee lives are conditioned by multiple bureaucratic procedures to prove their worthiness for resettlement. Then, once resettled in the U.S., refugees encounter another test of worthiness in the form of self-sufficiency. Social and political dynamics in the U.S. level of place of resettlement mirror the global geopolitical variability in refugee rights implementation and, more specifically, the idiosyncratic effects of U.S. refugee resettlement policy and law. The rise of authoritarianism, anti-immigrant sentiment and legislation, and U.S. states' largely passive response further complicate refugees' experiences at the local level (Allyn, 2019; Karas, 2019; Mathema & Carratala, 2020; Watson, 2021). In the process of seeking asylum and pursuing resettlement, refugees have interactions with people who represent nations, but once resettled in the U.S., voluntary agencies become responsible for state-authorized and funded activities for resettlement support. Thus, the issues and challenges of implementation outlined in the previous sections manifest through hyper-localized and interpersonal relationships with VOLAGs and the people working within them. The following sections focus more specifically on how these geopolitical, policy-informed, and sociopolitical dynamics permeate the sociopolitical contexts refugees encounter in the U.S. and directly pertain to higher education.

Policy and Law Influences

This section addresses the specific influences of policy and law on refugee (higher) education. The first area, variability of education as a human right, examines the shortcomings of higher education in achieving education for all and refugees' human right to higher education (Dryden-Peterson, 2016b; Unangst, 2020). Additional scholarship connects the failure of

facilitating refugees' human right to higher education to the increasing tendency of higher education toward market ideologies and the U.S. hyperfocus on economic integration (Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce, 2019; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018; Slowey et al., 2020).

Transnationalism is the third and final area of policy and law influences on refugees and higher education. Transnationalism refers to affective and relational connections that transcend geographic bounds. Literature pertinent to this area details refugees' transnational identities as essential to their educational outcomes (Arvanitis et al., 2019; Dryden-Peterson, 2016a; Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010; Hailu, 2020). Notably, Liebig and Tronstad's (2018) and Dryden-Peterson and Giles' (2010) works specifically address women refugees, higher education, and policy, although not specific to the U.S.

Variability of Education as a Human Right

Varied implementation of human rights, including for education, can be traced through the influences and effects of policy and law. As addressed in previous sections, the international human rights laws are unequivocal on the matter of refugee rights and protections, including the right to education. However, human rights implementations are varied across the international landscape of refugee resettlement contexts. One comparative education policy analysis investigation addresses this shortcoming globally (Dryden-Peterson, 2016b); additional scholarship further specifies the failure of facilitating refugees' human rights to higher education in the U.S. (Unangst, 2020). Importantly, the disjuncture of implementation implicit to human rights, specifically the global normative framework (UNHCR, 2019) along with its embedded reliance on nations to safeguard those rights, additionally manifests in presenting false hope of education as a pathway to future socio-political participation and in how refugee education is approached in the U.S.

Refugees do not possess citizenship. This lack of legal and political recognition delimits the extent to which refugees' education can be leveraged for comprehensive post-education social participation. In a historical policy and multisite qualitative study paradigmatically framed by comparative education, Dryden-Peterson (2016b) investigated the extent to which education for all—an education as a human right practice agenda—afforded refugees' rights to education. By juxtaposing the historical through contemporary policy guidance documentation ($n=214$) on universal human rights with multisite in-depth interviews with refugees ($n=208$), Dryden-Peterson (2016b) argued through this rigorous empirical work that "...despite integration in national education systems, in no nation-state did refugees, as of this writing, have the status that would enable the future economic, political, and social participation for which that education sought to prepare them" (p. 479). This investigation exposed how denying refugees access to citizenship superseded and derailed the promise of education for, at least, a modicum of employment and financial security as well as full socio-political participation customarily associated with educational attainment. Overall, this study contributed to documenting the policy-practice disjuncture between the *ideals* of human rights and localized nation-state authorized implementation, but also, and specifically pertinent to refugees, outlined how this disjuncture manifests as functionally predicated on refugees' access to legal recognition.

Further scholarly contributions also examined human rights implementation but specific to the level of higher education and in the geographic context of the U.S. (Unangst, 2020). For example, in an exploratory case study of U.S. higher educational institutions (HEIs) and their public information for refugees, Unangst (2020) identified 26 HEIs in Maine and an additional 11 in Idaho to answer the research question "How do American HEIs in two states, across institutional type, currently support refugees and thereby reflect the human rights discourse?" (p.

117). This study evaluated webpage content, broadly, about refugees in parallel to the human rights normative framework and policy guidance documents. Among the findings, most prominent were instances of performative or anecdotal promotional content “characterized as incidental activity” (Unangst, 2020, p. 121). The most densely represented manifestations in response to webpage search queries of “refugee” resulted in disjointed content that did not reflect broader institutional commitments to refugees or education as a human right.

Based on this selective case study of HEIs in two U.S. states, there is broad variation in the types and capacity for meaningful refugee engagement and fulfillment of education as a human right. Unangst (2020) argued “this diversity of activity around refugee issues reflects the differentiated landscape of American HEIs” (p. 124). Unangst (2020) also noted that “a cohesive response to the current refugee crises is lacking across these state education landscapes, as well as within individual HEIs” (p. 123). Akin to the disjointed and uncoordinated responses across multinational and nation-state levels regarding refugee support, welcome and reception, and implementation of guiding frameworks, this study established a corollary fragmented representation of cohesive policy-practice at the higher education institutional level, which is essential to investigating and theorizing refugee higher education in the U.S.

National and institutional policy considerations relate to the problem of refugees’ higher education access. Maringe et al.’s (2017) study of refugee students in South African higher education theorized and empirically documented policy-practice disjunctures, or the misconnection “between policy provisions regarding the rights and privileges of refugees/refugee students in higher education on the one hand, and the practical implementation of these policies on the other” (p. 210). Importantly, this argumentation points scholars grappling with intentions towards refugees and higher education juxtaposed with the realities refugees confront as they

attempt to pursue education post-resettlement. Maringe et al. (2017) found refugee policy and practice in South Africa's higher education context are not aligned or well-coordinated. They further argued that the policy-practice divide emerged in two ways that delimit refugee higher education access: 1). (inter)national policy exists about refugees, but it does not include higher education, and 2). the modern emphasis on internationalization positions normative groups as recipients and beneficiaries of higher education while omitting refugee students (Maringe et al., 2017). Similarly, a common barrier to refugee educational attainment is the focus on employability, which leads to perceptions of education as inaccessible when work and self-sufficiency are priorities (Maringe et al., 2017).

The scholarly contributions of Dryden-Peterson (2017) and Unangst (2020) demonstrated the vast limitations of education as a human right, specifically in achieving education for all and higher education access with and for refugee populations. Regarding a comparison of human rights to education as envisioned at the global, geopolitical level with localized manifestations of refugees' lived experiences, Dryden-Peterson (2017) outlined how the legal status for citizenship already foreclosed potential positive outcomes from educational attainment across refugees' lifespans. From an additional comparative methodological perspective, yet specific to two U.S. states' publicly accredited higher education institutions, Unangst (2020) highlighted the anecdotal and performative features of college and university webpages advancing refugee topics; this investigation added an additional layer evidencing the variability in human rights implementation.

This area of scholarship collectively advances the argument that direct pathways to refugees' higher education is overly complex and undermined without the corollary necessity of facilitating citizenship. Essentially, citizenship is a feature of legitimacy for refugees' full

participation in refugee hosting contexts. Legal recognition, through citizenship, facilitates the full measure of ideals codified in the normative framework for human rights: with citizenship, refugees can more readily access education and, as a future-oriented component of educational attainment, achieve full participation in society, politics, and work. Furthermore, that U.S. higher educational institutions' operationalization of refugees' admission, inclusion, and material supports are opaque and anecdotal presents an additional layer of complexity that needlessly obfuscates HEIs' responsibility to historically minoritized students. U.S. higher education's ambivalence towards refugees further substantiates the "variability" in human rights implementation that functions to expand the country's distance from achieving goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

When tertiary education policies and practices are illegible or incomprehensible to refugee students – who are intended to benefit from them – their ability to access and successfully navigate college is equally complicated. In short, if colleges and universities intend to practice the ethics of equity and accessibility they proffer in their mission and vision statements, then students with forced migration backgrounds must also be able to account for themselves and their experiences. The material and relational effects of promoting – if not genuinely implementing – diversity, equity, and inclusion with students from forced migration and refugee backgrounds cannot be realized in higher education without also systematically applying these ethical commitments to deconstruct faulty notions of refugees as homogeneous or synonymous with other categories of international college students.

Neoliberalism

For the context of this review, neoliberalism is not only market ideologies; herein, neoliberalism constructs refugees' economic participation, such as earning and spending money,

as essential to successful resettlement in Western contexts (Dykstra-DeVette, 2018). Following the previous scholarly contributions specific to human rights, neoliberalism is an additional policy-informed influence on refugees' higher education. Importantly, manifestations of neoliberalism specific to refugees occur across levels: at the national policy level dictating economic self-sufficiency (Refugee Act, 1980), the local level where self-sufficiency is operationalized (Koyama, 2015), and at the institutional level where policy-informed ideologies manifest in higher education and its purpose for refugees (Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce, 2019).

Based on policy analysis from EU member countries, Slowey et al. (2020) centered inclusion and equality to investigate the European landscape for forced migrants and educational opportunities. To account for the situation of ageing populations of forced migrants, Slowey et al. (2020) recommended an intersectional systems perspective – not to be conflated with intersectionality as navigating multiple systems of oppression as in Critical Race Theory (Crenshaw et al., 2000). Specifically, Slowey et al. (2020) discussed an intersectional systems approach instead as the intersection of political systems such as those occupied by individuals or learners, civic society, public policy, and employers to detail their collective impact on higher education institutions and systems. Findings through this lens, for example, demonstrated a pervasive approach to refugees' higher education as “a pathway... to labour market and economic integration” (Slowey et al., 2020, p. 7). As a note, “integration” is not clearly operationally defined, though Slowey et al. (2020) noted features of integration as related to the “economic and sociocultural, including opening access to education” (p. 7). As a result of these findings, the neoliberal ideology in this European context translated to a widespread reductive belief that higher education's purpose is to facilitate economic integration.

Additional evidence from the European context corroborates the view of higher education as entangled with refugee's economic integration. For example, through support from the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), Liebig and Tronstad (2018) investigated refugee women's integration in the European Union (EU) predicated on the relationship between employment and educational attainment. Notably, this research does not operationally define "integration," which has multiple meanings pertaining to refugees' experiences across international contexts. However, this research does specifically focus on refugee women's employment in places of resettlement as compared to educational attainment levels. For example, Liebig and Tronstad's (2018) findings indicated that European-resettled refugee women's skills are underutilized in their employment capacities and recognized educational attainment presents a barrier to integration; without a clear operational definition, "integration" could refer to achievement of economic, social, political, or cultural successes, which can take any number of potential contradictory interpretations. Regardless, Liebig and Tronstad's (2018) work did illuminate a comparative perspective on employment types disaggregated by participants' educational levels and compared between refugee and non-refugee women in the EU. Precisely, Liebig and Tronstad (2018) reported that refugee women's skills are underutilized in resettlement countries in their study, as evidenced by comparisons of part- and full-time work among refugee women, non-EU immigrant women, and native-born women. Underuse of qualifications was explicated as "employed refugee women with tertiary education also have a high incidence of over-qualification – ... working in jobs that would only require a lower level of qualifications... 40% of those ... were over-qualified" (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018, p. 23). Refugee women were most densely represented in part-time work. At one end of educational attainment, refugee women in European countries with higher education credentials

than their non-refugee peers encounter employment inequity; also, non-refugee women tended to have higher educational attainment than refugee women. Thus, an implication here is that refugee women's educational advancement is disincentivized based on persistent and pervasive lack of translating further education to social and economic mobility.

Findings from these European investigations signal that higher education is entangled with neoliberal ideologies of refugees' economic participation and that refugee women in Europe's EU and OECD member states fare worse in employment than their non-refugee women peers. From a surface level perspective, these scholarly works seemingly contradict. For example, evidence from Slowey et al. (2020) pointed to refugees' higher education access as linked to participation in the local society through economic integration. Liebig and Tronstad's (2018) work reported that among refugee women, of whom almost half were under-employed, past educational attainment did not translate to professional engagements on par with their educational backgrounds. Juxtaposing these two findings contradicts the supposition that higher education facilitates refugee women's economic integration. However, the lack of a clear definition of integration opens the concept to broad interpretation. In Slowey et al.'s (2020) general depiction, integration refers to economic, sociocultural, and educational elements, and does not specify the degree of access nor guarantees for outcomes of these forms of integration. From this perspective, refugee women's disincentivized educational attainment in the workplace is not unexpected. When economic integration remains unquestioned regarding the degree and nature of access and affordances, variations of inequity are likely to persist for refugees.

Scholarly inquiry on refugee's economic integration through higher education is not only limited to Europe. In a qualitative comparative case study, Damaschke-Deitrick and Bruce (2019) investigated German and U.S. approaches to refugee integration with particular focus on

the proposition that education facilitates integration. As a departure from the previous work omitting clarity on integration, these scholars acknowledged the variation and variability in integration approaches: “differences in the main objectives for integration appear related to the history and development of integration in a particular country and on that country’s current economic, social, political, and cultural contexts” (Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce, 2019, p. 28). This perspective introduces how and why integration approaches vary across resettlement contexts. In their analysis of the U.S. refugee resettlement context and approach to integration, Damaschke-Deitrick and Bruce (2019) reported that “U.S. education policies and practices have been primarily focused on preparing refugee students to enter the labor market and achieve economic integration” (p. 28-29). Despite greater clarity in this presentation of integration on how it is divergently implemented, there remains a lack of insight on the degree and quality of economic integration of refugees through education.

These works map the presence and effects of neoliberalism, or market ideologies, in refugee higher education. Collectively, education’s connection to economic integration is weak, especially for refugee women in European countries. Furthermore, the ambiguity of economic integration through education is also present in the U.S. context. These perspectives reinforce a neoliberal focus in refugee education in the service of employment without guarantees that educational gains will translate to the economic, employment, and sociocultural gains collectively addressed by economic integration. Higher education policy, as well national-level policy, could elucidate how to operationalize refugees’ integration with a focus on equitable affordances for political, sociocultural, and educational participation.

Transnationalism

Transnationalism, as related to policy and law, draws attention to refugees' multiple geographic places of socialization. Educational access in places of resettlement is related to refugees' transnational socialization. Resettlement is neither inherently a beginning of refugees' education nor an end-point which erases all prior educational experiences and encounters; rather, resettlement context education is a continuation of transnational socialization through which refugees amalgamate cultures, languages, and sociopolitical dispositions across their forced migration experiences. As previously articulated, refugees may encounter interrupted education or compulsory education in places of temporary resettlement; the refugee educational landscape is disparate based on unique trajectories that are shaped by and through the various policy implementations from country-to-country.

Transnationalism presents an oppositional ideology to neoliberalism. For example, Hailu (2020) implemented a qualitative inquiry with Nepalese/Bhutanese refugee families in Colorado, U.S. and sought insights on how the families narrated their transnational forced migration experiences and made sense of education in their place of resettlement. The Bhutanese/Nepalese parents told stories of their forced migration experiences, including their experiences of being denied education; in narrating these foreclosed educational experiences, parents encouraged their children to prioritize higher education (Hailu, 2020). Stories of transnational forced migration and interrupted education enabled intergenerational higher education reinforcement.

Additional examples of transnational education ideologies arise from temporary resettlement locations. Refugees in temporary locations live in an in-between state; they have left home, but they have not yet reached a permanent resettlement location. For example, in an ethnographic narrative inquiry with Syrian refugee youth temporarily resettled in Greece,

Arvanitis et al. (2019) addressed how the temporary location manifested as a bridge between their homes and the desired places of resettlement in Western Europe. Through this qualitative inquiry, Syrian youth aged 11-15 years old expressed their "cultural transitions apparent in border crossings, ...impacts on negotiations of identities, and the ambiguity of being in a 'new' third space... with time to reflect on past experiences and future[s]" (Arvanitis et al., 2019, p. 138). Participants demonstrated liminal and transnational ideologies. This liminal state of being in-between home and resettled facilitated reflection on the past and intentions for the future, especially expressions from the youth envisioning excelling academically, professional, and socially or inter-culturally (Arvanitis, et al., 2019). This particular Greek context for temporary resettlement did not afford refugee education, which is especially telling given how the youth articulated their educational futures.

Through a theoretical and qualitative portrait of a refugee teacher and school leader, Dryden-Peterson (2017) documented an educational example of a transnational disposition. Specifically, the portrait outlines the complex forced migration trajectory of Bauma, who was a temporarily resettled refugee in Uganda and who, while awaiting resettlement, established a school for refugees (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Bauma embodied a transnational disposition and ideology by expanding postsecondary educational access for youth at his school, and he exemplified transnational sensitivity by changing the language of instruction from French to English (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). This educational decision ensured that the school's graduates would meet Uganda's requirement of an English school certificate required to gain admission to higher education (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Importantly, sensitivity to school attendees' future in a place that was neither their home country nor a place of permanent resettlement constituted a transnational perspective in this vignette from Dryden-Peterson (2017). Specifically, refugees'

education is constrained, in some cases through interrupted education through the forced migration journey and in others due to a mismatch between previous education or language and the educational requirements of places of temporary or permanent resettlement. In the situation reported by Dryden-Peterson (2017), the school's language of instruction could either facilitate or foreclose refugee students' access to Ugandan higher education. Changing the language of instruction evoked an element of transnationalism specific to refugees whereby "refugee education is... both internal and external to the nation-state" (Dryden-Peterson, 2017, p. 476). As an intangible resource, education credentials can theoretically move with people as they migrate (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Yet, in this particular instance, refugees' ability to pursue educational advancement hinged on a transnational perspective informed by the enrolled refugee students' localized place, which was not their home country nor a place of permanent resettlement.

Despite disparate educational approaches and affordances, educational experiences in places of temporary resettlement—where and when available—shape refugees' outlooks on future education. In a mixed methods and ethnographically framed investigation of pre-resettlement education, Dryden-Peterson (2016a) argued that temporary places "remain an important site of access to education for refugees globally" (p. 138). Although resettlement to places with citizenship pathways are termed durable solutions and ideal among refugees, Dryden-Peterson (2016a) emphasized the large proportion of refugees who are born and remain in temporary resettlement locations, thus arguing the reality of "pre-" resettlement places' essential educational function in refugees' lives. Furthermore, educational affordances, or lack thereof, before resettlement constitute an anchoring point of learning socialization that, *if or when* a refugee is resettled introduces a conditioning feature in subsequent learning contexts. Specifically, education in pre-resettlement contexts "takes places locally [and] ... is a

continuation of global trajectories” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016a, p. 144). Concludingly, Dryden-Peterson (2016a) argued that refugees’ pre-resettlement experiences with communication challenges, pedagogical approaches prioritizing teachers (to the detriment of learners), and discrimination cumulatively circumscribe ongoing educational pursuits and, more specifically, refugees’ education as transnational.

A temporal-spatial perspective on forced migration is evident in Dryden-Peterson and Giles’s (2010) work that addressed a Canadian higher education audience and called on Canadian higher education institutions to examine default assumptions of refugees’ inferiority and to instead promote policy and practices for their inclusion (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010). They described the tenuousness of education along refugees’ forced migration journeys and this reality’s implications for schooling in resettlement contexts (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010). They specified this argument regarding forced migration and affordances for education:

The extended nature of displacement and the lack of possibilities for education in exile mean that most refugees miss out on their one chance for school-based learning. Yet given the uncertainty of the future for refugees, the increasingly globalized realities that most of them face, and the promise of knowledge-based economies, education – that is adaptable and portable – is critical. (p. 3)

This argument is paramount to refugee higher education. First, these arguments equally apply to refugees, broadly conceived. Second, women, especially those who traverse the forced migration journey without a spouse or partner, are especially relevant to the first argument regarding the lack of reliably available education as refugees flee violence or fear of persecution. This is so because of gendered and patriarchal norms that, while culturally disparate in their

forms and applications, can arguably be seen as consistent for single parents of children; for example, the most prominent applications in scholarship and practice for education for all and education as a human right are those policies and programs that prioritize children and youth, a worthy priority. Regardless, another essential corollary relevant to the present research is evident in the second portion of the aforementioned proposition, namely “uncertainty” and “knowledge-based economies, education” (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010, p. 3). Thirdly, and in correspondence with this argument, refugees are primarily the recipients of a pre-selected resettlement option rather than being given an array of choices of geopolitical locale. In practice this means that refugees’ languages, cultural traditions, or previous schooling cannot be rewritten in the past to be most amenable to host country resettlement states. In other words, refugees whose primary languages are Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda, and French may not get a priority application consideration for French-speaking countries; thus, the incongruence between previous socialization and cultural traditions are not an inherent point of coordination regarding resettlement. This produces situations where any forms of preparation or future planning are rendered obsolete or, at the most, held in a pattern of stasis until resettlement applications are accepted.

Considered collectively, this strand of scholarship specifically addresses refugee women and higher education. This portion of the literature review is not extensive nor specific to the U.S. resettlement context. Therefore, synthesizing these works in light of the main focus of the present research – on refugee women and U.S. higher education – evokes a degree of scholarly license to render the relevant elements legible.

While these studies productively contribute to a gendered lens on refugee higher education, the question remains as to if refugee women are welcome to join higher education or

if, for this population, their futures are foreclosed by the additive layers of U.S. policy like self-sufficiency (Koyama, 2015) to such an extent that no one has wondered about their participation in colleges and universities? As in the case of European refugee women, their so-called integration experience represents a double-bind where some are labelled as not or under-educated while those who hold university degrees also experience the devaluation of credentials (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018). Specific to the U.S. resettlement context and its somewhat comparable sociopolitical and economic status markets to the EU, this section of the review highlights the possibility that refugee women in the U.S. may encounter a similarly binarized and disparate regard to their educational credentials. If this similarity is sound, then what, then, might be the purpose of advancing refugee women's inclusion in U.S. higher education? If the U.S. dynamic is dissimilar from the EU, then are refugee women with tertiary education employed up to their skill level and are those without tertiary education able to access education advancement opportunities? Furthermore, Dryden-Peterson and Giles's (2010) call to Canadian higher educators could reveal corollary points of advancement for U.S. scholars of the same discipline. Certainly, the argument that interrupted education is an impediment to refugee women's continued education holds true regardless of geographical context. What then, are U.S. higher educationalists to make of the companion argument regarding "uncertainty... [and] the promise of knowledge-based economies, education – that is adaptable and portable" (Dryden-Peterson, 2010, p. 2)?

Temporary resettlement locations are divergent in affording refugee education, and yet, specific to refugee higher education, they are important spaces in long-term refugee education. Specifically, pre-resettlement locations are not designed for permanent refugee resettlement, and the variations in educational (in)access structure refugees' socialization to and reflection on

future education. From an ethnographic perspective, Dryden-Peterson (2016a) demonstrated the sociopolitical effects of adverse educational experiences in temporary locations, and Arvanitis et al. (2019) contributed the reflexive influence of temporary refugee resettlement locations on envisioning educational futures. The educational importance of temporary locations is evident across these empirical scholarly contributions. Specifically, educational experiences and reflections from temporary locations emphasize the dual reality of the exigency of refugee experience alongside the imperative of and determination for high achievement. These disparate examples of pre-resettlement education socialization contextualize refugees' education within multiple nation-state-mediated contexts; in both cases, places of temporary resettlement shape refugees' educational beliefs.

Sociopolitical Influences

This section shifts from policy and law to sociopolitical influences on refugees and higher education. As operationally defined for the purpose of this research, sociopolitics are the accrual of social and political beliefs and actions of a society that, combined, relate to policy and law dynamics, but that manifest at the local, community, and interpersonal levels where these dynamics can be felt and perceived. Scholarship has documented the effects of deploying economic self-sufficiency as a primary goal in refugees' lives (Koyama, 2015). Specific to an education finance feature of sociopolitics, scholarship highlights the educational effects of self-sufficiency in positioning refugees as risky or at risk (Koyama, 2015) while others highlight the need for flexible refugee higher education funding (UAARM, n.d.; Unangst & de Wit, 2020). An additional area of socio-politically relevant scholarship calls on higher educational institutions to address othering and misrecognition of refugees in higher education institutions and their practices (Bragg, 2021; Hailu et al., 2021; Koyama, 2015; Mangan & Winter, 2017).

Effects of Self-Sufficiency & Finance Alternatives

An example of effects of self-sufficiency in refugee educational spaces pertains to the notion of risk. To examine self-sufficiency and risk in refugees' lives, Koyama (2015) implemented an ethnographic study in the northeastern U.S. and investigated the discourses of risk applied to refugees through examining the space of English as a Second Language (ESL) and workforce preparation instruction. This inquiry interrogated refugees as erroneously positioned through risk in three ways: the "risk" of dependence on governmental resources, the "risk" of usurping jobs from Americans, and refugees as "risks" to national security (Koyama, 2015). Notably, the first two conceptualizations of risk evoke self-sufficiency (Refugee Act, 1980), as Koyama (2015) documented.

The impetus toward refugees' employment, in conjunction with the refugee instructors who advocate for additional and longer durations for education and language training, additionally calls into question the U.S. refugee resettlement policy of economic self-sufficiency (Refugee Act, 1980). Koyama (2015) theorized the effects of this policy, as relevant to an investigation of U.S. resettled refugees and the three-tiered construction of refugee risk discourses. Specifically drawn from the findings of this ethnographic investigation, Koyama (2015) concluded that "the current trend in the US (and perhaps, globally) is to conflate social policies, including education policy, to its economic instrumentality, [yet] refugees' economic adaptation in the US is but one aspect of resettlement that must be addressed" (p. 118). A particularly noteworthy element of this concluding remark is the connection between risk discourses leveraged toward refugees in conjunction with how refugee educators navigate, and seek to productively use, these risk discourses in refugee classrooms. Conjoining the U.S. hyper-focus of economic self-sufficiency with refugee educators' statements advocating for extended

refugee language and educational offerings draws attention to the disjointedness between the policy and law influences of refugees and higher education compared with localized perspectives from people who frequently interact with refugees. Koyama (2015) documented the effects of U.S. refugee approaches to economic self-sufficiency as the ultimate form of refugee success, evident through how refugees' instructors discussed English as a precursor to job security. Specifically, findings demonstrated how employers' negatively connoted refugees as a risk, as in posing a threat to business security and availability of jobs to "locals [local Americans] who think the better jobs are due them" (Interview, 26 April 2011, as cited in Koyama, 2015, p. 617). Economic self-sufficiency (Koyama, 2015) is presented as the core of U.S. refugee resettlement policy, yet the sociopolitical employment landscape presented in Koyama's (2015) study demonstrated a racialized and xenophobic ideology on the part of employers.

Additional findings indicated that refugees' instructors leveraged the discourses of risk-taking to promote productive risk taking in the realms of learning English and pursuing jobs. Koyama (2015) unraveled the connectedness of refugee resettlement policy and the space of English language learning where teachers and learners navigated the discourses of risk erroneously applied to refugees. However, Koyama (2015) additionally reported that resettlement workers included in the study "agreed that refugees should have more education and prolonged ESL training" (p. 118). Compellingly, the multiple discourses of risk directed towards refugees were known to instructors who participated in Koyama's (2015) study, and these sociopolitical ideologies additionally rendered the instructors' awareness of a needed temporal and educational buffer to the rote pursuit of employment. English and job skill instructors introduced a generative component risk as defiance and perseverance to encourage refugees as they sought employment.

The discursive positioning of refugees as risky elides the realities of refugees' lives as fraught with political contestation amid with attempts to survive while traversing multiple countries and their immigration systems and cultural norms. Koyama (2015) articulated the connection between U.S. immigration and refugee resettlement legislation and the risk discourse applied to refugees. This view demonstrates how discourses of risk position refugees within a dichotomy of having defied danger to take asylum and/or as posing as dangerous to national security and job availability.

Innovation in refugee higher education troubles the discourses of refugees as risky and burdened with expectations of economic self-sufficiency. In a comparative and exploratory case study of Canada and the U.S., Unangst and de Wit (2020) theoretically framed their investigation with a critical transformative paradigm (Hurtado, 2015); this framing oriented their interview and document analysis toward disrupting inequitable power structures regarding the role of non-profit organizations in refugee student support. Findings from the case of U.S. higher education included the administrative treatment of refugee students as synonymous with international students, thus vastly inflating enrollment costs as well the limitations of educational options for refugee students at the secondary level (Unangst & de Wit, 2020). Refugees' higher education costs arguably relate to the features of neoliberalism outlined in previous sections. However, in response to high cost and how refugees are frequently tracked into lower-level and non-age-appropriate learning environments, Unangst and de Wit (2020) argued that flexible funding for refugees' higher education is a better immediate solution to facilitating refugee higher education access; in brief, flexible funding would be a redistribution of federal funds to resettlement agencies that would be allocated for higher education expenditures.

Direct action in the form of communicating resources is an additional mode of troubling the deleterious effects of economic self-sufficiency. For example, another example is present through the work of the University Alliance for Refugees and At-Risk Migrants (UARRM, n.d.) housed at Rutgers University. This collective's advocacy work addresses refugees' and forced migrants' higher education access broadly, ranging from reinforcing these populations' rights to legal recognition and pathways to citizenship (which eases the financial burden of higher education), addressing on-campus assistance, and collecting empirical work on refugees and higher education (UARRM, n.d.). Most notably to finance, however, one way this group advocates for refugees' higher education access is by publishing refugee-eligible scholarships on their webpage, including a disaggregating search tool based on features of geographic location by state in the U.S. as well as scholarships for which certain ethnic groups are eligible (UARRM, n.d.).

These higher education finance-related recommendations pertain to the sociopolitical realm because they speak to refugees' pathways through the challenges by offering concrete, generative advocacy and access tools. For example, Unangst and de Wit (2020) connected to the realm of sociopolitics due to the nature of refugee voluntary agencies and non-profits in comprising the strongest collective body of refugee advocacy. To realize flexible funding, akin to healthcare flexible spending as the authors noted, refugee advocacy networks must collectively lobby for governmental or policy-level change. This advocacy process begins from grassroots motivations and mobilizations that, through relationships and organizations surrounding refugee support, gain momentum as more people become involved. Ideally, this collective people power draws the attention of elected governmental officials who then can

examine the request and transform refugee resettlement policy. However, this is just one advocacy model for and with refugees and higher education.

The access and advocacy tools presented by UARRM (n.d.) feature a wide array of sociopolitical advocacy mechanisms with and for refugees. The scholarship information, especially, seeks to disrupt the financial barrier for refugees to access higher education, which is complex due to the governmental and policy-informed limitations and requirements for refugees to obtain citizenship. While UARRM's (n.d.) broader advocacy agenda addresses the matter of equitably facilitating citizenship pathways, the resources additionally put financial aid information specific to refugees and forced migrants directly into the hands of those who would seek higher education enrollment.

Othering and Misrecognition

In the contemporary political moment, and at the time of writing, ubiquitous race consciousness geared toward anti-oppression, anti-racism, and dismantling structures of unquestioned whiteness remain fraught despite the capacity of each to transform societies toward equity. As a result, sociocultural dynamics present challenges for resettled refugees evident as racialized, xenophobic othering (Hailu et al., 2021), the higher education institutional deployment of refugees as vulnerable (Bragg, 2021), and misrecognition (Mangan & Winter, 2017). Collectively, these dynamics reflect the sociopolitical climate endemic to the U.S. that culminate in refugees' experiences of resettlement.

Racialized and xenophobic attitudes are present in the U.S. sociopolitical climate and influence refugees' resettlement experiences. In an intersectionality-informed conceptual work, Hailu et al. (2021) theorized the effects of racialized othering present in high income resettlement contexts like those in Australia, the U.S., and Western Europe, specifically on Black

and African refugee populations. Particularly, in one conceptual theoretical element, Hailu et al. (2021) outlined the basis and effects of othering and racial stigma and posited that when considering "...African refugees in predominantly White societies, Othering often takes a form of racial stigma" (p. 3). Significantly, this conceptualization situates African refugees into the hierarchical racialization and racism endemic to the U.S. where peoples' evaluation is erroneously pre-determined based upon an assumption of ethno-racial identity through the faulty "lens" of phenotypic markers.

Considering this intrusion of Western racialized into the racial identities of African and Black refugees also introduces a place-specific contour of sociopolitical othering with particular importance to education. As Hailu et al. (2021) articulated: "universities... engage in placemaking, the notion that place is produced through social and discursive processes, by creating and maintaining public spaces that strengthen relationships with the community and between people in those places" (Moore, 2015 as cited in Hailu et al., 2021, p. 6). The placemaking activities within universities hold capacity to disrupt the racialized and racist sociopolitical context that African and Black refugees encounter in the U.S. Hailu et al. (2021) recommended an intersectional approach to analyzing African and Black refugees' experiences in the U.S. and in higher education, which is described in greater detail in the section "Intersectional (In)Equity in Higher Education" below.

Additional faulty framings of refugees occur through the notion of vulnerability. Specific to Canada and in navigating institutional review board approval for ethical research engagement with Syrian refugees, Bragg (2021) articulated the higher educational disposition of refugees as vulnerable. By reflecting on the process of research approval through the Research Ethics Board (REB), Bragg (2021) demonstrated that the review board evidenced a discursively flat

conceptualization of refugees. Specifically, the review board responded to the research application by positioning the intended participants, Syrian refugees, as “highlight vulnerable... and a high risk” (p. 9). These labels discursively indicate the viewpoints of the review board and their deficit views of refugees. As Bragg (2021) articulated, this response “reinforced problematic ideas about refugees as inherently vulnerable, lacking agency, and therefore a ‘high risk’ research proposition” (p. 9-10). This example demonstrates a protectionist ideological stance. In effect, the notions of refugees as vulnerable or as non-agentic, erases and flattens their experiences, which are diverse, transnational, and filtered through multiple intergovernmental and bureaucratic processes through forced migration before ever being resettled. Furthermore, a transnational perspective that recognizes refugees as transnationally mobile – through forced migration – would reinforce and not seek to undermine their agency and power. More specifically, because refugees, by definition, flee violence and persecution across international borders, their juridical categorization as refugee would, instead, honor the massive psycho-social investments in pursuing safety. However, the deficit and protectionist ideological and discursive positioning Bragg (2021) described is not unique to the Canadian context alone.

Additional internationally-based studies of refugee higher education access also present and consider sociopolitical challenges of othering. For example, Mangan and Winter (2017) conducted a meta-ethnography of refugee education in the contexts of Britain and Australia and reported sociopolitical barriers to access, such as xenophobia, inequality, and marginalization. Notably, refugees in these contexts described their experiences of being invalidated in higher education in the categories of “their intelligence, refugee life story or identity and current life struggles. Invalidation involved dismissal, not understanding or recognising, or negative judgement” (Mangan & Winter, 2017, p. 494). These retellings of refugees’ experiences

highlight how higher education institutions missed the opportunity to affirm and support refugee students. Across the meta-ethnography, these dynamics lead to misrecognition (Fraser, 1991 as cited in Mangan & Winter, 2017) and subsequent demoralization of refugees in or pursuing higher education.

Other scholarship on this topic conducted in the U.S. outlines barriers, challenges, and outcome metrics in comparison to students with other demographic and identity markers. Through a discourse analysis with Congolese refugees, Perry and Mallozzi (2017) researched the role of adult refugees' worldview in influencing their pursuits of education. In addition to findings of limited pathways for refugees to translate a desire for education to accessing further and higher education, Perry and Mallozzi (2017) reported that access challenges to higher education were in stark contrast to refugees' dispositions of favorably viewing education and particularly esteeming higher education. This disjuncture between access and refugee disposition towards refugees is, as Perry and Mallozzi (2017) articulated, steeped in the operationalization of self-sufficiency with refugees where "their educations ...are sacrificed or, at the very least, unsupported" (p. 511). This remark clarifies the relationship between how economic self-sufficiency is articulated to refugees and the effect on education. The more favorable outcome is unsupported education while the further end of the continuum is sacrificing education, in favor of employment.

Effects of Education

This component of the review redirects attention to the affordance of higher education through refugees' experiences. Considerations of transnational community and efforts to collectively contribute to this community's success and longevity depart from traditionalist or normative conceptions of success (Bajwa et al., 2017; Crea, 2016; Khadkha & Rinker, 2018;

Saelua et al., 2021; Tsu, 2021). Furthermore, additional scholars present the generative supports and assets refugees derive through higher education access (Abdo & Craven, 2018; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2021; Koyama & Ghosh, 2018). To bring transnational community and generative assets together, the final section pertaining to the effects of education addresses the transformative function of an intersectional equity lens on refugee higher education and related research (Acker, 2006; Hailu et al., 2021; Kezar, 2014; Laker & Davis, 2015; Mazon, 2010; Roberts et al., 2018; Tienda, 2013; Unangst & Crea, 2020; Zhao et al., 2005).

Transnational Community Uplift

Transnational community uplift encompasses refugees' multiple places throughout their forced migrations and also introduces the component of retained relationships that comprise a transnational community. Additionally, community uplift is operationally defined for the purpose of this research as referring to the collective advancement of groups of people connected through solidarity, resource sharing, and navigating life from a collectivist, rather than individualist, perspective.

As an example of the capacity of transnational community uplift, Saelua and et al. (2021) incorporated feminist refugee epistemology with refugee youth and parents in Colorado, U.S. to examine participants' narratives of their lives. One feature of the findings documented refugees' depictions of "intergenerational community involvement" (Espiritu & Dong, 2018 as cited in Saelua et al., 2021, p. 75), which incorporated stories and connections across generations and geographies. Specifically, participants demonstrated that "imagining better futures was not just about attaining a college degree or achieving financial stability. Participants also discussed how serving local communities and broader refugee communities was key to making a better life" (Saelua et al., 2021, p. 73). Education was a component of their futures but also involvement

with transnational community uplift among refugees. Refugee participants viewed their refugee community commitments at the same level of importance as traditionalist conceptions of a good life. Saelua et al. (2021) elaborated on how refugees' community commitments trouble "success" from a normative paradigm:

Both parents and children in our study imagined futures that encompassed both their homelands in Southeast Asia and current physical location in the United States, dreaming that their children could give back to their global and local communities. These perspectives diverge from normative discourses of 'success,' which typically revolve around persistence, degree attainment, and post-graduate wealth or social uplift. (p. 75)

This study's findings reported connections among participants' global and local communities, education, and their conceptions of success. These connections feature transnationalism where refugee communities are comprised of people in places of resettlement (which may include relationships throughout multiple countries), temporary locations, and home countries. Additionally, commitments to refugee participants' transnational communities unsettle traditional approaches to "success," which Saelua et al. (2021) described as normatively conceived as educational persistence, degree attainment, or accumulated wealth, sometimes termed social mobility. Thus, collectively, these findings highlight refugees' commitments to transnational community uplift, which is related to education and financial security, but that repositions community as collective beneficiaries of the strengths of the whole.

Scholarship with refugees in places of temporary resettlement have also evidenced elements of collectivist transnationalism. For example, Crea (2015) conducted an intervention offering higher education to students (N=122) in two refugee camps and one city. Beyond the

normative success measures associated with higher education, such as credentials, social mobility, and employment opportunity, participants in Crea's (2015) study expressed group-based "feelings of empowerment, related to expanding their worldview as gaining a specific set of skills. The students seemed proud of their academic achievements and grateful for their exposure to a larger world of ideas and possibilities" (p. 19). For participants in this study, access to higher education positively contributed to overall quality of life and well-being that participants described as collective empowerment. Additionally, refugees in this study also connected their empowerment through education with their peers from multiple geographic contexts.

Refugees' engagement in peer support networks is another form of transnational community. Relatedly, Bajwa et al. (2017) conducted a community-based participatory action research over two years in Canada that included interviews with refugees ($N=38$) to evaluate peer support networks in higher education. Specifically, one finding from Bajwa et al.'s (2017) study is that participants conveyed the "benefit from hearing [peer] mentors share stories of how they decided which program to pursue" (p. 61). Importantly, participant refugees shared their decision-making processes in programmatic selection in their higher education programs. These instances of cross-experiential sharing among refugees with disparate backgrounds enabled a transnational community to develop.

Additional scholars documented the beneficial features of refugees' community building, though in disciplines other than higher education. For example, Tsu (2021) applied historical analysis about Southeast Asian refugees' community gardens in the 1980s. A central finding from this work was that refugee community gardeners leveraged their agricultural knowledge from their home socialization and adapted these knowledges to the U.S. local resettlement

contexts, importantly to share resources in the refugee community and collectively, contribute to community uplift. Additionally, in the context of the Southeastern U.S., Khadka and Rinker (2018) applied qualitative participatory research techniques to investigate the concept of community resilience with Bhutanese refugees through a health and wellness project where participants talked through experiences with collective trauma. Through family interviews, focus groups, and photovoice elicitation, Khadkha and Rinker (2018) argued that the refugees' communal space for narrating their experiences around trauma enabled participants to "establish an ideal for transformative change... [whereby] social resilience ...can be progressive from both a therapeutic and justice perspective" (p. 12). In essence, this investigative intervention documented how facilitating community around individual and collective trauma led to beneficial, community healing. Although not directly situated in educational, migration, or refugee studies, the work of Tsu (2021) and Khadkha and Rinker (2018) also advanced community as beneficial for refugees, which is directly related to the transnational community uplift.

Empirical evidence for the affective, transnational community uplift benefits of higher education importantly disrupts neoliberal rationales for refugee education (Saelua et al., 2021). In other words, Crea's (2015) study emphasized the role and function of dignity as arising from higher education participation. Although acknowledging and redressing the inequity of refugees' limited access to higher education is an important foundation, extant scholarship tends to eschew the psychosocial and collective benefits of higher education and instead tend toward the capitalistic, neoliberal questions of jobs and finance. Crea's (2015) work, like Saelua et al. (2021), demonstrated more expansive positive effects of higher education.

Supports and Assets Generated through Transnational Community

The previous sections outlined the formation of transnational community uplift; this section addresses how these refugee spaces create generative supports and assets and why they are beneficial effects of education with and for refugees. For example, in Lebanon, Dryden-Peterson et al. (2021) investigated Syrian students', teachers', and families' educational experiences. This scholarship documented that students' experience discrimination, along with other social and adjustment challenges in places of resettlement, but participants also conveyed that refugee students learn best, feel safest, and are the least stressed when they feel heard and accepted at school (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2021). Through observation and interview, the research team collected data that evidenced how positive social-emotional ties at school benefitted refugee students (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2021). Importantly, the findings for substantiating the beneficial effects of refugee students feeling heard and accepted at school was present across participants' subjectivities: refugee students and their families as well refugees' teachers conveyed that students' educational experiences were significantly more positive in supportive and accepting environments.

Remaining in the realm of refugee school and family connections, there are additional supports and assets developed through refugees' presence. In a U.S.-based ethnography of the case of one school district, Koyama and Ghosh (2018) studied how refugees' presence in schools facilitated boundary spanning relationships among schools and communities as well as refugees and their families within educational spaces. Koyama and Ghosh (2018) clarified their operational definition of people who evidenced boundary spanning:

Boundary spanners—in this study, mentors—employed by the school district also extend their work responsibilities within schools to the

refugees' homes and ethnic communities, often meeting with refugee families to talk about their children's schooling. ... boundary spanners... work back and forth across and between groups, organizations, institutions, and societal structures, are quite diverse in their aims, resources, and positionalities (p. 96; p. 98)

Place is an essential feature of boundary spanners, as they engage in both schools and refugees' homes. Locational engagement, centered around refugee students' education, is a distinguishing feature of boundary spanners: they engage with refugees and their families across spaces of shared engagement. Koyama and Ghosh (2018) also noted that boundary spanners do not occupy binarized positionalities; rather, they leverage the knowledge and experience "back and forth across and between groups, organizations, institutions, and societal structures" (p. 98). From this point, boundary spanners recognize the knowledge and practical benefits of insights gained through multiple spaces of engagement to facilitate and support refugee students' education. Arguably, boundary spanners are a component of refugees' transnational community, especially because boundary spanners can share their insights and knowledge – derived through multiple spaces of engagement – to support refugee students, who can, in turn, distribute knowledge and resources to their own transnational communities and, ultimately, return positive outcomes of their educational attainment to their communities. Furthermore, because boundary spanners are active in multiple spaces surrounding refugee education – schools, homes, community organizations, for example – they are uniquely positioned to facilitate meaningful and profound school-to-community partnerships organized for refugee resettlement and education support. Boundary spanners occupy multiple spaces of education and are relevant to refugee resettlement support; acknowledging this multi-subjectivity recognizes the

transformational capacity of people who are refugees or work within refugee and educational spaces.

Practice-oriented scholarship additionally substantiates the generative capacity of holistic refugee support, akin to the multi-site-informed information sharing function of boundary spanners (Koyama & Ghosh, 2018). Specifically, Abdo and Craven (2018) conducted a participatory evaluation study of Every Campus a Refuge (ECAR) and described the program as facilitating and affording supports and assets related to refugees' transnational communities and their uplift. For brief background on ECAR, the flagship campus at Guilford College, and increasingly many additional ECAR campuses throughout the U.S., hosts refugee families upon their initial arrival and leverage space available through the campus to afford housing without requiring rent or utility payments; substantively, this approach enables newly-arrived refugees to save the very small amount of cash assistance they receive through federally-funded resettlement programs that they can later allocate for vital life expenses (Abdo & Craven, 2018). This is a profoundly innovative and sustainable approach to refugee resettlement. This novel, cost-neutral approach to colleges and universities facilitating refugee resettlement is innovative alone. However, ECAR additionally facilitates recently resettled refugees' proximity to locals and campus community members who, as boundary spanners (Koyama & Ghosh, 2018), add an additional spatial dimension to refugees' transnational networks. In relation to ECAR (Abdo & Craven, 2018), involved boundary spanners include refugees with transnational socio-cultural experience as well as students, staff, and faculty affiliated with the institution as well as community members. ECAR's approach to boundary spanning refugee resettlement support (Abdo & Craven, 2018) additionally introduces a temporal dimension because hosted refugee families and ECAR affiliated people (students, staff, faculty, and community members) continue

their relational connection even after the refugee guests have moved to housing off-campus. ECAR not only innovates the initial refugee resettlement period by housing and offering utilities to refugees through unused campus space but also introduces added layers of spatial-temporal compassion to newly resettled refugees transnational communities; cumulatively, this equitable and humanizing introduction to the U.S. as a place of resettlement preserves a modicum of material assets that refugees in the program can then reserve and leverage for later contributions to community uplift.

Intersectional Equity With and For Refugee Higher Education

An intersectional equity (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; Crenshaw et al., 2000) lens recognizes higher education as an institution designed and built for maintaining and valorizing structures of whiteness and white supremacy while simultaneously maintaining the racialized oppression of people of color (Wilder, 2013). Literature pertinent to this section of the review recognizes the oppressive legacy of American higher educational institutions as entangled with and benefitting from contemporary colonialism, racialized subjugation, and the perennially shifting goalpost of which minoritized groups are deemed acceptable or not (Acker, 2006; Hailu et al., 2021; Kezar, 2014; Laker & Davis, 2015; Mazon, 2010; Roberts et al., 2018; Tienda, 2013; Unangst & Crea, 2020; Zhao et al., 2005). An aggregate effect of dynamics that produce and reify otherness is heightened urgency for intersectional approaches to educational work with refugees, particularly oriented to spaces of higher educational institutions and access as well as offerings through community-based, non-profit, or informal education spaces. An intersectional approach further advances refugee-centric scholarship from the realm of deconstructing or diagnosis problems, challenges, or deficits at the individual refugee level to, instead, recenter a call to transformative action at the level of institutions, society, and policy.

Intersectional approaches to refugee education and education scholarship are in direct connection to the concepts that shape refugees' lives outlined in the section "sociopolitical influences" (Bragg, 2021; Hailu et al., 2021; Koyama, 2015; Mangan & Winter, 2017; UAARM, n.d.; Unangst & de Wit, 2020). Subsequently, the opening component of this section of the review also draws from the elements of sociopolitical influences previously synthesized, yet with more focus on the transformative capacity of intersectional awareness to subvert sociopolitical acts and verbalizations of othering and misrecognition.

Through their conceptual work on the racialization of African origin refugees in westernized contexts like Australia, the U.S., and Western Europe, Hailu et al. (2021) posited the damaging consequences of xenophobia and otherizing nationalism in resettlement contexts. Moreover, these scholars theorized the transformative capacity of intersectional approaches to identify racialized oppression and, more significantly, to dismantle systemic power structures that validate normative identities and modes of being and knowing while simultaneously stigmatizing and devaluating the codices of living and learning produced through and within African diaspora refugee communities. Drawing from core tenets of critical race theory (CRT), Hailu et al. (2021) advocated for counter-storytelling as a generative technique to capture the experiences of African diaspora refugees through their minoritized identities while navigating intersectional systems of oppression. As a note, the epistemological and methodological grounds for counter storytelling or counter-narratives was theorized through the racialized and gendered labor of pre-eminent Black legal scholars, who cross-reference a rich network of Black intellectualism (see e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Crenshaw et al., 2004; Hill Collins, 1990; 2004). Through this CRT framing, Hailu et al. (2021) created a conceptual and theoretical foundation for intersectional approaches to research with African diaspora refugees in the

hegemonic Western context of the U.S. This contribution to scholarship especially foregrounded the necessity of attending to inequitable power distributions in the realms of research and knowledge production with U.S. resettled refugee populations.

Intersectional approaches are additionally addressed in comparative international education scholarship. Drawing from comparisons among Australian, German, American, and online approaches to refugee higher education through a mixed methods textual analysis of 181 abstracts, Unangst and Crea (2020) posited that “intersectional programs undergird ...marginalized students... [in] centralized admissions and enrollment procedures, mentorship, and student support networks” (abstract). Importantly, this scholarship did not directly involve refugee participation to substantiate the findings or recommendations. However, Unangst and Crea (2020) recommended that participatory programs in higher education afford a panacea for the diversity of identities among refugees who encounter hierarchical barriers to their inclusion. Specifically, they stated:

There is, some might argue, an inherent tension between the interrogation of identity markers (such as gender, religion, etc.) as essentialist and concurrent attention to the diversification of HEI refugee support programs. We suggest that a fundamentally participatory approach resolves this tension, in which refugee students themselves define and iteratively incorporate their own lived experience and identity into university programs. (Unangst & Crea, 2020, p. 241)

Notably, this anecdote indicates a tension between identity-based features of in/exclusion in higher education and a Eurocentric, Westernized ideal of diversity among college students.

Antithetical to the foundational texts of Critical Race Theory and the tenet of intersectionality, Unangst and Crea (2020) redirected the onus of inclusion onto refugee college and university students who were already navigating the racialized, gendered, elitist structures of Western higher education. The central problematic inherent here is the avoidance of naming and problematizing *structural inequity* and *systems* – not identities – *of oppression*. Moreover, recommending participatory designs as a panacea for refugees’ education completely overlooks and substantively silences the additive and cumulative effects of navigating multiple, intersecting systems of oppression. While likely well intentioned toward refugee higher education students, a recommendation of participatory techniques to facilitate higher education refugee students’ “inclusion” repositions rectifying intersectional (raced, classed, and gendered, among others) *systems of oppression* through individual labor. Substantively, the phrase “intersectional programs” has a seductive lure yet fails to account for the role of transforming systems of oppression rather than requiring individuals subject to the oppressions reproduced through oppressive systems. Succinctly, Unangst and Crea’s (2020) recommendations fall short of the transformative capacity of Critical Race Theorists’ vision for intersectionality, namely shifting the gaze and transformation responsibility away from already oppressed peoples to, instead, direct resistant energy toward naming and refusing systems of oppression inherent to white racialized society.

Similarly, higher education scholars who orient their scholarship toward equity and social justice have addressed these equity topics’ contemporary popularization and potential limitation in merely virtue signaling. For an example from higher education scholarship of this dynamic of equity in name only rather than also in practice, Tienda (2013) identified a disjuncture in the language of higher education policy on diversity and equity rather than its application where “the

term diversity is paired with the term inclusion as if both terms imply each other” (p. 2). Tienda (2013) elaborated that higher education institutions may fall short of achieving the goals of addressing and mitigating structural inequity.

As this study addresses higher education, situating the inquiry within the discipline’s scholarship of raced, classed, and gendered inequality is beneficial. For example, the construct of inequality regimes proposed by Acker (2006) accounts for an intersectional lens on efforts toward organizational equality. Relatedly, higher education, understood as localized organizations as well as an organization of people across campuses, can be interpreted, critiqued, and reimagined through the construct of inequality regimes, defined as “practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (Acker, 2006, p. 443). This construct places intersectionality, or the overlapping effects of race and gender that result in women of color experiencing the most marginalization, (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991 as cited in Cooper, 2015) into conversation with organizational structures that perpetuate inequalities. Furthermore, Acker’s (2006) proposed inequality regimes facilitated an understanding of disparate educational, workplace, and social status advancement related to structural functions of globalization that operated at the local level. Specifically, this construct suggested that “the severity of inequalities, their visibility and legitimacy, and the possibilities for change toward less inequality also vary from organization to organization” (Acker, 2006, p. 459). This idea relates directly to refugee women in higher education because the subject is largely unstudied, rendering these women invisible and illegible to higher educational institutions, even amid highly-visible moves toward equity and inclusion in the U.S.

Refugee women's absence from higher education relates to theories of organizational change. Notably, foundational higher education scholarship has multiple theoretical and empirical models related to cultural, institutional, and organizational change (see e.g., Clark, 1972; Tierney, 1989; 1991). Foundational higher educational change texts draw from a positivistic paradigm, largely concerned with identifying, diagnosing, or naming universalist and essentialist truths. Specific to the present research, a positivist paradigmatic view of higher educational change elides the presence of structural inequity. Furthermore, the present research adopts a critical, or critiquing stances of current realities, and accommodates multiple truths; these elements of critical paradigmatic grounding require structural analysis of multiple, overlapping systems of oppression.

Related to educational change, Kezar (2014) adopted a structural analysis of higher educational change. Thus, the work of Kezar (2014) is more closely aligned with the present study's paradigmatic alignment with critical inquiry. Specifically, by implementing a social network analysis, Kezar (2014) proposed a multidisciplinary, organizational, and social approach to "understanding change in higher education" (p. 93), where change is presented as higher educational transformations to pursue updates relevant to transitioning student demographics, identities, and desired supports and outcomes. An important implication from this work is the call to higher education scholarship to "alter the focus of change research from the campus (organization) as the only analytic unit to the network (or network in combination with the campus)" (Kezar, 2014, p. 107). This call to higher education scholars matters because it recognizes the limitation of organizational culture analysis in overlooking the structuring function of interpersonal connections in higher education culture and its openness or resistance to transformation. In other words, a myopic emphasis only on campus- or division-level

transformation misses opportunities to understand localized inequalities as manifestations of systemic injustices. More specifically, Kezar (2014) advocated for “a qualitative approach... to think about network associations ... investigated in local contexts with specific populations” (p. 108). In the practice of higher education research related to change, this recalibration entails attention to relationships and localized meaning making. Specific to this research, thinking through organizational transformation regarding refugee women in higher education requires a localized and transnational lens. In practice, applying this qualitative approach will involve listening to and interpreting individual refugee women’s experiences as nested within systemic inequalities.

Organizational inequality and higher education change are related concepts. Acker’s (2006) depiction of inequality regimes in organizations situated pervasive inequality amid dynamics of globalization that are experienced locally. This relates to Kezar’s (2014) proposition of the importance of organizational theory and social networks understood as related and interconnected. Although Kezar (2014) addressed change in higher education broadly, the connection between organizational theory and social networks also introduced an understanding that relationships can support or hinder higher educational transformation. Relatedly, social ties in higher education can reproduce or disrupt regimes of inequality that demarcate boundaries of inclusion or exclusion among raced, classed, or gendered identities. In other words, social networks are neutral toward change, yet can be productively oriented when awareness of disparate identity-based inclusion or exclusion is rooted in how social networks correspond to global manifestations of similar demarcations and boundaries. Specific to refugee women in higher education, social networks within the higher education community may present a

supportive mechanism to address the social justice inequity of this population's noticeable absence on college campuses.

Measures of demographic data are frequently used in higher education as indicators of diversity without the more rigorous, transformational work of mitigating inequity (e.g., Laker & Davis, 2015; Mazon, 2010; Tienda, 2013). Quantifying diverse students' presence is a productive step toward internationalization. However, this practice is not a complete narrative of students' experiences of inclusion or exclusion from the metrics or campus social and academic spaces. University diversity is an empty metric without contextualization. As Tienda (2013) explained, "increasingly the term diversity is paired with the term inclusion as if both terms imply each other" (p. 2). Understanding the depth and breadth of diverse experiences is an essential requisite step away from structural diversity toward inclusion for higher education practitioners.

Discourses of international student inclusion problematize merely quantifying demographic presence from a structural diversity perspective (Laker & Davis, 2015; Roberts et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2005). Increasing numbers of diverse students alone does not facilitate inclusion. Subsequently, this study adopts Tienda's (2013) definition of inclusion: "organizational strategies and practices that promote meaningful social and academic interactions among persons and groups who differ in their experiences, their view, and their traits" (p. 1). Inclusion requires empowerment, active participation in campus life, and contextualized intercultural competence (Laker & Davis, 2015; Mazon, 2010; Tienda, 2013). However, Tienda (2013) demonstrated how language of diversity alone, without redress to barriers for equitable inclusion, is a limited and weak form of DEI. Furthermore, approaching an equity agenda for refugees' higher education presents a multitude of options for colleges and universities – in conversation with local refugee communities and, where present, their

community advisory boards – to develop or promote programs of study that directly address local preferences and needs.

Across the literature on refugees and higher education, scholars present empirical connections to the influences of policy and law as well as socio-political contexts and the beneficial effects of education. Especially relevant are the effects of refugee higher education, including transnational community uplift, assets and generative supports, and pathways of redress through intersectional approaches to education research and pedagogy for higher education. Consequently, the next sections address space/place and its political, geographical, and relational facets that culminate in a place-conscious (Greenwood, 2003) theoretical framework. Where there is power, there is politics, and refugees' contested place in the U.S. as a resettlement location entails considerations of power and politics. Thus, a politicized conceptualization of place theoretically frames the present research with place consciousness (Greenwood, 2003).

Theoretical Framework: Dimensions of Place

Spatialized social theory conceptually orients the research and is operationalized through dimensions of place (Greenwood, 2003). Considering finite aspects and attributes of place further specifies a politicized approach to spatial justice and narrows the field of inquiry toward a systematic analysis of place. Greenwood (2003) presented place in five dimensions with potential to deepen understanding of the present topic: the perceptual, sociological, ideological, political, and ecological dimensions. The next subsections elaborate on these dimensions and their relevance to exploring refugee women's conceptualizations of higher education. Considering refugee women resettled in the U.S. with a place-based lens illuminates how they conceptualize higher education refracted through the discursive relationship of people to places

and vice versa (Greenwood, 2003). As an exploratory study, the dimensions of place are also particularly suitable to interpret and represent the discursive plane of engagement as refugee women navigate resettlement in the U.S. Approaching refugee women's conceptualizations of place through a multifaceted lens promotes accounting for participants' pasts, presents, and futures which includes multiple geographic places, times, and disparate norms and values available to them throughout their forced migration journeys.

Perceptual Dimension: Refugee Women's Experiences

The perceptual dimension of place focuses on the human activities of perception through senses – smell, sight, touch, taste, sound, awareness of heat and cold, proprioception (the body's perceptions of distance or close objects – to interact with people, objects, and places, or “multisensory perception” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 624). Multisensory perception constitutes as means for sense-making or reflecting information from the senses to understand the world and make sense of it. Greenwood (2003) theorized these processes as a “participatory relationship with other phenomena through the multisensory perception of direct experience” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 624). Interaction with objects, people, and places comprise this process of sense-making. For refugee women, perceptions may entail a conglomeration of familiar and unfamiliar sensations. Some may be relatable to past experiences while others in the resettlement context may become familiar and understood over time. Recognizing the function of perception in place highlights “the variety of human experience, [which] can give rise to many different places” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 622). That is, the experience of place is not uniform across all people, but rather, as cultural beings, people participate with place and make sense of the world in a variety of ways.

Sociological Dimension: Temporality of Forced Migration and Identities

The sociological dimension addresses complex relationships that transcend the interpersonal and account for multiple place-based connections. This is relevant to refugee women who have multiple identities, experience many geographic locations, and transition through varied life stations which inform the relationships they create. The sociological dimension accounts for “human experience, identity, and culture [as] intimate with and inseparable from our relationship with places” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 627). Sociologically, place reflects how identities and cultures interact with, construct, and shape people and vice versa. People experience place in conjunction with their cultural identities. In turn, cultural identities account for the interaction among humans and culture as negotiated through places. For refugee women, the sociological dimension highlights how their identities and culture(s) interact with place and subsequently influence meaning-making processes. Greenwood (2003) articulated this discursive interplay as “our experience of places [is] mediated by culture, education, and personal experience, but places themselves are products of culture” (p. 626). Subsequently, the sociological dimension asserts the relevance of relationships across time and place, which is especially applicable to refugee women who encounter multiple geographic places and cultural idiosyncrasies, all while carrying their own cultural traditions with them. Over time during forced migration, refugee women amalgamate transnational relational networks that inform their cultural and identity self-expression in the place of resettlement.

The co-constitutive nature among place, identity, and culture over time and across forced migration journeys reflects Greenwood’s (2003) sociological dimension. These intertwined concepts matter because they signal the malleability and porousness of these relationships. The sociological dimension affords awareness of different place-based realities and the possibility of

change, particularly toward educational inequity. People, along with their cultures and identities, also construct places, yet this process is so pervasive of human experience that it can be overlooked. Greenwood (2003) articulated this potentiality as “when we fail to consider places as products of human decisions, we accept their existence as noncontroversial or inevitable” (p. 627). This perspective introduces the realization that places are not so concretized as to foreclose transformation. Relative to refugee women and education, the sociological dimension focuses on how people create places, imbue them with meaning, and leverage them to facilitate equitable relationships among disparate identities, cultures, and places. Ethical attention to this dimension requires thoughtful attention as to whose cultures and identities are deemed primary by default and whose are ignored or assumed to be irrelevant. Thinking through a sociological dimension of place reinforces people as participants in ascribing value to places and calls for attention to the varied hierarchical structures of power that categorize and evaluate human identities and cultures.

Ideological Dimension: Spatial Organization, or the Neighborhood

The ideological dimension recognizes that systems of power and privilege inhere upon place-making and people as place-makers. Particularly, the ideological dimension accounts for a “spatialized critical theory [that] recognizes that... the organization of space... facilitates and legitimizes any culture production” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 629). The ideological dimension prioritizes how space is mediated through ideologies and hierarchies of legitimacy, particularly of certain groups as included or excluded. This dimension importantly deviates from an apolitical phenomenological detachment to, instead, account for how power influences notions of legitimacy and people as place-makers embedded within structures of oppression. How places are organized, separated, or deprioritized draws attention to the beliefs and values ascribed to

certain locations. Akin to the sociological dimension, recognizing place as constructed with ideologies presents another opening to rethink how places, namely educational places and refugees' role in them, are stratified based on disparate ascriptions of value.

Relative to this research's central interest in refugee women and access to higher education, several questions guide engaging with refugee women's experiences in this dimension. Especially beneficial are questions that reflexively examine the participants' lived experiences of how places are structured and organized. Where do refugee women live? Are nearby public spaces kept safe? With whom do refugee women interact? If so, where and for what purpose? Do they have reliable access and transportation to public spaces? Responses to such questions indicate where and with whom agency or power is exercised and the function of spatial organization in constructing educational beliefs. Openness to different lived experiences enables approaching justice on refugee women's terms and enacting responsibility toward them as reliable, trustworthy narrators of their lived experience. Refugee women's experiences are not inherently monolithic, generalizable, or disempowering. How refugee women interact with space and its organization signal the effects of power. Attention to their navigation within or through spaces will convey where and under what circumstances they exercise their power. Exploration of place through the ideological dimension traces the effects of arrangement of, for example, neighborhoods or a classroom, and the meaning of this arrangement relative to the ideas behind those organizational features.

Political Dimension: Refugees' Resistance

Building on previous place-based themes, the political dimension introduces resistance to exclusion. Specifically, the political dimension focuses on how constructions of people, attributes of identity, or groups result in dynamics of inclusion or exclusion. The political

accounts for the discursifying nature of place, indicative of social structures, along with how discursification is resisted. Following a metaphor of marginality, those who occupy the place-specific social “fringe” are relegated to outsider status which contrasts with dominant modes of being, identity, or social status occupying the social center. The political, and hence resistant, aspects of place evoke how “marginalization and oppression are linked through the exercise of power, economic exploitation, cultural imperialism, and violence” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 631). Conceptualizing the political dimension of place is challenging. At once this facet introduces social hierarchies along with a corresponding continuum of responses to minoritization. Resistance may be evident in contesting assimilation to maintenance of home culture. These concepts are laden with the exercise of power in the forms of domination and resistance. Importantly, attempting to draw those at the margins toward the center “can be interpreted as another act of colonization, to the extent that it “disregards the potentially counter-hegemonic politics of the margins” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 633). Of particular importance to an inquiry of refugee women’s conceptualization of education is this dimension’s orientation toward recognizing inclusion and exclusion.

Ecological Dimension: Exploitation of People and (Natural) Places

Finally, the ecological dimension orients place consciousness toward the relationship between people and the natural world. Greenwood (2003) stated how modern capitalism and consumption deprioritize ecology which is “treated mainly as a collection of natural resources in the global economy” (p. 633). From this perspective, ecological devastation is implicated in processes that de-territorialize humans from connection to and within natural environments; damage to ecologies also divest people from the cognizance of people also being a part of nature. Ecologically understanding place resists the patriarchal notion “that ‘nature’ and ‘woman’ are

related social constructions that reflect relationships of power, and that patriarchal, capitalistic societies have constructed both nature and women as something ‘other’ to have ‘power over’” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 635). The ecological dimension relates to exploring conceptualizations of higher education through implications of similarity between the treatment of women and the natural world.

The connection between the natural environment’s exploitation and the subjugation of women is an element of place because they “are the experiential center of patterns of both social and environmental domination” (p. 635). If the logic of environmental devastation is a corollary to social subjectification, then refugee women may evoke connections evident from an ecological dimension of place through their experiences relative to exploited natural environments. Specific to refugee women and education, this example may be extended to maintain flexibility based on how participants envision and interact with treatments of environmental and social domination.

Chapter Summary

This research responds to the inequity of refugee women’s access to higher education. This problem is situated within the complex problem space of single parenthood, global forced migration, inaccessible basic or continuing education, place-delimited public service access, and xenophobic anti-immigrant discourses in the resettlement context of the U.S., and, more specifically, the U.S. South. However, the study focuses less on deficit positioning of refugees as a risk or at risk (Koyama, 2015) but instead, foregrounds refugee women’s power in the processes of grappling with their current resettlement realities and all of the necessary recreations of home, sociality, and relational networks entailed with transnational mobility, which many refugees experience in multiple locations over time. Additionally, this study seeks

to discover the particular facets of refugees' current place which interact with refugee women's conceptualizations of higher education and, given time and support, could reinforce their intrepid responses to recurrent, systemic minoritization. As such, this chapter reviewed the primary scholarly strands pertinent to the present research: 1) international geopolitics framing the status of refugees and human rights to education and higher education; 2) the U.S. refugee resettlement process including policy and law, sociopolitical factors, and the hegemony of self-sufficiency; and 3) emergent literature specific to refugees and education, including higher education, in conversation with elements of policy and law, sociopolitics, and effects of education.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The present study's methodological foundations were comprised from the philosophical and theoretical components within the paradigm of critical qualitative inquiry. Briefly, each phase of the research—from design through data analysis and writing—was informed by a central philosophy of critiquing inequity (Denzin, 2017; Denzin & Giardina, 2010; Guido et al., 2010). As operationally defined and implemented, criticality in this research centered the critique of refugee women's exclusion from higher education. Relatedly, this study's research questions were: 1) How do refugee women talk about higher education? 2) To what extent do refugee women's forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education? 3) How do refugee women express their understanding of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?

Data collection occurred over six weeks resulting in totals of 22 interviews with refugee women, 20 interviews with support workers, and 26 observations. All interviews with refugee women occurred in the women's homes, at their request. Interviews with support workers occurred at places of employment and coffee shops. Observations with refugee women included walks in their neighborhoods, accompanying them to refugee support group meetings, and attending meetings with refugee support personnel. Observations of resettlement workers, where permitted within the health and safety constraints of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, occurred at their places of work. Participant recruitment initially targeted adult refugee women within their first five years of resettlement in the U.S. and support workers. A portion of people who participated in the study occupied both refugee woman and support worker subjectivities; participants in this group are referred to as "boundary spanners" (Koyama & Ghosh, 2018). In

total, nine refugee women, nine resettlement workers, and four boundary spanners participated in the study.

To demonstrate alignment with the critical qualitative paradigm, the following sections first outline the philosophical and theoretical components of critical qualitative inquiry. Then, the research design addresses the methodology of exploratory case study. Next, the section on population and case replication describes the subjectivities of those who shared their stories and lives as data for this research. Next, the data collection procedures section addresses the data collection methods of observation, interview, and reflexive memos. Finally, the analytic technique section outlines key features of case study, particularly cross-case synthesis, as well as trustworthiness and limitations present in the study. This chapter concludes with descriptions of the study's instrumentation, trustworthiness, and limitations.

Philosophical and Theoretical Paradigms

A collection of critical qualitative theories constituted the philosophical foundation for this study. Criticality provided a foundational lens for this research because the study addresses an intellectual advocacy agenda (Denzin, 2017). This research prioritized developing linkages among scholarship about refugee education, the relationships of people to each other and places, and movements for equity in higher education. Interrogating the current state of refugee inclusion in higher education was an overarching goal contributing to the selection of research situated within the critical paradigm. These critiques manifested in two primary ways. First, the present study critiqued the reality that higher education is not sensitized to refugees' inclusion, and second, this study viewed refugees as well-positioned to be substantive participants in higher education and thus sought to trouble their limited representation in colleges and universities. This

critique is of crucial importance to advancing a sociology of education predicated on education's capacity to productively contribute to a stable, just society.

This research's methodological guidance was drawn from traditions of critical qualitative inquiry to question how culture, and its related beliefs and values, shaped participants' views on refugee higher education. This research, philosophically grounded within critical qualitative inquiry, oriented research findings toward the cultural and ideological dynamics that informed how participants conceptualized refugee women and higher education. A central element for the research was understanding how participants made sense of refugee higher education and what relationships to other people and places informed their sense-making. Critical qualitative inquiry directed knowledge production from this research toward critique of inequity. This research adopted a political and ethical stance that responds to Kuntz's (2016) assertion that criticality is both confrontational and generative. Extant scholarship has extensively covered higher educational inequity, particularly for refugees (Bragg, 2021; Dryden-Peterson, 2016b; Hailu et al., 2021; Koyama, 2015; Mangan & Winter, 2017; Unangst, 2020); this research study contributes to that line of critical investigation with refugee women. Relevant to the realm of productive critique, a critical philosophical foundation promoted troubling the higher educational inequity of refugee women's access to higher education and also sought ways to promote and advance refugee women's education beyond basic priorities. This positioning additionally related to Schwandt's (2006) call for a moral-political qualitative inquiry agenda, or "scholarly citizenship" (p. 809). Thus, adopting this facet of a critical theoretical paradigm entailed bridging my roles as a refugee community advocate with the scholarly agenda of contributing to movements toward equity and social justice in higher education.

A qualitative research framework was appropriate for this study because of its emphasis on processes that link “people, situations, [and] events” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 29). The processual observance and notation derived from qualitative inquiry highlighted the function of culture and relationships in this study. Processes, understood through a qualitative lens, were apparent by a “focus on specific situations or people, and [an] emphasis on descriptions” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 30). To reiterate, the element of criticality most relevant to this study was critique of educational inequity.

Researcher Reflexivity

I entered and completed this work with multiple, fluid senses of self, only partially conveyed by a list of identities or subject positions, and all in various states of being and becoming (Ahmed, 2000). In reflexive consideration of the topic of this research, some of my identities were foregrounded while others were quieter while conducting this research. For example, initial data collection was conducted with refugee women and resettlement workers with whom I had prior refugee resettlement support relationships, which also continue; these interactions created space to elaborate on my stage of dissertation study and, hence, the request to share an IRB information sheet and record our conversations. Other prominent reflexive features included transnationalism, racial(ized) identity and racial consciousness, and an ethical commitment to ongoing refugee advocacy.

Transnationalism was the most recognizable relational facet of self during this research. Shared experiences of different cultures and countries among me and participants afforded both a point of difference and opportunities for connection. Multiple countries, cultures, and modes of relational being have constituted “home” across my lifespan; I was born in one country, socialized in another, and spent the better portion of my adult years living and working in

international contexts that were neither the place of my birth or socialization. As an important distinction between me and the research participants, each of my intercontinental transitions were predicated upon chosen and not forced migration, in sharp relief when compared with refugees. This essential distinction highlights the difference between *choosing* one's place of life and living contrasted with being forced to migrate because of violence or persecution, as in the case of refugees. However, mutual personal experience with multiple cultural contexts presented an enjoyable space of opening dialog with participants who have also experienced multiple countries and cultural contexts.

Racial(ized) identity and racial consciousness were an additional feature of reflexive engagement pertinent to this research. The regional context was the southern U.S. where racism toward people racialized as Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Pacific Islander persist (Casemore, 2008; Whitaker et al., 2018). Within a racialized sociopolitical context, I conducted this research as a white, working class, first-generation graduate student, queer, and anti-racist woman. My whiteness has afforded me privileges in the realms of schooling, work, and social relationships that were rendered visible and in need of unsettling as I developed an anti-racist worldview, which introduced me to the sociopolitical realities of whiteness. Essential to this research was my cognizance of not erroneously conflating the oppression of growing up poor and queer with endemic, systemic, and institutional racism. As I navigated the research, I reflected on the implications of living between cultural/traditional expectations that are untenable (Lather, 1992; Pillow, 2003). As I have benefitted from elders investing time and resources toward my education, I oriented my work toward humanizing participants in this research and advancing the broader goal of contributing to their educational access. Correspondingly, I recognize that intersectional identities occur across a spectrum and that one identity positioned as

minoritized or valorized cannot be monolithically applied. In this regard, I connect with refugee women who, although very different in identity and experience, create life as an in-betweenness that is always emerging.

My ongoing responsibility to refugees was also integral to my reflexive engagement in this research. At the time of this research, I was (and continue to be) an emergent critical scholar, so my orientation toward justice in education shaped the research process. My commitments to equity and social justice manifested in how I developed this research embedded within a broader scholarly agenda and continued (and continue) investment in localized, collectivist efforts for immigration justice, refugee rights, and direct refugee resettlement support. Responsibility to participants included efforts to flatten unequal or hierarchical power relations and build trust. Many refugees are accustomed to drive-by volunteerism where people appear in their lives or community for a short time to fulfil a course requirement or other obligation and then abruptly depart. Repetitions of this dynamic erode trust between refugees and those affiliated, working, or researching with universities (Onyx, 2008). I embodied my responsibility to participants in pursuit of “structural change, [and] a changing relationship between social structures and social agents” (Beck 1992, p. 2). Herein, the foundation of criticality central to this research framed the design and my reflexive engagement within the problem space of refugee women’s exclusion from higher education. Toward responsible engagement with and to participants, I practiced ongoing consent during the data collection phase, articulated my investment and reasoning for the research, and ethically communicated timelines and exit strategies to avoid perpetuating the harm of extractive approaches.

Furthermore, tenets of ethical responsibility to research participants informed my reflexive engagement. Notably, I have been involved with the refugee community in the context

of this research since 2015, and, during that time, have maintained weekly meetings with refugee women unable to participate in group-based English language and cultural orientation classes due to their work and/or childcare schedules, prior to 2020, and most recently, because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Through this involvement, I learned about moments when women have experienced imbalanced personal connections with those people who have or insinuate authority in refugees' lives. It was essential to me to be as clear as possible about the intentions of this research and practice ongoing consent with all participants.

Ethics and Intentions in Research Techniques

This section addresses the implementation and intention for ethics in this research (Kuntz; 2016; Lincoln, 2009). Because the research design incorporated interview and observation, explicating practices for entering and exiting the research sites anchored this study in ethical transparency, which reinforced the pursuit of learning how refugee women's thoughts and beliefs about higher education are shaped by and through power and informed by spatialized relationships to the resettlement location and resettlement workers. One method appropriate to this element was representation of multiple participant perspectives (Clifford, 1983), whereby more than one refugee woman's experiences were analyzed to incorporate multiple voices to evoke multiple truths, a core component of qualitative inquiry. Specifically, this research prioritized multiple voices, truths, and realities to eschew reproducing refugees' educational experiences as a pale facsimile of "ideological interests" (Jackson, 2010, p. 283). In other words, much scholarship documents refugees' hardships, their positioning as risks or risky (Koyama, 2015), and the unimaginable challenges they encounter as forced migrants, but this research instead foregrounded how participant refugee women viewed themselves in relation to higher education.

Study Sites

This study was conducted in a mid-sized city in the southeastern part of the U.S. South and multiple case study design enabled an expansive view of included cases and the multiple places that permeate the processes pertinent to the cases. Data on the state-level refugee population in North Carolina substantiates this place as the broadest sense of the study's site. Specifically, Walden and Sienkiewicz (2019) reported that:

North Carolina consistently ranks 10th in the United States for the number of refugees resettled. In 2015 over 3,300 refugees made the state their home with most resettling to Durham, Guilford, Mecklenburg, and Wake counties, among others. The following year, arrivals totaled just 2,200 and only 1,100 refugees arrived in North Carolina in fiscal year 2018. (p. 85)

The relatively large refugee population in North Carolina indicated that obtaining a sample of refugee women would be possible. An infographic from Charlotte Awake (2016) presented in Appendix D, further supported this methodological decision. Specifically, these details about the state in which the current study is situated constitute the rationale for the suitability of this context to accomplish the place-based goals of the research.

From a localized perspective, the study sites for data collection with refugee women included their homes, neighborhood walks and community events, appointments with resettlement workers in their offices, and public parks. For resettlement worker participants, sites included workplaces and coffeeshops with outdoor seating. Importantly, the study sites primarily reflected participants' preferences; with consent, I followed the participants as they engaged in their daily lives and work. This feature of the research also addressed rigor in case study, described as data collection "over an extended period of time covering multiple sittings" (Yin,

2018, p. 119). Entry and exit plans were essential to maintaining my ethical commitments to the refugee and resettlement support communities which I occupy.

Planning for ethical engagement when “entering” the study sites with a new subject position as researcher, rather than friend, community partner, or teacher, required additional forethought. Existing relationships with refugees benefited my entry into their communities and facilitated a foundation of relational trust and accountability. I prioritized responsible engagement through clear communication and practicing ongoing consent. I made a concerted effort to distinguish my customary involvement with refugees and support who were known to me from the research through clear communication about when I would support refugees’ learning needs contrasted with when I requested to speak with them for the purpose of this research. Although this research has concluded, I have not left the sites of study. I remain in close contact with participants akin to my relationships with refugees and support workers prior to beginning the study. Specifically, I continue to teach one-on-one English classes for refugee women English language learners unable to participate in group classes and, most recently, have co-designed and am delivering a higher education access course for Afghan new arrivals.

Research Design

The critical qualitative paradigm guided this study and facilitated awareness to systemic injustice in the form of educational inequity, especially the role of the political, spatial, and temporal influences that shaped refugee women’s conceptualizations of higher education. Given the minimal existing research on U.S.-based adult refugees and higher education, an exploratory research design (Yin, 2018) was best suited to explore how refugee women resettled in the U.S. conceptualized higher education. Therefore, an exploratory multiple case study design, discussed in greater detail below, provided a multivocal foundation for continued empirical study (Yin,

2018). Combining tenets of exploratory and multiple case study design enabled attention to relationships and processes that shaped how refugee women think about and approach higher education in the U.S., which were emergent at the time of the study. Additionally, this approach evoked bricolage or the adaptation of tools at home to address the research (Maxwell, 2013). Briefly, the researcher had never used case study methodology prior to the dissertation, although other methodologies were known, such as the comparative case (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016; 2017) and the extended case (Burawoy, 1998). Thus, the research design attempted to follow the fundamental approaches to critical qualitative (Maxwell, 2013) and multiple case study (Yin, 2018) methodologies with the goal of pursuing more advanced case study methodologies in the future. The following sections address the recruitment and case replication techniques, data collection procedures, and analytic technique of within and cross-case synthesis aligned with the critical qualitative paradigm and multiple case study methodology.

Research Questions

Research questions were formulated through the corpus of literature on refugees' human rights to education, international and comparative works pertaining to higher education and refugees, and the dimensions of place (Greenwood, 2003) that theoretically frames this research. Primary concepts drawn from these strands of extant scholarship included: geographic place, affective connection to place, interrupted education, assimilation ideologies, economic self-sufficiency or workforce involvement, and educational beliefs. The primary purpose of this study was to explore processes over time (Yin, 2018, p. 10), specifically those processes that structure refugee women's conceptualizations of higher education. Therefore, research questions addressed by this study were:

1. How do refugee women talk about higher education?

2. To what extent do refugee women's forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?
3. How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?

Exploratory, Multiple Case Study

This study employed an exploratory, multiple case design that was not bounded (Houghton et al., 2013; Yin, 2018). Correspondingly, the central cases were refugee women and resettlement workers as well as the unexpected inclusion of boundary spanners, who embody both refugee woman and resettlement worker subjectivities. Additionally, background for the cases included contextual factors and relational processes such as spatialized constructions of place(s), the U.S. South sociopolitical context, and the relationships developed through place, including the U.S. resettlement context and, in the case of refugee women, those places that were part of their forced migration journeys. The study design was exploratory because relationships among the concepts included in the study were unknown, yet these concepts and their relationships emerged as a product of the exploratory and multiple case research design. Cumulatively, combining exploratory and multiple case study design generated insights on similarities, differences, and the contextual factors surrounding points of comparison. Substantively, included findings and the discussion in subsequent chapters address patterns, differences, and theorizations about the divergent experiences of refugee women and practices of resettlement support workers.

Exploratory, Multiple Case Study & Theoretical Frame Rationale

Two features of the methodology substantiated the research design: established guidelines for exploratory and multiple case study and the methodological affordances, embedded within the cross-case synthesis predicated on the within case analysis, of place consciousness (Greenwood, 2003). First, exploratory case study design was appropriate to this

research because of multiple unknowns pertinent to the cases (Yin, 2018). Specifically, the unknowns for this research were the relevant concepts to U.S. resettled refugee women's higher education conceptualizations and the relationships among them. For example, scholars have begun examining adult refugees and higher education in international contexts (e.g., Arvanitis et al., 2019; Bragg, 2021; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018), most commonly in places with more robust social support networks than the U.S., and of the extant scholarship that includes the U.S., most frequently in comparison with another country (e.g., Bajwa et al., 2017; Unangst & de Wit, 2020), largely does not disaggregate refugees' experiences by gender or other intersectional facets of identity. Furthermore, exploratory case study design's emphasis on connections with theoretical foundations provided another feature of suitability (Yin, 2018). For the purpose of this study, the theoretical foundations of international human rights and refugee education scholarship outside the U.S. context provided the theoretical foundation to both explore U.S. resettled refugee women's views of higher education and extend this corpus of literature to illuminate the features of the present study.

Second, multiple case design was also apt for this study because it eschews a priori assumptions of sameness. Specifically, this feature of multiple case design was deployed by not assuming shared experiences or beliefs across participants in each case. Multiple case design offered the opportunity to separately consider each refugee woman, support worker, and boundary spanner, without assuming shared experiences. Furthermore, multiple case design enabled comparing and contrasting within each case and across cases (Yin, 2018). In particular, this approach considered the processes of relationship development regarding higher education, within places and with people, especially attentive to networks of support, knowledge sharing, and practices (Greenwood, 2003). To avoid generalizing unique experiences within and across

cases, this research focused on the processes that inform and construct beliefs about refugee women's higher education, particularly how these were informed through contextual, relational spaces. Third, theoretically framing this study with Greenwood's (2003) dimensions of place focused on individuals as embedded within multiple systems of power. Specifically, Greenwood (2003) offered five place-conscious dimensions that emphasized accountability "to the connections between people, education, and places" (Greenwood, 2003, p. 603). This reorientation was not solely individualistic; rather, conceptualizing individuals within structures that shaped their lives identified inequity in refugee women's higher education access and enabled theorizing how these inequities occurred. The dimensions were also not temporally, spatially, or geographically bound, as in traditionalist approaches to case study, and so offered a frame to recognize the processes and interplay among individuals, places, and systems. As an exploratory case study, a place-conscious (Greenwood, 2003) framework afforded identifying concepts important to participants in their higher educational thinking (and in relation to concepts from theory during the within case analytic phase) and to identify relational patterns among them (in conversation with the place-conscious theoretical framework during the cross-case synthesis phase, which interwove the analysis from the within case analytic phase); both of these analytic techniques are described in the section titled "analytic techniques: case replication and cross-case synthesis". Theorizing refugee women's conceptualization of higher education with place-based inquiry elicited connections among people, places, and the world beyond the immediate, temporal, or localized notions of place, particularly transnational socialization processes in divergent cultural contexts. The process of refugee resettlement did not artificially negate the accrual of experience across time and space; place-consciousness methodologically foregrounded the relational effects of forced migration.

Each of these three features of the methodology and theoretical framework collectively accounted for an aligned research design specific to the topic and features of this study. The emergent nature of U.S. based empirical inquiry refugees and higher education paralleled the features of exploratory case research design. With few empirical contributions to map the terrain of U.S. higher education and refugee women, both international higher education literature and the theoretical framework collectively constituted a connection to extant scholarship from which to theorize these experiences amid the U.S. sociopolitical context. Also, that the study incorporated multiple cases – refugee women, resettlement workers, and boundary spanners – yet did not homogenize them or their experiences corresponded to multiple case design. In essence, the cases were collectively approached as entangled with the central topic of concern (refugee women and higher education) yet accounted for each case’s uniqueness as well the divergences across cases. Finally, the place-conscious (Greenwood, 2003) theoretical framework also predicated a theoretical grounding advantageous to methodological decision making. The framework oriented the research design to observe and interrogate the intersubjective relationships among people and their places; the specific dimensions of Greenwood’s (2003) place-conscious theoretical work established a basis for particular attributes of place as participants described and as observed through data collection procedures.

Case Selection and Replication

Multiple case study design enabled an exploration of multiple conceptions of refugee women and higher education. Case replication (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2018), as opposed to population sampling, was achieved by including three cases ($N=22$), comprised of refugee women ($n=9$), resettlement workers ($n=9$), and boundary spanners ($n=4$). Related to case selection, as opposed to populations and sampling, Maxwell (2013) advised that multiple case

study is most rigorous when it addresses internal case variation rather than “sampling... because it is impossible to observe everything even in one small setting” (p. 137). Replication across the three cases emphasized patterns from the participants based on case category (within case comparison) and among all three cases (cross-case synthesis). This technique is distinct from other sampling approaches that attempt to include a sample representative of the national population(s) of interest.

Following “replication, not sampling logic, for multiple-case studies” (Yin, 2018, p. 55), participants were initially selected for replication from two groups (refugee women and resettlement workers) but in the process of participant recruitment, some participants conveyed their identities as relevant to both categories. The groups of refugee women and resettlement support workers constituted the pool of potential cases to replicate. This research was originally designed to incorporate two cases, refugee women and refugee support workers. However, participant recruitment resulted in three cases that represented refugee women, resettlement workers, and, unexpectedly, a case of people who were both refugee women and educational resettlement workers, referred to as boundary spanners (Koyama & Ghosh, 2018). The following sections outline the inclusion criteria for participant inclusion and methods of case replication and instrumentation.

Refugee Women Case

As a reminder, the 1951 Refugee Convention established defining criteria for refugee status as people who are “...unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2010, p. 5). To operationalize this definition for the present study, eligible refugee participants were those who, at any point in their

lives, were able to obtain refugee status. However, to delimit criteria for this investigation, two temporal inclusion criteria were implemented and are described in full below.

First, eligible participants were those within their first five years of being resettled to the U.S., exclusively refugees resettled in the U.S. between 2017 and 2021. This temporal criterion was essential to investigate the interplay of refugee women's thinking about higher education relative to the function of refugee resettlement support. Specifically, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (2012) mandated the timeline of refugee eligibility for "refugee support services ...in the U.S. less than sixty months (five years)" (DHHS ORR, para. 5). After the 60-month period, U.S.-resettled refugees are ineligible for further VOLAG or support services that are federally funded. Thus, this time span of refugees' first 60 months was vital in facilitating across-case comparisons among refugees, resettlement workers, and boundary spanners as these first five years are when refugees are eligible to benefit from federally funded resettlement support. Second, all refugee participants were adults. For this study, adulthood was defined by the U.S. age of maturity criterion of being 18 years or older.

Facets of identity and educational background constituted an additional set of inclusion criteria. Womanhood, an inclusion criterion for refugee participants, was broadly defined regardless of sex assigned at birth. All refugees with expansive gender identities and meeting other inclusion criteria were welcomed to participate; no one was excluded on the basis of identifying as cisgender, transgender, nonbinary, or two-spirit. Additionally, eligible women refugees were not required to be actively enrolled in education of any form nor was prior educational attainment required. Finally, to contribute to knowledge of adult refugee education in the U.S., eligible participants were resettled in the U.S. and not residing in another host country.

Also, because of the size of the refugee population, a mid-sized city in the Southeastern region of the U.S. was the location for participant recruitment.

Refugee Support Case

Broadly, the phrase ‘resettlement worker’ referred to eligible participants in two main categories: people employed by voluntary agencies, or VOLAGs that receive federal funding and refugee support workers, or those who work in non-profit resettlement support organizations. Both groups contributed to refugee participants’ relationships to place and (dis)connections with higher education, as demonstrated in the findings in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Data from resettlement workers was essential to facilitate a comparative study and to develop understandings of how refugee women conceptualize higher education given the close relationship of resettlement workers with refugees in their first five years-post resettlement. Including refugee support workers (who were not VOLAG-affiliated) and/or those employed by a voluntary organization (VOLAG) for refugee resettlement support, complemented the sample of eligible refugee women resettled between 2017-2021.

For context, North Carolina has 10 voluntary agencies (NCDHHS, 2019; Appendix E) charged with facilitating, administering, and reporting on refugee resettlement. However, because refugee support services have been drastically limited through legislative and executive office action by the 45th President of the United States and his administration, VOLAGs customarily rely upon not-for-profit agencies and community volunteers to round out the services available to refugees. For example, NCDHHS (2019) also published a list of 21 entities that provide refugee assistance (Appendix F) but the distinguishing feature of these groups from VOLAGs is that they are not the receiving entities involved in refugees’ relocation from places of temporary resettlement to the U.S. as a permanent resettlement location. Resettlement support

workers from both non-profits and VOLAGs were included. All resettlement workers were adults.

Boundary Spanner Case

Koyama and Ghosh (2018) defined boundary spanners as people with affiliations in both educational and refugee resettlement support. Boundary spanners included in this study also align with this definition. Boundary spanner participants represented an additional layer of multiple roles. Specifically, boundary spanners in this study were previously resettled refugee women (beyond the five-year time limitation) who worked in refugee resettlement support, including education. Included boundary spanners worked with both non-profits and VOLAGs and were adult women.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected with observation and interview methods across multiple spaces, specific to the case type and participants' preferences. Across cases, observation of one eight-hour day was the first method of data collection. Then, two 90- to 120-minute interviews were conducted. Reflexive researcher memos were maintained throughout the research design, data collection, and analysis phases. In alignment with case replication rigor (Yin, 2018), the same methods of data collection were implemented with all participants. These procedures were implemented across cases with variation only in the places of observation and interviews.

Observation Procedures

Observations provided insight into participants' everyday actions for insight into interview-based expressions about refugee higher education. Observation was an additional data collection method; Appendix J presents the observation guide for refugee women and Appendix K for resettlement workers. Regarding case study design, observation afforded insight on the

study's "relevant social or environmental conditions" (Yin, 2018, p. 121). Specifically, observations provided context in action on participants' views of refugee higher education, their verbalizations of these ideas, and a baseline for evaluating participants' contributions in the interviews. Both social and environmental factors were important to this study design framed by place consciousness (Greenwood, 2003). With refugee women participants, observational data evidenced their interactions with children, peers, partners, and community members or neighbors about concepts like learning, schooling, and their ambitions or visions for using education. With resettlement workers, as well as boundary spanners who preferred observations occur at their places of work, their conversations with peer refugee workers (both within their sectors of non-profit or VOLAG and across sector affiliation) also provided a deeper perspective on their narratives in the interviews.

Participant observations were appropriate within this design, as participant interactions provided rich data that informed analyzing each case and facilitated cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2018, p. 124). The social aspect accounted for through observation informed the relationships and co-constitutive meaning making described during interviews. Specifically, observations in the contexts of home and work enriched data specific to how (and what forms of) refugee education were discussed and for whom various forms of education were intended. Observations also added opportunities to take note of the dimensions of place-consciousness (Greenwood, 2003). Furthermore, refugee resettlement is complex and fraught with the vagaries of war and forced migration; situated within this context, specific questioning about educational backgrounds and beliefs about refugee women and higher education was also contextualized in the research design in contrast with awareness of the prevalence of interrupted education (Koyama & Ghosh, 2018; Hailu et al., 2021) among refugees. Within these complexities,

observations generated awareness of how participants conducted themselves under quasi-normal or mundane daily activities. Maxwell (2013) articulated the generative capacity of observation under similar circumstances, such as increased capacity to “draw inferences... getting at tacit understandings and ‘theory-in-use,’ as well as aspects of the participants’ perspective that they are reluctant to directly state in interviews” (p. 103). From the perspective that refugee women and higher education was not a comfortable topic for discussion and questioning across all participants, observations provided additional insight on the topic to inform how the interviews were conducted.

Interview Procedures

All participants participated in two semi-structured interviews scheduled for 90 minutes, though several extended to 120 minutes. After spending a full day with each participant, interviews included prompts for discussion that reflected situations or conversations that occurred during the observations. Semi-structured interviews focused on gathering evidence of explanations of how and why participants view the topic at hand (Yin, 2018, p. 118), which is higher education in the context of the present study. Interviews also elicited the meanings and processes participants ascribed to refugee women’s higher education. Semi-structured interviews were the primary mode of data collection, and Appendices H and I, respectively, present the interview protocols for refugee women and resettlement workers.

The context for interviews depended upon each case type; however, participants’ comfort and safety were the unifying goals for all interviews. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted in person. Fully vaccinated participants were prioritized, and most participants were vaccinated against Covid-19. However, some interviews were conducted outdoors and masked with participants who were not vaccinated. In total, nine interviews were

conducted, each with refugee women and resettlement workers; four boundary spanners participated in interviews.

Reflexive Memos

Reflexive memos (Birks et al., 2008) were central to the research development, design, implementation, and analysis. Memos included observation notes, reflexive and theoretical journals, and reflections on data collection, specifically to inform subsequent observations and interviews. Importantly, memoing offered the opportunity to annotate and reflect on experience. Memos provided an essential research tool for maintaining awareness of the research's development, how participants were engaging with me, and obtaining beneficial data to address the topic of refugee women and higher education. Memos additionally offered a place to gather notes and maintain a keen awareness of processes and embedded power dynamics. A timeline for these elements of the instrumentation are presented in full (Appendix L).

Observations, Interviews, and Memo Instrumentation

Protocols were prepared in conversation with extant literature to provide beneficial starting points to learn about conceptions of refugee higher education. Specifically, the instruments guided data collection via two direct methods: observations and semi-structured interviews. A third indirect method of data collection, researcher memos, was also incorporated, yet did not require instrumentation.

In compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, all participants were offered an IRB information sheet about the study (Appendix G). Semi-structured interviews were the primary mode of data collection (Appendix H presents the interview protocols for refugee women and Appendix I for resettlement workers). Observation was an additional data collection method; Appendix J presents the observation guide for refugee women and Appendix K for

resettlement workers. Data collection with boundary spanners was guided by both refugee and resettlement worker protocols for interviews and observation. Finally, researcher memos comprised the final mode of data collection and were used to prepare for and reflect upon episodes of data collection.

Analytic Techniques: Case Replication and Cross-Case Synthesis

Consistent with tenets of rigor in multiple case study and its corollary cross-case synthesis, data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently. Analytic techniques relied on iterative, or cyclical, inductive and deductive procedures. Cycles of analysis concurrent with the ongoing data collection promoted adaptive flexibility and finesse as the data collection occurred. Inductive, or open, coding was created directly from the data, and deductive coding relied on deriving codes from relevant literature; both techniques were incorporated in the within case analysis phase. These techniques alone are insufficient for rigorous case study research, which also requires weaving inductive and deductive techniques together to think upward conceptually—within and across cases—to build theory from the data (Yin, 2018). Regardless of type—observation or interview—data were analyzed “immediately after finishing the first interview or observation” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 104). Thus, with the addition of each new piece of data, analysis immediately followed throughout the data collection phase.

Briefly, deductive coding was defined in correspondence with methodological guidance for qualitative research as a priori concepts derived from relevant literature (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2020). Thus, the deductive phase of coding the within case data corresponded to concepts in the literature review. The codebook was developed through the within case analysis phase, and then, the theoretical framework was applied during cross-case synthesis. This methodological approach is apparent in the structure of subsequent chapters: Chapter 4 addresses

findings for the research questions in correspondence to relevant literature included in the review, and Chapter 5 presents the cross-case synthesis in conversation with the theoretical framework and expands from the theoretical connections drawn in Chapter 4.

This analytic approach is consistent with multiple case study in three ways: this methodology emphasizes beginning data analysis immediately following collection—which included the within case analysis and codebook development (Maxwell, 2013), the multiple case technique of first analyzing within case data in conversation with relevant theory (Yin, 2018), and the pursuit of case replication, which is determined iteratively through cross-case synthesis and with regard to developing an analytic procedure related to the “researcher’s own style of rigorous empirical thinking” (Yin, 2018, p. 165). Collectively, these analytic techniques pursue the multiple case study methodological goal of upward conceptual thinking (where the cross-case synthesis built from the within case analysis by introducing the theoretical framework). Relatedly, this flexibility in theoretical incorporation in the methodology of multiple case study enabled drawing from critical qualitative methodological guidance within the analytic procedures, accounted for in the within case analytic process including two phases of inductive coding and one phase of deductive or a priori coding.

Thus, the deductive analysis represented in the codebook (Table 1) reflects concepts deductively derived from literature reflected in the review. Instead of coding for all the elements of a conceptual framework, as demonstrated through coding for all concepts included in the literature review and constructed for analytic framing as is customary in other forms of qualitative research, the theoretical framework’s dimensions of place (Greenwood, 2003) were applied in the cross-case synthesis phase of analysis (Yin, 2018).

Technically, qualitative data analysis tools enabled organization and robust analysis of within and cross-case comparisons. Otter.ai (Liang, 2021) was used for initial, automated transcription. All 44 transcripts were manually confirmed for. Final interview transcripts and observation notes were analyzed using Atlas.ti version 8.4 (Atlasti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2020). The following section first describes methodological decision-making concerning case replication, a necessary multiple case study criteria to enable within- and cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2018). Then, within case analysis is described followed by cross-case analysis, although within case analysis and cross-case synthesis occurred concurrently and cyclically.

Replication Approaches for Multiple Case Study

The research design of a multiple case study was structured such that the groupings of refugee women, support workers, and boundary spanners constituted three distinct, yet interrelated cases. The case replication pursued a parity of refugee women and resettlement workers and was achieved with nine participating refugee women and nine resettlement workers; four boundary spanners also participated and can, in theory, count toward both categories. Considering the multiple case study design, rigor is achieved through case replication rather than sampling logic. Yin (2018) articulated that “the logic underlying these replication procedures also should reflect some theoretical interest” (p. 55). Specifically, the theoretical component of primary interest across cases was discerning how or to what extent refugees’ values or beliefs about higher education are shaped by interactions with refugee support workers.

The theoretical component of interest corresponded to other migration scholars’ work comparatively engaging perspectives from refugees and those who work with them (Agha & Cuddeback, 2020). Also, replication rigor entailed a consideration of within-case structures “so

that the theoretical replication across subgroups are complemented by literal replications within each subgroup” (Yin, 2018, p. 50). In this regard, a minimum of two participants per case were recruited (and exceeded in each of the three cases) to achieve multiple-case design replication. In consideration of both within- and cross-case replication Chapters 4 and 5 include “both the individual case studies and the multiple-case results” (Yin, 2018, p. 57), with Chapter 4 addressing within-case results and Chapter 5 addressing cross-case synthesis.

Coding Schema

Finalized interview transcripts, prepared using Otter.ai (Liang, 2021), observation notes, and researcher memos were analyzed via Atlas.ti version 8.4 (Atlasti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2020). First, all data artifacts were read in their entirety and immediately following data collection. Three rounds of initial open coding within each case (Yin, 2018) resulted in 34 initial codes. An additional round of open coding resulted in 36 open codes. Next, two rounds of deductive, concept driven coding, predicated on the research questions and topic-based contributions from the literature review, resulted in six additional codes for a total of 42 codes. Briefly, deductive coding was defined in correspondence with methodological guidance for qualitative research as *a priori* concepts derived from relevant literature (Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2020). Thus, the deductive phase of coding the within case data corresponded to concepts in the literature review. The codebook was developed through the within case analysis phase, and then, the theoretical framework was applied during cross-case synthesis. The final codebook is presented in Table 1. Next, coded excerpts from the cases of refugee women, support workers, and boundary spanners were organized thematically to develop a codebook and preliminary schema for each. Each group of coded excerpts was then evaluated and analyzed for addressing how and why major concepts in the research questions emerged, first within each

case and then across cases (Yin, 2018). Finally, codes from the open and concept driven coding processes were compared to create an integrated codebook and finalized schema.

Table 1: Codebook and Codes

Phase 3 Deductive	Phase 2 Inductive	Phase 1 Inductive (Open)
Discussions of Education	Forms of Education	Basic Education Community college English language learning G.E.D.
Factors Influencing Education	Negative Factors	Cost of education Credential devaluation Community support Confidence Determination Dream Empowerment Family support Importance of education Pride Self-study Social mobility Socialization Womanhood First generation
	Positive Factors	International high school Culture Gender Gendered Labor Interrupted Education Parenthood Parent Support Positive Relationships Shame
Interrupted Education	Through Forced Migration	Employment Housing Independence Linguistic hegemony Racism Negative relationships Self-sufficiency Structural barriers Education access Mentors for education
	Relational Factors	
Effects of Immigration Law	Essentialization	
	Humanization	

Within-Case Analysis

The initial phase of within case analysis began with a full read of all data artifacts without annotating, followed by a phase of open inductive coding, then a second round of inductive coding, and a final phase of deductive coding and codebook consolidation; these elements are described in detail in the within case findings (Chapter 4). Concepts originating in the data and those drawn from refugee and refugee higher education literature were combined upward theorization to build theory from the data (Yin, 2018).

Analyzing patterns, processes, and differences within cases generated insights on questions of “‘how’ and ‘why’” (Yin, 2018, p. 197). Anecdotes from the data related to “how” and “why” questions addressed major concepts from the study’s research questions, which were developed in conversation with extant scholarship and multiple relevant concepts. However, an important distinction for within-case analysis from other qualitative analytic techniques was avoiding reducing elements of the data to variables, which would be most appropriate to explanatory, not exploratory, case study design. As an exploratory study, initial analytic techniques prioritized identifying concepts and the relationships among them.

This phase generated an initial list of codes from participant statements that responded to the “how” and “why” specific to the study’s research questions. The codebook was further refined in an additional round of inductive coding. The final round of coding prioritized reducing the codebook elements in conversation with concepts from extant scholarship. Also, the finalized codebook prioritized identifying patterns and processes within the cases.

Cross-Case Synthesis

Cross-case synthesis, adopted for this research, “only applies to the analysis of multiple-case studies” (Yin, 2018, p. 194). Yin (2018) articulated that this “approach to cross-case synthesis contrasts with the data aggregation approaches in the conventional research syntheses, which aim to reach conclusions about the variables but not necessarily about the cases” (p. 196). Cross-case synthesis retained the concepts developed from the within-case analysis codebook yet juxtaposed participants’ experiences among and across the cases. Toward this end, cross-case synthesis merged concepts and relational processes present within the cases but among participants categorized primarily to different cases. Elements of similarity and dissimilarity across cases were addressed with equal consideration. Cross-case synthesis additionally is in alignment with a place-conscious (Greenwood, 2003) theoretical framework, which is expansive and responsive to multiple temporal and geographical localities and the multiple implications these factors may have in individual lives. Specifically, the theoretical component of primary interest across cases was discerning how or to what extent refugees’ values or beliefs about higher education are shaped by interactions with refugee support workers.

Trustworthiness

This study primarily met standards of rigor in trustworthiness by incorporating multiple sources of evidence within the multiple case design (Yin, 2018). This technique of triangulation accounted for how multiple means of data collection speak to or diverge from one another (Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2018). Specific to this research, triangulation was implemented across the methods of observation and semi-structured interviews. In addition to breadth of voices, triangulation in this study prioritized complete data by “gathering multiple perspectives” (Houghton et al., 2013, p. 12). Triangulating the data across methods enabled achieving a broad

range of considerations for participants' thoughts about refugee women and higher education as well as a deep sense of the meaning of their thoughts on the matter. Furthermore, "multiple sources of evidence" (Yin, 2018, p. 43) contributed to validity and enhanced the trustworthiness of findings. Also, the study design attended to external validity by extending relevant theory and incorporating these theoretical foundations throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting phases. Theory in the critical qualitative paradigm guided the analytic procedures within and across cases included in the case study. Given the array of methods incorporated and to achieve the iterative refinement specific to multiple case study and appropriate methods of triangulation that Yin (2018) promoted, analysis was iterative once data collection began and informed subsequent stages of data collection.

Member checking was incorporated throughout the data collection and analytic stages. Although Yin (2018) briefly addressed participant review by key informants, Maxwell (2013) offered more insight on this technique and was employed to guide this approach. Member checking included asking for clarification during interviews, after initial transcript review, during the within case analysis on quotation and anecdote interpretation, and on the organization findings in relation to key concepts for the study. This approach to open lines of ongoing and iterative communication with participants upheld the practice of ongoing consent to participate in the study as well as ensuring valid interpretation. Additionally, member checking attended to issues of validity through interpreting what participants shared by "ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 127). A selection of instances of member checking is included in Appendix

M. Limitations

There are several interpersonal and methodological limitations related to this study's design. One affective limitation was my personal proximity to refugee families and resettlement support organizations over the past seven years. As a volunteer instructor, I have come to know some refugee women, children who migrated with them and those born since we first met, and the conglomerated groups of friends and extended kinship networks with which they have built connections post-arrival. From a limitations perspective, these prior relationships influenced my disposition and world view regarding refugees' lives in the U.S. I was and remain close with many of the participants included in this study. However, to mitigate this limitation, I purposefully communicated my purpose for research, as opposed to friendly instructional or cultural orientation assistance, before and frequently during data collection procedures.

Additionally, observations within a case study design may have also limited the analytic techniques. Yin (2018) articulated that observations may produce unintended bias over the interactions and relationships included within a single case. However, this site in the state where I reside may also be understood as open to developing new ideas because "home is from the start a place of difference" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, p. 33). In other words, familiarity in this space is not the same as purposefully seeking out answers to research questions framed by critical qualitative place-based inquiry.

Chapter Summary

Methodologically, this research is grounded by critical qualitative inquiry and exploratory multiple case study (Yin, 2018). Importantly, the paradigm and approach informed each stage of the methodology and methods. Through reflexive engagement, this research foregrounds ethical commitments to and communication with refugee women as well as those who work with them surrounding their resettlement. As an exploratory case study (Yin, 2018),

this research prioritizes strong theoretical grounding through extant literature while also investigating the contours of refugee women's experiences with higher education. Furthermore, given the limited treatment of adult refugees in the U.S. context of resettlement, the exploratory case design is apt. Case replication, rather than sampling, additionally corresponds to the approach of exploratory case study, which pursues case completion. Methods of observation, interview, and reflexive researcher memos afford deep insight into the processes of, or "how" and "why," women refugees in the U.S. conceptualize higher education. These methodological approaches and methods are in alignment given the primary purpose, ethical commitments, and desired outcomes of this research.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS FROM WITHIN-CASE COMPARISONS

Findings from Within-Case Comparisons

This chapter addresses findings from within the cases of this exploratory multiple case study through the coding schema, as described in Chapter 3, and according to the study's research questions. Findings for cross-case synthesis are presented in Chapter 5. Sections devoted to each case address the research questions:

- How do refugee women talk about higher education?
- To what extent do refugee women's forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?
- How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?

The first section presents within case findings from refugee women participants, organized according to the research questions. The findings sections based on within cases are presented in the following order: refugee women first, then, workers who support them second, and third, boundary spanners, or those who came to the U.S. as refugees and now work in refugee resettlement. Throughout, data excerpts are only attributed to participants with pseudonyms to protect the identities of those who consented to participate. Relationships among the concepts from the coding schema and their function(s) regarding the research questions are also addressed throughout. The cross-case synthesis of findings is presented in Chapter 5.

The refugee women case included nine people all within the first five years of resettlement in the U.S. Table 2 summarizes participants' pseudonyms, age range, education background, motherhood, language(s), and primary affiliation with a VOLAG or non-profit.

Table 2: Summary of Refugee Women Participants

	Age	Education		Language(s)	Primary
Pseudonym	Range	Background	Mother	[Primary Listed 1 st]	Affiliation
Abeni	31-35	Grade 1; G.E.D. Enrolled	Yes	Ewé, French, English	Non-Profit
Barika	18-20	High School Graduate	No	Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda, French, English	Non-Profit
Beatrice	21-25	High School Graduate	No	Kirundi, Dutch, English, French, German, Kiswahili, Kinyarwanda or Ruanda	VOLAG
Imani	36-40	Grade 6	Yes	Kiswahili, French, Kinyarwanda, English	VOLAG
Jamila	21-25	Community College- enrolled	Yes	Kiswahili, English, French, Kinyarwanda	Non-Profit
Kaya	36-40	Grade 6	Yes	Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili, English	Non-Profit
Rehema	18-20	High School Graduate	No	Kiswahili, French, English	Non-Profit
Rosie	31-35	Grade 6	Yes	Kinyarwanda, Kiswahili, English	VOLAG
Sade	26-30	Grade 10, G.E.D. Enrolled	Yes	Arabic, English	Non-Profit

The worker participants included in the study represent affiliation with either a VOLAG (an agency that manages the resettlement transition into the U.S.) or a refugee support non-profit. The essential distinction between VOLAGs and non-profits is the pre-arrival phase; VOLAGs facilitate paperwork and flights for refugees to enter the U.S. whereas non-profits provide wrap-around services such as education, cultural orientation, and, in some non-profits, case management. Table 3 summarizes resettlement workers' pseudonyms, age range, education background, and primary affiliation with either a VOLAG or non-profit. Table 4 summarizes

boundary spanners' pseudonyms, age range, education background, motherhood, and primary affiliation with a VOLAG or non-profit.

Table 3: Summary of Refugee Resettlement Worker Participants

Pseudonym	Age Range	Education Background	Primary Affiliation
Adrian	36-40	Master's Enrolled	Non-Profit
Andromeda	21-25	Bachelor's Degree	Non-Profit
Angelique	31-35	Bachelor's Degree	Non-Profit
Becky	36-40	Bachelor's Degree	VOLAG
Clarke	36-40	Bachelor's Degree	VOLAG
Colombe	21-25	Bachelor's Enrolled	Non-Profit
Darby	26-30	Master's Enrolled	Non-Profit
Loren	21-25	Bachelor's Enrolled	VOLAG
Simon	36-40	Bachelor's Degree	Non-Profit

Table 4: Summary of Boundary Spanner Participants

Pseudonym	Age Range	Education Background	Mother	Primary Affiliation
Gia	31-35	Master's Degree	Yes	Non-Profit
Penance	36-40	Master's Enrolled	Yes	VOLAG
Raisa	36-40	Master's Degree	Yes	Non-Profit
Roux	31-35	Master's Degree	Yes	Non-Profit

Findings indicate, according to Research Question 1, that refugee women discuss higher education through forms of education, factors influencing education, and the effects of

education. Regarding Research Question 2 refugee women expressed that interrupted education is entangled with forced migration and gendered labor, yet they also described experiences and relationships that provided a buffering or mitigating effect against interrupted education. Finally, pertaining to Research Question 3, refugee women described their understandings of U.S. immigration law regarding education access along a continuum from essentializing to humanizing approaches.

Refugee Women

Refugee women included in the study discussed higher education, the relationship between forced migration and education, and the impact of immigration law relative to education. Specific anecdotes about education addressed basic education, such as English language or cultural orientation, as beneficial for some and stifling for others. Community college was also prevalent among participants and was described as an affordable mechanism to advance educational achievement toward long-term learning and professional goals. Furthermore, refugee women participants described negative and positive factors that influenced education in their lives. Effects of education, such as women's empowerment and community uplift, constituted the final component of how refugee women talk about higher education.

Regarding the extent of influence of forced migration, refugee women participants relayed that their forced migration journeys were also overlaid with gendered labor, such as family caretaking, which was an exacerbating factor to interrupted education in some cases. Notably, interrupted education for participating refugee women occurred in their home countries, in countries of temporary resettlement, and in the U.S., their permanent resettlement location. However, participants also addressed the role of positive relationships to buffer the effects of gendered interrupted education across their forced migration journeys.

Refugee women also shared divergent experiences of their understandings of immigration law relative to higher education access. These distinctions related to participants' time residing in the U.S. and the affiliation of their preferred or closest contact for information. Specifically, newly arrived participants in their first three months post-resettlement relied on VOLAG or resettlement agency-affiliated personnel for knowledge while those who had resided in the U.S. longer indicated preferences for non-profit-affiliated personnel for information on accessing higher education and navigating refugee resettlement law.

Refugee Women's Discussions of Higher Education

Three thematic groups, with a total of 16 codes, as referenced earlier, accounted for the coding schema relative to Research Question 1 which asks, "How do refugee women talk about higher education?" Refugee women in the study expressed their views of education as: a) forms of education (basic education like classes for English Language Learners (ELL) and community college), b) factors that influence their educational access (negative and positive), and their understandings of the effects of education (women's empowerment and community uplift). The following sections present how each of these three concepts illustrate how refugee women discussed higher education.

Forms of Education

Basic education and community college were the most prevalent forms of education refugee women discussed. Basic education refers to English language learning (ELL), vocational and technical skills training (primarily related to urgency for employability), and navigational skills for the local context such as public transportation, housing, and cultural understanding. Community college pertains to two-year colleges desired for their affordability, commonplace discussion among refugee contexts, and relative understanding of ease-of-admission.

Collectively, how women refugees in the study discussed education signals awareness of navigating educational pathways to access learning necessary to their goals; additionally, the forms of education refugee women addressed also relate to the factors influencing their education and their expressions of the effects of education.

Basic Education. Pertaining to basic education, Abeni, a refugee woman, wife, and mother of 2, shared during an interview held at her small business: “I [am] learning like the way the kids learn, how to read it, how to write it, I learn that.” Because Abeni’s background includes interrupted education – she was removed from school at age 7 – her primary goal with education is to become literate, a facility which she does not have in her native language. Abeni continued to explain that she requires English literacy to pass the U.S. citizenship test and “to have a good life.” Here, the expressions around a literacy component of basic education are entangled with a bureaucratic procedure (e.g., confronting the U.S. citizenship exam) and an affective element of “a good life.” In this situation, basic English language learning fulfills two purposes. First, English language learning relates to Abeni’s goal to pass the exam, that is highly formulaic and English-only, to obtain citizenship. Second, literacy and English communication skills are connected to Abeni’s conception of a “good life” that includes the ability to read, write, and understand the language. Succinctly, basic education in the form of English language learning is not only clearly related to imposed, or bureaucratic, purposes but also accounts for one woman’s intentions to create a good life for herself and her family.

Conversely, other participant perspectives presented negative connotations of basic education as irrelevant to some refugee women’s lives. Beatrice, a young, refugee woman who completed English language high school in a temporary resettlement location before arriving to the U.S., explained “...most of my time I was not going to English class because it was boring. I

know English!” As a recent newcomer within her first three months, Beatrice was required to attend English classes without regard for her strong educational background or her fluency in multiple languages, including English. For context, Beatrice explained her educational background:

I used to like medicine, maybe nursing. I said that... if I do nothing, then my life will not be good. In high school back home, you chose the... work you want to do. So, in my high school, I did software development.

Beatrice is interested in STEM-related fields, has a high school diploma from an English language school, and possesses impeccable English language facility, but was required to attend English language classes. When she brought this to the attention of her caseworker at her resettlement agency, Beatrice relayed they “told me, ‘Everyone has to go. You just have to go.’” Basic education was imposed on Beatrice without consideration of her educational background or ambitions for future learning. For Beatrice, the bureaucratic requirement of English language learning was not in alignment with her background or goals, as in the case of Abeni. Instead, the imposition of English language classes on a refugee woman who arrived with fluency was redundant and predicated on racist, deficit assumptions of her language ability. Particularly, obligating a fluent English speaker to participate in elementary language learning may serve as a deterrent to future educational pursuits, if the expectation becomes entrenched that all education in the U.S. will similarly be overly simplistic, misaligned with students’ backgrounds and interests, and, by default, mark refugee students as ill-equipped to pursue academic topics aligned with their prior learning.

Community College. Specific to community college, refugee women discussed two-year higher education as an accessible, affordable option. Additionally, refugee participants conveyed

that community college is frequently presented to them as a good educational opportunity by other refugees and support workers. For example, Rosie shared,

I was thinking about going to [community college] because if you don't go to school in this country you don't know to speak, you see? ... When you go to school you get some knowledge or skills; if you don't go to school here you will stay in one language, walk around with the language you come with. It will never help you.

Rosie's expression connected the function of community college with the ability to communicate and build her life in the resettlement context. She indicated that, to her, community college diminishes her perception of her native language as not beneficial to her new life. This perspective signals the utility of academic learning as a form of a new language and a reinforcement of expansive or technical English language applications. In one sense, Rosie's comment that going to school affords "knowledge or skills" reinforced how community college introduces the new language of academic communication, where reading, writing, and speaking conventions are formalized. Also, Rosie conveyed a sentiment that not obtaining education results in "stay[ing] in one language, walk[ing] around with the language you come with." From this perspective, community college facilitated the ability to convey learning beyond classroom contexts in addition to the communication skills refugee women have developed across their forced migration journeys.

From another perspective, some refugee women described community college as a means to advance toward their educational goals with flexibility regarding cost of attendance and preparation for four-year undergraduate or graduate degrees. Jamila, a recent high school

graduate and mom, lives with her parents and siblings and has very specific educational goals; she described community college as a stepping-stone in her life:

My choice is to be a lawyer, but I feel like [becoming] a lawyer is kind of difficult. ...I applied to [community college], and it helped me with financial aid. ...I'm going to tell you right now, after the two years, I'm going to transfer to another school, and I'm going to get the law degree.

Jamila expressed clarity of her short- and long-term educational goals, and she understood that community college is an affordable pathway to continue learning and building a postsecondary educational foundation. The last component from this quotation is relevant to educational advancement; Jamila stated, “after the two years, I’m going to transfer to another school, and I’m going to get the law degree.” This expression demonstrated Jamila’s savvy cognizance that community college would only take her so far in her educational goals. Community college cannot accommodate Jamila’s intention to obtain a four-year college degree, a prerequisite to her choice to become a lawyer. While affordable, community college is not an educational panacea for refugees, especially for those whose goals require four-year, professional, or terminal degrees.

Factors Influencing Education

Refugee women participants also discussed the factors that influence their education. To illustrate, these expressions were grouped by negative and positive factors. Both categories demonstrate refugee women participants’ cognizance of the dynamics that influence education.

Negative Factors. Case excerpts coded as negative factors relative to education pertained to educational credential devaluation. Many refugee women participants shared that they hold educational degrees from their home countries or a country of temporary resettlement. For all

participants included in this study with educational credentials such as high school diplomas, training certificates, and university degrees, none were accepted as viable proof of education. Effectively, this resulted in refugee women either having to re-start education in their desired fields or pursue work available to people without so-called “verifiable” education credentials. For participants in this study, education credential evaluation functioned as a limiting factor to continued education and professional advancement, especially due to the U.S.’s Eurocentric and elitist model of accepted international credentials.

Beatrice shared an example in her own attempts to enroll in continued education as a recently resettled refugee, within her first three months post-arrival. She said, “The jobs and schools here, in America, they don’t care about... the diploma from Africa; it’s nothing. Perfect work in school, but it's nothing.” She described herself as a diligent student with a high G.P.A. Prior to resettlement, Beatrice anticipated that a diploma from an English language high school would secure a modicum of decent professional or educational opportunities in the U.S. Instead, she was confronted with the reality that employers and educational institutions would not recognize her diploma from her home country. Beatrice encountered the U.S. Eurocentric and elitist standards for credential evaluation. Specifically, education credentials from international baccalaureate (IB) schools with American accreditation are readily accepted. However, these programs are extremely expensive and cater to children of diplomats and international non-government organization personnel.

Positive Factors. Case excerpts coded as positive factors relative to education included self-taught skills related to higher education, including several for entrepreneurial endeavors to fund higher education and the importance of education. Participants’ descriptions of self-teaching included self-guided study, many of which were oriented toward developing marketable

skills and small business development, to support long-term goals of pursuing higher education. Participants described their own understanding of why education is important – for themselves, their families, communities (locally and abroad), and younger generations.

Self-teaching included independent learning for English language and academic skills as well as marketable skills to develop small businesses; in both cases refugee women participants expressed that these endeavors were inextricably linked with longer-term goals of higher education. For example, Rosie, a mom of 4 whose first language is a purely verbal, not written language, shared that she accesses tools to support her literacy learning, such as “Books from the free library, YouTube, and, sometimes, my kids [school-aged] help me with writing.” For Rosie, who plans to enroll in a local community college once she has saved enough money, these tools enhance her ability to grasp the spoken and written forms of English.

Furthermore, Rosie also expressed that she consulted YouTube to learn “special African hair braiding.” In addition to her day job at a corrugate-processing factory, Rosie braids hair for her friends and neighbors; she saves the money for her “college piggybank.” In Rosie’s case, self-study accounts for unguided academic and entrepreneurial advancement. She independently accessed learning tools that further her facility in English language as well as introduced her to sophisticated entrepreneurial skills which materially enhanced her ability to access higher education.

In Beatrice’s case, she described how her previous country drew people from all over the world, so, in addition to her high school diploma that reflects her study of English and software engineering, she is a polyglot. Besides Kirundi, the language she shares with her family, Beatrice described fluency in Dutch, English, French, German, Kiswahili, and Kinyarwanda or Ruanda. With these extensive linguistic skills, she shared her interest in translation and interpretation

work with the resettlement agency that facilitated her and her family's relocation to the U.S. Beatrice stated, "After some time, I found a job at [resettlement agency, redacted] to do all that translator work. It's not my favorite, but it's a little bit of money. They say I have to have money for school." Beatrice understood that higher education in the U.S. costs money and used her extensive facility in multiple languages to secure herself some additional money. She leveraged her linguistic skills to advance her education.

Effects of Education

Refugee women participants also discussed education related to their understanding of effects of obtained education in their lives. Major concepts included women's empowerment and community uplift. The element of women's empowerment pertained to concepts of determination when confronted with challenges. The aspect of community uplift accounted for aspects of empowerment beyond the individual level to account for contributions or returns to participating refugee women's family and broader community, in the place of resettlement and in home or temporary resettlement locations, as well as features of social mobility. Participants described their understanding of education relative to social mobility as having better, safer lives, improved employment opportunities, and the ability to advocate for themselves and additional members of their communities in the resettlement context and additional transnational contexts.

Women's Empowerment and Community Uplift. Specific to social mobility, a relevant example comes from Abeni, who owns a small hair braiding business to save for her citizenship exam and enrollment in community college. She expressed understanding that education is a deciding factor in creating a better life and achieving social mobility. Abeni stated, relative to social mobility:

For now, I do the hair braiding. My children ask me, ‘Mummy, what was it like to go to college?’ I can say nothing to them; I keep to my mind that I didn’t go to school. ...My life needs to change. Because when I have school, the way I am now, when you see me outside, you’re gonna say ‘Oh, this girl has a good life.’

Here, Abeni equated having education to having a better life than working hard in a small business. She understood education is a pathway to having a “good life” and a clear answer when her children ask her about her college experience. This expression conveys belief in a pervasive ideology of education as directly connected to upward social mobility. However, education does not always fulfill the promise of secure employment and increased income. Specifically, amid the neoliberal intentions of higher education as well as the hegemonic deployment of U.S. economic self-sufficiency (Refugee Act, 1980), Abeni’s statement clarifies the extent to which she believes in education as a positive lever for upward social mobility. This quotation evidences the pervasive effect of educational ideologies as rooted in economic, or neoliberal, ideologies that are distributed along a continuum of worthiness.

Additional refugee women participants expressed the importance of education for themselves, their families and communities, and future generations of young women. Importantly, participants did not bound their understandings of educational importance to one geographical place (e.g., one country or another); instead, participants’ descriptions accounted for education as important to their role as mentors in the U.S., their home countries, and third countries (of temporary resettlement).

Jamila, a recent high school graduate and mom of one infant, expressed herself clearly on the importance of education as intertwined with social transformation and social mobility. She stated:

Education is key for my life, the baby, all those other girl kids. They [referring to leaders in her country] always say, ‘No, females don’t go to school.’ Really? Is that so? Let me show you. I want to be somebody, like somebody who has really good education. I will go back to my country and say, ‘You guys say women can’t go to school? Look at me!’ So now because of my school, I’m someone. ...for me, my parents, my baby, all those girl kids. ...With education, you can be somebody, you can take pride in yourself.

Jamila conceptualized the positive factors of education at many levels. She acknowledged its importance for herself and the life of her infant child and elaborated that, in the future once her education is complete, she will “work in comfort. I don’t like to work in a factory. ...We have a chance in this country. I will advocate for those of us [refugees] who hurt or are hurt by others.” Her ambition in pursuing education contained personal and familial facets; however, she also viewed her education as a disruption to gendered norms and imposed expectations in her home country, to the benefit of other girls. She wanted to pursue education for a better life for herself and that of future generations of girls and young women in her home country who experience lowered, gendered expectations relative to education.

Among refugee women participants, responses to Research Question 1 related to how they discuss higher education demonstrate a range of topics. First, they addressed forms of education, like English language and community college. Also, the factors that influenced their

education trajectory were present across women's narratives. Lastly, effects of education addressed women's empowerment as derived from education access.

Refugee Women and Interrupted Education

Refugee women included in the study described experiences with interrupted education to address Research Question 2 which asks, "To what extent do refugee women's forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?" Two thematic groups, with a total of seven codes, accounted for data excerpts related to this research question. Refugee women in the study expressed their experiences of forced migration relative to higher education as two primary themes: first, gendered labor – at home, in temporary locations, and in the U.S. resettlement context – was and is a detriment to higher education; second, supportive relationships bolstered motivation to continue or pursue education.

In some cases, interrupted education, or the inability to attend school, was a direct result of being refugees. Interrupted education in participants' lives resulted from forced migration from home countries, no educational opportunities in countries of temporary resettlement, and, in the U.S., as a result of navigating rules and regulations pertaining to refugee resettlement. Across their spatio-temporal realities, women in the study described that gendered labor constrained their ability to access education.

Despite refugees experiencing the effects of power among their personal lives, geopolitical upheaval, forced migration, and resettlement, women in the study also provided examples of buffering or protective relationships. These relationships with peers, mentors, religious leaders, and, in some cases, family members, positively contributed to refugee women's motivations and participation in education.

Forced Migration, Gendered Labor, and Interrupted Education

Participants in this study indicated their experiences with gendered interrupted education. Participants' examples demonstrate connections among forced migration, gender, and interrupted education prior to resettlement in the U.S. The first example described the gendered norms for labor and education in the country where Jamila lived before being resettled in the U.S. Jamila stated:

Female, ...they, believe me, they can't do nothing [there]. They just believe female... there, cook, take care of the babies, the house. "Think of the husband," that's all they believe. ...they say female, they can't go to school.

Due to forced migration to obtain refugee status, Jamila and her family relocated. In their temporary resettlement location, women were discouraged from pursuing education in preference for domestic caretaking. Other women refugees in the study relayed experiences with gendered interrupted education. Abeni described the educational reality she and her family encountered prior to resettlement:

...if your parents [don't] have money, they can't send you to school, and in Africa some famil[ies], they don't care about... school, especially for a girl or woman, they don't care about it. I have a big brother and I'm the second child of my parents. ...my [big] brother go to school, my sister go to school, and my baby brother go to school. And my school before, I just started like four to seven. Just only me [with] no school because they say I'm the first daughter for them.

For Abeni, her gender and place in the family structure as “first daughter” resulted in her selection to go to work and be taken out of school. Her gendered labor supported one elder and two younger siblings’ school fees through her work as a domestic slave.

For participants in this study, interrupted education did not stop post-resettlement. Participants described that their gender as women also related to interrupted education in the U.S. For example, Abeni explained she had previously enrolled in English courses, but after “I start[ed] again, and in a few months I get pregnant. I started, and I dropped again.” Normative gendered expectations in the U.S. resulted in pregnancy and class enrollment as incompatible. Succinctly, this dichotomy resulted in Abeni’s experience with interrupted education, during her childhood, was additionally perpetuated in the U.S. Her role as pregnant mother precluded her active engagement in English class and, ultimately, delayed her literacy development and educational advancement.

Additionally, Jamila became pregnant her senior year of high school, and she shared that her school attempted to prevent her from continued attendance. She retold an exchange regarding her pregnancy and continued school attendance that occurred in a meeting among her principal and teachers, and her parents were not present. Her principal told her, “‘You have to stay home.’ ...[Jamila responded:] ‘No, I can[not] stay home for no reason. I have to come to school.’ My ...principal ...made a meeting. They said I have to stop.” When enrolled in high school in the U.S., Jamila experienced resistance to her presence and continued education because she was pregnant. Jamila’s pre-resettlement context attempted to impose binarized expectations for gendered labor and education: women may labor at home – for children and husband – and education is not allowed. In the U.S., Jamila’s country of resettlement, she again confronted the nexus of gender and educational access. Her school leaders attempted to prevent her attendance

while pregnant, but Jamila protested. She graduated on time and delivered a healthy baby two days later. In Jamila's life, both temporary and permanent resettlement locations imposed gendered expectations for education that, without her resistance, would have resulted in interrupted education in both places.

Also, relative to gender and education, Rosie, a mom of four, declared "Not pregnant, next year? Then, I am going to school!" These refugee women's examples indicated that interrupted education occurred in their lives throughout their forced migrations and intersected with their womanhood, gendered social norms that structure for whom education is intended, and gendered expectations for their labor at home. Collectively, these women's statements reflect a network of power that affects the lives of refugees across forced migrations, particularly women as a result of norms for gendered labor and worthiness of educational participation. However pervasive interrupted education is across time and place, supportive relationships provided an important buffer for participating refugee women.

Buffers Against Interrupted Education

Positive relationships with family and religious leaders provided a buffering effect against interrupted education in participating refugee women's lives. For Jamila, her family's affective and material support of her education is essential. She described the supportive role of family in her life:

I'm glad my family... support[s] me. Yeah, my mom take[s] care of my baby when I'm not here. That is the one thing I still thank God for, a place in my family. If I'll be alone, I don't know how I could do anything.

In Jamila's case, her family's support manifested as affective encouragement to continue her education. Additionally, her ability to access education is materially maintained through her

mother's gendered labor in caring for her infant while she travels by bus to attend community college courses.

Positive relationships with family and religious leaders also provided a buffer to the consequences of interrupted education. In Abeni's case, she shared that in her later teen years she continued to be a domestic slave but also enrolled in hair braiding courses. For Abeni, learning hair braiding was a pathway out of domestic slavery and into an autonomous life where she could prioritize the basic education foreclosed by her family's financial situation. She described a pivotal moment in her life when she was exhausted, isolated, and navigating life without familial support, resulting in her motivation for continued learning waning:

Then that pastor came to see me, and I talked to him about the way I feel, and he told me "No one is gonna tell you what to do, but everything, everything you are going through, God knows it. God knows so I don't think it is a good idea to stop your learning." That's right. He told me, "No! don't drop it. Keep doing it. Keep fighting. This is your life and you will have education all your life, so keep learning even [if] you don't feel comfortable, keep learning, fight for it." So okay, I keep that much and said, "Okay, I will do even it's not easy, not at all easy."

For Abeni, the pastor's reminder of strength and persistence from her faith traditions was timely. She re-committed to her own education and, ultimately, a pathway out of servitude by learning a trade to increase her savings for access to higher education.

Among refugee women, features of forced migration, gendered labor, and interrupted education were present throughout, as well as features of interpersonal relationships that disrupted potential situations that would perpetuate their interrupted education.

Refugee Women, U.S. Immigration Law, and Education Access

This section examines refugee women participants' statements that address Research Question 3, which asks, "How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?" To summarize, excerpts addressing this research question accounted for 15 codes and two disparate conceptualizations: 1) humanizing refugees, or whole person perspectives, and 2) essentializing refugees, or legalistic and rigid perspectives. Refugee women's understandings of U.S. immigration law relative to higher education access most frequently came from interactions with refugee resettlement workers. Across cases, participants primarily demonstrated information-seeking closeness with either VOLAG, or resettlement agency, personnel, or non-profit-affiliated refugee resettlement workers. Despite some refugee women having interactions with people from both types of refugee support entities, they shared that they considered one of them as their primary resource for information.

Participants who had already passed the three-month mark post-resettlement demonstrated an affinity for non-profit personnel for insights on immigration law and education access. This dynamic is not uncommon. VOLAG personnel bridge refugees' transitions from places of temporary resettlement to the U.S. and offer more intensive services within the first three months of resettlement and, in some cases, can last as long as five years. However, because of funding constraints, caseworker overload, and time-bound federal regulations for eligibility for services, many refugees change case management from a VOLAG to a non-profit and/or access education, training, and public health information through non-profits. An additional feature of this dynamic pertains to the frequency of contact that is different between VOLAGs and non-profits. In the initial three months after resettlement, refugees customarily have close, somewhat frequent contact with VOLAG personnel on housing and housing assistance, to enroll

children who will not turn 18 during the current school year in public school, provide guidance to eligible adults on enrollment in systems of support (e.g., Medicaid and nutrition support), and to facilitate job applications; the frequency of contact with VOLAGs declines rapidly once these initial basic supports are in place, especially employment. Alternatively, non-profits customarily offer multiple days per week for contact and relationship building that is most frequently not time-bound to the initial three months.

Among the refugee women cases, time since resettlement was an essential moderating feature of whether participants communicated primary affinity for agency or non-profit workers for information. In sum, those whose resettlement was more recent (e.g., within the first through third months in the U.S.) preferred the immigration and education information received from VOLAG or resettlement agency personnel. Participant responses additionally revealed that agency personnel conveyed immigration law and educational access knowledge that essentialized or flattened the refugee experience while non-profit-affiliated personnel shared more humanizing information about immigration law and education access.

Essentializing Refugees

Codes relevant to this theme in the dataset reflected essentializing views of refugees' education access based on U.S. immigration law, including emphasis on any employment and discourses of rugged individualism (Hoover, 1928 as cited in Linley, 2017), which prioritizes personally overcoming obstacles rather than addressing structural inequity as the primary object of critique, deconstruction, and eradication. These ideas additionally pertain to a rigid, legalistic interpretation of the doctrine of self-sufficiency, evidenced by the VOLAG personnel insistence on work over education, "When you're over 18, you have to work first" (Beatrice). More

recently arrived participating refugee women described that agency personnel conveyed the primacy of employment regardless of their educational background, skills, or structural realities.

As an example, Beatrice, a high school graduate fluent in English, had moved to the U.S. just six weeks earlier. She described her multiple attempts to request her VOLAG-affiliated caseworker to share educational access information with her:

When we came here, our case manager told us that for me, I can never go to school. When you come here for the first time in America, you have first to work. When you're over 18, you have to work first. We have to look for money first to pay the loan, like the case manager told us. Yeah, we have to pay for the loan, so if you don't work, that's not a possibility. Maybe it's that [the case manager] didn't want me to go because she thought that maybe [the case manager] is the one who's going to take care of me, to pay for my school. ...I said, "That's okay, but why can't you help me?"

Beatrice's interaction with the case manager reinforced her and her family's indebtedness to the resettlement agency that paid for their flight to the U.S. Despite repeated attempts to convey that she wanted to continue her studies in college with her family's affective and financial support, the case manager repeatedly told her she must work. Furthermore, Beatrice's age played a role in essentializing her as a refugee. Generally, 18 is the age of legal adulthood in the U.S., which includes the legal possibility of going to work. However, the case manager's emphasis on employment attempted to foreclose Beatrice's educational access and, at the time for her, the agency was the most reliable source of information about U.S. immigration law and her ability to

access education. From her telling, she sought educational access information, but she felt the case manager misunderstood her request.

As an additional example, Rosie also felt the pressure of essentialized approaches to education. Rosie is a mother of four who, when asked her preference for education and work, stated would become a doctor. She explained that this desire was rooted in her wish to support those people who wanted to become pregnant and experienced difficulties as well as those who were actively laboring and bringing their babies into the world. Despite this longing to provide medical support for wishful and birthing parents, Rosie has experienced educational and, concomitantly, economic essentialization as part of her resettlement experience. She described her current situation:

Especially here for the adult people it's not easy, education. For example, for me, I wanted to study, but... hey [shrugs and smiles]. The managing over the family for me... I do know if I have more time, for coming to school morning, then... but I have to go to work. ...if I don't go work maybe get chased away from the house. You know, I stay with my young kids here night times. Worked only morning hours at [redacted, factory].

Now we have nobody here.

As Rosie explained, she is keenly aware of her financial precarity and the imposed dichotomy of further study and financially supporting her household. Rosie works in a metals factory mostly on the early morning shift, and her eldest child attends to breakfast, feeding, and catching the bus for the younger children. Rosie demonstrates both the keen and precise ambition to give back to her community through medical care for pregnant and birthing parents and yet her resettlement experience has, instead, resulted in her current situation of laboring in a metals factory.

Humanizing Refugees

In contrast to essentializing approaches, concepts from refugee women participants relative to humanizing approaches include open, ongoing discussions of education backgrounds such as “We always talk about the degree” (Jamila) to facilitate intentions and pathways for future education by non-profit personnel who demonstrated mentorship roles, as in “They always talk to me about school” (Jamila). The refugee women who shared these perspectives are, importantly, beyond their first three months post-resettlement in the U.S. and indicated that their preferred source for information about their refugee status, related laws, and educational access is through non-profit refugee support personnel. In this study, findings relative to humanizing refugees are related to women refugees’ preference for and closeness to non-profit-affiliated personnel who share information about navigating immigration law and accessing education.

For example, Jamila shared that her case manager, affiliated with a non-profit, consistently talked with her about her education and provided education access information to facilitate her transition from high school to college. Jamila described her relationship with a case manager:

We always talk about the degree... about how ...to transfer, GPA, how to cover the money, everything. I asked them what degree I need for me to be a really good lawyer, so we talked about that the next week. They always talk to me about school. They push me and they look after me. ...We always went there to visit, [redacted, community college] and [redacted, state flagship university]. ...Since I was in a great summer school for students, I always like participating in learning about college.

In Jamila's case, a humanizing relationship with a non-profit-affiliated case manager enhanced her commitment to accessing higher education. Rather than being tracked into employment at 18 years old, her case manager offered support and mentorship that responded to her chosen career choice of law.

Similarly, Abeni described a self-created humanizing approach to her resettlement in the U.S. In contrast to Jamila's descriptions of a case worker who supported her interest in education over work, Abeni created her own way through the requirements of self-sufficiency. Abeni describes her situation:

In Africa, if you do not go to school, you learn something to do to help yourself. So this is the one I learned. Hair braiding. This is the one, Sister. Since I don't get a school, I learned this one. That work ...I still can do, let me just start ...looking for money. [Until] now I didn't know [this] is gonna be putting me here. Yeah, to know something. So this is my life, my story.

As a teenager, when she decided to learn African hair braiding, Abeni was keenly aware of the future limitations of her parents' difficult decision to take her out of school as a primary school-aged child. Recognizing she wanted more for herself than a life of enslaved servitude, Abeni surreptitiously saved money she earned through selling her handmade handicrafts and snacks. This secret enterprise enabled Abeni to pay for the instruction in hair braiding in her home country. She maintains this entrepreneurial endeavor in the U.S. and, as she stated, "I didn't know [this, hair braiding] is gonna be putting me here." To interpret this quotation, Abeni was referring to her inability to grasp how the secret money she put away by selling her own creations that led to paying for her apprenticeship in African hair braiding would ultimately

sustain her life in the U.S., including her daily, diligent study for the U.S. citizenship exam as well as her ability to support her two school-aged children.

Support Workers

This section addresses findings from refugee support workers, who represent VOLAGs, or refugee resettlement agencies, and non-profits. A key distinction between the two types of refugee entities is that VOLAGs are refugees' first point of contact in the resettlement process and non-profits tend to enter refugees' lives after the initial three months post-resettlement. Specific to Research Question 1, support workers described affordances of basic education and community college. Regarding Research Question 2, support workers expressed understanding refugee women's forced migration relative to education as a function of gendered labor in a "cycle of poverty" (Angelique, Interview, 9/28/2021) and entanglement with racism. Related to Research Question 3, support workers explained perspectives on refugee education in relation to immigration law in terms of self-sufficiency, specifically in rigid and legalistic terms or as a process of interdependence. Each of these themes is addressed in detail in the following sections.

Support Workers' Perspectives on Refugees' (Higher) Education

Similar to refugee women participants, support workers also discussed basic education and community college regarding Research Question 1 that asks, "How do refugee women talk about higher education?" Distinct from refugee women participants, however, non-profit-affiliated support workers described these educational spaces for refugees as having more benefits than content knowledge alone; notably, non-profit workers recounted basic and community college education as spaces for confidence- and community-building as well as pathways away from labor-intensive, dangerous work. As a contrasting example, perspectives

from an agency-affiliated worker described refugees from a deficit perspective in basic education spaces.

Basic Education as Confidence- and Community-Building

Support workers presented perspectives on basic education as both confidence- and community-building. Across worker cases, spaces for basic education were described as positively contributing to refugees' self-confidence and expanding their social and peer relationships. In sum, workers described that as refugees attended and became comfortable in basic education classes, then refugees' self-confidence increased; as they developed increased self-assurance, then refugees would begin to connect with, socialize, and build communities of support with others present in basic education spaces.

Simon, a non-profit-affiliated support worker of over a decade, described the process of refugees who attend basic education classes, develop increased self-confidence, and build communities of support. Confidence-building, from Simon's perspective, is an important facet of education with refugees. He described his perspective of the resettlement apparatus that operates on a multinational level, by detailing how many important life decisions, such as flights, travel dates, and initial housing made by VOLAGs without refugees' input, results in "...this huge loss of control in their life." In this excerpt, he continued this sentiment by hypothetically addressing a newly arrived refugee:

"Come to school; start building yourself up again." It takes... confidence to ride the bus, come to school, start learning about [the] neighborhood or [the] city. Make some friends here! There's a confidence building [effect of] coming to class and learning English. If you spend enough time here, you meet with people, you see them grow. From that confidence, there's

more to draw from when [they] go out into the world, when [they] have to go handle some bureaucratic business.

Drawn from long-term involvement with a refugee educational non-profit, Simon expressed how participating in basic education has expansive capacity beyond content knowledge alone. Simon viewed the non-profit refugee support space, including basic education, where he works as also positively contributing to confidence development, building social and community networks, and enhancing confidence in the world beyond the classroom. From the perspective that refugee resettlement can be dehumanizing, Simon explained his view that relationship building via basic education “is a way they can start getting some small piece of that [confidence] back.”

Community College as a Path out of Dangerous Work

Support workers detailed a connection between postsecondary education or community college and better livelihoods, for adult refugees and their children. In their descriptions based on knowledge of employed refugees, support workers recounted the frequency of refugees placed in high-risk work, specifically in factories and chicken-processing plants. In these industries, injuries are numerous, the second and third shifts preclude participation in free basic education, and the long travel back and forth – provided for free by these high-risk employers – culminates in working refugee generations talking about higher education as social mobility for refugee youth.

Andromeda, a support worker affiliated with a non-profit, described a pattern she frequently witnesses among refugees tracked into high-risk labor and how they discuss education with their children:

...Once they reach that point in their story [factory employment], it shifts to, “I tell my kids every day, ‘You have to go to school; you have to do

your homework so you can get a better job, so you don't have to work in the chicken plant like I do.”

Refugee parents employed in high-risk manual labor industries emphasized the importance of education as a pathway out of dangerous work. Andromeda additionally explained an alternative for refugees employed under these circumstances. She explained that one affordance of refugees entering college is “...be[ing] able to utilize passions and hobbies. ...that bring them fulfillment, community, and enrichment [and] also still build skills that someday might be able to translate into a job.” From her perspective, Andromeda viewed higher education as a more expansive educational space where refugees’ “passions and hobbies” would be welcomed; she described a triangulated connection among higher education, personal interests, and future professional advancement. Andromeda’s anecdote about personal interests compared with the first regarding refugees employed in high-risk work demonstrated her perspective that refugees who arrive to the U.S. as adults and remain in high-risk work may never be afforded time or space to pursue safer and more fulfilling professions.

Several support workers also described refugees’ access to higher education in the form of community college as a lever for social mobility, for adult refugees and younger generations. Simon expressed that refugees’ “education is the key to open the golden doors to freedom.” He expanded by stating:

Access to education, to college, is more than the paper. It’s access to social capital. It’s access to relationships, networks, career advancement, ... and it’s increasingly necessary to have a secure and safe life here. It rubs off on their kids, too. [They can] use it to apply for better jobs or

higher paying jobs. That's the goal [to] be able to start or go back to school.

Simon also stated an expansive view of higher education that accounted for intangible assets. "Relationships and networks," gleaned through education access, as Simon articulated, are foundational for "a secure and safe life." This connection importantly signaled a perspective of the intangible affordances to those who can access education as a lever for social mobility.

Correspondingly, Andromeda echoed the perspective of education, and community college accessibility, as essential for refugees' professional safety.

[One] artist is working at a factory. He has to ice his hands when he gets home from work, and it's hard on him to do his art because of the manual labor. Community college is more involved with the refugee populations because they are more affordable and easier apply to in terms of maybe just the application process. And in terms of being able to change your course load without a really impacting the tuition too much, for instance. So, the idea of being able to also talk to other colleges and inspire other colleges to want to take up this cause, it is very exciting to me.

Specifically, Andromeda refers to a particular refugee she knows who is an artist, which requires working with his hands. Despite his artistic gifts, he is working in a factory to survive, which takes a physical toll on his body which is instrumental to the creative process of art making. In reflecting on this particular refugees' situation, Andromeda notes the affordability and flexibility of community college. She additionally notes the invigoration she experiences in communicating humanizing approaches to refugee resettlement, education, and employment pathway alternatives for refugees to additional colleges and universities.

Refugee Education from a Deficit Perspective

Support workers also described deficit perspectives specific to refugees' education circulating among refugee support spaces. Some of these anecdotes arise as non-profit-affiliated workers discussed dynamics they have witnessed through their work with other refugee entities. Some additional anecdotes arise from agency-affiliated workers describing their own views.

Darby, a non-profit-affiliated refugee support worker, offered a critique of how some who work in refugee support operationalize their dispositions on refugees' education. Darby explained she has witnessed assumptions "that [education] is seen as a luxury, that refugees don't have time for luxuries. I've seen this mindset before." Darby expressed concern that education is viewed as a "luxury" by some others working in refugee resettlement. She clarified that educational access is not viewed uniformly among refugee support workers. Instead, there are variations in the operationalization of "mindsets" that construe refugees' education as a non-necessity.

A direct example of operationalized mindsets among refugee support workers included notions that refugees are incapable or unable to think of and act upon paths to improve their livelihoods. For example, regarding a role in refugee education support through a VOLAG, Clarke stated:

I love to get them to actually have some confidence, like, "you need to pass maths" which I'll help them on that. I will inspire you, and I'll try to do my best to build confidence in you like, "Don't get stuck or complacent. Always push yourself," but I can't force people to want to better themselves. I don't know. Some of them can't even imagine a better

future; they just can't, they won't even. It's hard for them to even think of what that will even be like. How can they even say?

Two contradictory ideas are present in Clarke's statement; at first, he expressed the desire to build refugees' confidence, but he then claimed that he "can't force people to want to better themselves." This inconsistency is made further apparent by the discursive deployment of the word "even," used five times in three statements: "Some of them can't **even** imagine a better future; they just can't, they won't **even**. It's hard for them to **even** think of what that will **even** be like. How can they **even** say? [emphases added]." The grammatical function of "even" in these statements is adverbial, to denote emphasis, comparison, or, colloquially, exasperation. Clarke's discursive subtext is unclear: his statement was ambiguous regarding where he placed the subject of emphasis, comparison, or exasperation. His emphasis could be on refugees, at the individual level, or, alternatively, directed toward the level of systems and structures of power, which are imposed on refugee lives.

Support Workers' Perspectives on Forced Migration and Education

This section presents findings from support workers regarding Research Question 2 which asks, "To what extent do refugee women's forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?" Features of forced migration and its effects on refugee women's education from support workers were largely filtered through workers' applied experience as direct service providers in a specific geographic context. Thus, support workers' anecdotes related the functions and effects of their clients, who are forced migrants, navigating educational spaces in a mid-sized U.S. Southern city. Major concepts related to this research question include 1) forced migration as related to gendered labor that contributes to a cycle of poverty and 2) the

effect of racism on resettled refugees; both concepts confound refugee's educational access and manifest as interrupted education.

Forced Migrants' Gendered Labor in a "Cycle of Poverty"

Similar to refugee women participants, support workers discussed the factors of forced migrants' gendered labor as connected to systemic and pervasive poverty. Angelique, a former instructor of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) who is now affiliated with a refugee support non-profit, described her understanding of forced migration's effect on refugee women's higher educational access as a "cycle of poverty." This phrase provided a clear connection between additional anecdotes from other refugee support workers and the sociopolitical challenges of poverty. Angelique continued her depiction of the "cycle of poverty" as being entangled with the requirement for refugees over 18 years of age to begin working. She explained:

...there's no time for anything else. I think it's hard for someone, especially the refugee kids, to break out of that cycle. It's complicated, but it's a general cycle of poverty. The older kids are expected to start working.

Angelique is not gender-specific here, but her statement indicated awareness that the expectation of refugees who reach the age of adulthood in the U.S. (i.e., 18 years old) are expected to go to work. She elaborated on this expectation by connecting it to a "cycle of poverty" that is predicated on the reality that high school graduates have limited employment opportunities. Simon similarly conveyed an understanding of this "cycle of poverty" as breakable through intergenerational labor. He stated his hopes for his refugee women clients:

We want to see you build your life up to something comfortable; [your] kids are going to school and hopefully on the way to breaking a cycle. ...your kids are gonna grow up here, and they will take bigger steps than you ...to break this cycle.

In Simon's statement, he indicated a view that a mother's efforts to "build [their] life up" translated to improved life chances for her children. Here, he hoped that refugee women, specifically mothers, would connect their efforts to build a stable, "comfortable" life in the U.S. to the possibility that their children could "break this cycle" of the systems of inequitable power imposed on refugees.

Similarly, Andromeda, a non-profit-affiliated support worker, lamented the experience of one of her past refugee woman clients whose educational credentials were not accepted in the U.S. She stated:

As a graphic designer coming here, if you don't speak English, you are not going to be able to get a design job, and you have to go back to school to be able to get the qualifications. Even then you have to learn English and that means: go back to school and *then* get the job all while providing for yourself.

Andromeda's statement clarified how previous educational credentials were rendered obsolete for refugees resettled in the U.S. without evaluated and accepted credentials and English language communication facility. Despite prior pursuit of higher education and successful degree completion, Andromeda's client was effectively forced to start over educationally and professionally. As Andromeda explained, this refugee had to "go back to school, and *then* get the job, all while providing for [themselves]." In this example, the forced migration journey

translated to a refugee woman having to enter the work force as a so-called unskilled worker because her education credentials were not accepted; then, she had to confront the labor of first, learning English, then, completing a graphic design degree again, all while working in a precarious, physically-taxing, and under-paid job to pay her expenses.

Additional resettlement workers elaborated on the nexus of forced migration and gendered labor that connect to Angelique's depiction of refugees' positioning within a "cycle of poverty." For example, Darby, affiliated with a non-profit, described a patterned dynamic among refugee clients with whom she has worked. Regarding nuclear families with two parents, Derby stated that she commonly witnessed:

[An] agreement [of] splitting where moms say, "I'm going to do the childcare. You're going to do the paid labor." There seems to be this split dynamic of coordinating who's going to be doing which work, but I have noticed that if I say one person [should attend] orientations, it's usually the men in the family who do this.

In this arrangement, gendered labor is apparent. Refugee women are responsible for family caretaking, childcare, and housework while refugee men are responsible for paid employment as well as accessing cultural orientation knowledge. Effectively, this dynamic results in local culture knowledge and the ability to directly ask questions of a cultural orientation leader are filtered through men to additional members of the family.

Angelique also addressed the reality of gendered labor among refugee women: "the older girls and women in the family are expected to take on childcare roles for younger siblings." Angelique drew this conclusion from her experiences in ESOL and her non-profit employment; she continued to explain a tension she experiences, specifically, that her organization "started the

preschool to encourage more mothers to be able to come, ...but then there's kind of this like gray area for teenagers, ...between 16 and 21.” She was aware of the prevalent expectation that eldest girl children perform pseudo motherhood for their younger siblings, sometimes to the detriment of the eldest girl children’s education. Angelique was additionally aware of the need for structural supports, like childcare, to enable refugee mothers’ participation in basic education. Furthermore, Angelique explained that trying to teach virtually through the pandemic was “a joke” because her older refugee girl students had “to take on childcare roles for younger siblings.” She articulated that some younger refugee women want to prioritize education, but then “mom says no, you have to stay home and take care of all the kids as the woman of the family.” Functionally, Angelique described that eldest girl children are *de facto* mothers, and required to perform gendered labor, in the absence of mothers and/or parents.

Forced Migration’s Entanglement with Racism

Specific to a mid-sized, U.S. South city as a site of refugee resettlement, support workers discussed forced migration as entangled with racism and xenophobia, an assumption of foreignness, as predicated on racism. Angelique explained that younger refugees bear the brunt of racism and racialized xenophobia; she said:

Children, school aged kids, get this the most. Those world views of the parents really do trickle down. A few kids were bullied [based on] assumptions of people of color broadly. The racism is all the same against people of color. In 2018-2019, it got horrible. One kid who was 16 at the time told me, “I would rather go back to [redacted, African country] because at least I know who they're targeting there. Here, it's any Black person.”

Angelique's previous students experienced racism in the resettlement context of the U.S. South. In education contexts, this manifested as racist and racialized bullying. The effect of this dynamic was that one student wished to leave the U.S. and return to his home country in Africa, from which he and his family fled violence to obtain refugee status. In essence, this refugee student viewed a refugee-producing geopolitical context as more favorable than being in the U.S. where "any Black person" is targeted. Here, interrupted education is expanded beyond the normative view of only happening prior to resettlement; this refugee youth's education is threatened by racist targeting in the context of resettlement in the U.S.

Support Workers' Perspectives on Immigration Law and Higher Education Access

This section addresses support workers' responses related to Research Question 3, which asks, "How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?" Among support workers, self-sufficiency was a densely represented element with relevance to the relationship between immigration law and refugee women's higher education access. Support workers interpreted self-sufficiency in two primary ways. One interpretation of self-sufficiency was from a rigid, legalistic operationalization. An additional support worker interpretation and expression of self-sufficiency accounted for interdependence and cultural socialization as a process. Importantly, the distinguishing feature among refugee support worker participants was affiliation with either a VOLAG, or refugee resettlement agency, or a non-profit, which does not resettle refugees but rather provides wrap-around support services. The language of refugee "self-sufficiency" derives from codified law in the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Act (1980). However, as demonstrated in the following sections, this phrase's operationalization ranges from strict to loose interpretations among refugee support workers relative to their working context with either a VOLAG or non-profit.

Self-Sufficiency as Rigid and Legalistic

Strict interpretations of self-sufficiency, as it relates to immigration law and refugee higher education access, most frequently connected with refugees' employment status. In particular, Becky, affiliated with a VOLAG, stated that she had witnessed self-sufficiency as refugees getting a job. She elaborated to explain the effect that self-sufficiency as employment had on her ongoing relationships with refugee clients, "I've worked with clients that come in, and they are ready to work from day one, and they find the job, and they're ready to go. Then, I never really see them again." In this case, Becky's job is fulfilled once a refugee is employed. Details that go unmentioned in this anecdote include the fact that the types of jobs available to refugees in the U.S. South are generally in high-risk industries that require second and third shifts, which also aligned with participant experiences conveyed in this research. Becky's job maintains 9-5 business hours. Becky did not elaborate on her thoughts on why she would not see employed refugees again once they had been hired.

Loren, also employed by a VOLAG, although a faith-based one in contrast to Becky, clarified a distinction between self-sufficiency for refugees and "people who share [his] personal demographics," (e.g., white, male, employed, married, home-owner). Regarding self-sufficiency, he said that:

Self-sufficiency is a mirage that we have a sense of control. Personally, for me, and people who share my personal demographics, believe that it's viewed more as freedom to do what you want rather than what you need.

It's the freedom of being able to progress and do whatever you want.

Loren's statement presented some potentially conflicting sentiments. Initially, he seemed to problematize self-sufficiency as "a mirage [of] control." This could be generative, yet he

continued by stating that other people like him seemed to understand the concept in relation to “freedom... to... do whatever you want.”

Relatedly, Andromeda, a non-profit-affiliated support worker, clarified the dynamic she had witnessed regarding what Becky described as employment leading to “never seeing them [e.g., refugee clients] again.” Specifically, Andromeda conveyed that “self-sufficiency is used as a deadline to stop providing services in many ways. The part that just rubs me the wrong way is when self-sufficiency is only tied to employment.” Andromeda’s perspective provides a counterpoint to Becky’s. For Becky, employment is fulfillment of self-sufficiency such that she is unconcerned by refugee clients’ absence from her workplace, a VOLAG charged with and federally funded to support refugee resettlement. Conversely, Andromeda recognized and critiqued the operationalization of self-sufficiency as merely employment. As Andromeda elaborated, employment as self-sufficiency is an abnegation of responsibility that is deployed to prematurely terminate refugees’ access to agency-related support services. Andromeda expounded on her philosophical interrogation of self-sufficiency:

From some people, self-sufficiency means freedom to choose and be independent. I haven't wrapped my head around where that comes from, or the impact of it on refugee assist[ance]. Is it that some folks who think of self-sufficiency that way assume that refugees are a drain... And so they need to be left alone, independent, to stay in their jobs at the chicken plant?

Andromeda provided a critical link between operationalization of self-sufficiency as linked with pejorative assumptions of refugees’ subject positions in the U.S. social hierarchy. Explicitly, her query revealed a connection in mindset between self-sufficiency, as any form of work including

grueling, high-risk work (e.g., “at the chicken plant”) with assumptions of refugees as threats to American resources and good jobs, perceived as a non-renewable resource.

Correspondingly, Simon and Angelique, each affiliated with refugee supporting non-profits, also problematized a rigid perspective on self-sufficiency. Simon introduced cognizance of self-sufficiency as employment, but stated, “We encourage self-sufficiency as much as possible. We’re more interested in teaching.” His sentiment conveyed an understanding that self-sufficiency doctrine is widespread among and within refugee resettlement support spaces, but that he and his organization prefer to emphasize teaching over a dogged pursuit of refugees’ employability. Angelique’s critique was directed toward VOLAGs, or resettlement agencies. She stated that “from the agency side, ...they describe self-sufficiency as not being dependent. They define that as work: ‘You can be on your own now.’ Instead, we want to [en]able independence but they can also reach out... with questions.” Both Simon and Angelique clarified their awareness of agency-based operationalizations of self-sufficiency and provided counterpoints from their own refugee support non-profit-based perspectives. Understanding that self-sufficiency is more than individualism and being out-of-contact with would-be resettlement supporting agencies disrupted and contested flat VOLAG-based interpretations of self-sufficiency as employment.

Self-Sufficiency as a Process of Interdependence

Conversely, refugee support workers affiliated with non-profit entities described distinctly different approaches and operationalizations of self-sufficiency than VOLAG-affiliated support workers. Major related concepts from this segment of participating support workers included interdependence, or reliance among two more people, and self-sufficiency as a process,

or a perspective that does not expect anyone to master a task immediately or after one supported attempt.

A grounding anecdote for this section came from Darby, who described her non-profit's approach of "self-sufficiency with an asterisk." She explained that a flat – or rigid – definition of self-sufficiency pertained to independence most commonly legible as individualism, but that for her organization, the asterisk was crucial because it encompassed approaches to refugee support that prioritized *ongoing* refugee support, regardless of their time post-resettlement. This asterisk, as Darby explained it, related to each facet of her organization's work with refugees in cultivating comfortability with navigating bureaucratic systems in the U.S. but not imposing the expectation that refugees should encounter and overcome them alone. Most notably pertinent to immigration law and its effect on refugee higher education, though, Darby explained she and others in her organization are available to past and present refugee clients for navigational support to "pay bills, ...fill out paperwork," and she clarified that their foundational ethic is that their refugee clients "know they can still, always ask us for support." This statement refers to the view maintained by Darby's organization that there is not a federal funding-delimited timeline for refugee clients to access support. Darby elaborated on how self-sufficiency as a process, rather than an endpoint of employment, is evident in her work:

There's not an end to aiding them [refugees] in self-sufficiency. We're not like, "Okay, it's been 90 days; you're done. We'll see ya!" We're very aware that much of resettlement is an ongoing process. I have worked with families who have been here for five years and still have things that they ask me about or want... even just need a reminder.

Darby explained that these iterations of ongoing resettlement support toward self-sufficiency reflected the disposition of her organization and its view of an individual's ability to thrive and succeed as intertwined with larger groups of people. In sum, Darby's approach to support for refugees reflected a disposition that self-sufficiency is an ongoing process, not a finite goal achievable by a check-box approach where obtaining a first job, in any vocation or context – whether high- or low-risk, related or not to a refugee's professional or educational background – fulfills self-sufficiency. For Darby and others like her in this study who are affiliated with non-profits, self-sufficiency is a process of people growing together and giving and receiving support, that, collectively, advances individual and shared success.

In reaction to their explanations of some refugee support workers who interpret self-sufficiency rigidly, Andromeda and Simon, based on their work in refugee non-profits, elaborated on the approaches they and others in their working contexts adopt. From Andromeda's perspective, and in consideration of the strict interpretation of self-sufficiency from VOLAGs, non-profits like hers are essential. Andromeda clarified that "it's good to have these additional community support groups, non-profits, that can take some of that pressure off the requirements set on the agencies. ...we [non-profits] can account for refugees' passions." As Andromeda understood it, VOLAGs must meet a set of specific "requirements," while non-profits have more leeway in their operationalization, interpretation, and deployment of self-sufficiency, even including "refugees' passions." From this vantage, VOLAGs operate within a rigid structure about self-sufficiency and so must enact it in a similarly rigid fashion; contrastingly, non-profits do not have the same imposed requirements and so can facilitate a pressure release for refugees from "the requirements set on agencies" as Andromeda described.

Simon, also affiliated with a non-profit, additionally explained a perspective on self-sufficiency that related tensions between a legalistic perspective and approaches that acknowledge self-sufficiency as a process rather than one achievable or ultimate goal. He stated that he is aware of a tension regarding self-sufficiency for those who work with refugees:

...For a lot of people who work with newcomers, [there's] this constant negotiation in yourself between what resettlement law says about self-sufficiency versus recognizing when somebody has or doesn't have capacity up to a certain point and helping them make the transition to the next level, just out of their reach.

Simon, as a long-term refugee support worker in a non-profit context, acknowledged his experience of the tension between legalistic interpretations of “resettlement law” and the varying capacity of individuals to contend with the implicit knowledge required by living in a new cultural context or “capacity [to] make the transition to the next level.” Simon expressed awareness of how the strict interpretation of refugee resettlement law does not fully account for individual variances among refugees. His expression clarified that, for those who work with refugees via non-profits, there is a negotiated process enmeshed with addressing individual variation in refugees’ “capacity” for pursuing the “next level” of self-sufficiency. From Simon’s perspective, there is a need to address refugees at an individual level regarding their abilities for achieving self-sufficiency, which he described as a multi-leveled process.

Refugee support workers, related to Research Question 3, described how immigration law and refugee women’s higher education access are construed from rigid, legalistic interpretations of self-sufficiency to self-sufficiency as an interdependent process. Importantly, support workers’ depictions amid this binary of rigid or loose interpretation clearly reflected

their affiliations with either VOLAGs (refugee resettlement agencies) or non-profits, that do not *resettle* refugees but instead provide wrap-around support services.

Boundary Spanners

Participants who occupy subjectivities as resettled refugees *and* support workers are an unanticipated feature of this research. Boundary spanners, as posited by Koyama and Ghosh (2018) are people with an affiliation spanning educational spaces and refugee resettlement support; specifically, those “who work back and forth across and between groups, organizations, institutions, and societal structures” (p. 98; see also e.g., Koyama & Kasper, 2021). For the purpose of this research, an operational definition of boundary spanner pertains explicitly to those people who first arrived in the U.S. as refugees and who chose to enter professional roles as refugee support workers. As the name implies, participants described as boundary spanners evoked perspectives that transcended the binary of refugee women and resettlement workers. In this research, participants included as boundary spanners also meet the inclusion criteria for refugee women and support workers.

Regardless, boundary spanning participants’ statements also related to the research questions. Specific to Research Question 1, boundary spanners discussed education as necessary in building knowledge and intangible assets, for themselves as previously resettled refugees as well as for their clients who are more recently resettled. Also, related to Research Question 2, boundary spanners stated concern for younger generations of refugees who seem convinced that making money quickly is more highly prioritized than education. Through reflection on their own educational trajectories and the support they have received and offered, boundary spanners described the essential role of community pertinent to Research Question 3.

Boundary Spanners on Refugee Higher Education

Boundary spanner participants communicated their beliefs on refugee women and higher education from multiple perspectives. For some boundary spanners higher education was viewed as beneficial and necessary in their own lives. Alternatively, some boundary spanners depicted refugee women's higher education access as central to their goals for personal and community (e.g., additional women refugees') development. The first component highlighted interrupted education as a motivation for boundary spanners' education in the place of resettlement; the second addressed education as more expansive from the degree alone.

One boundary spanner, Penance, a refugee woman and VOLAG employee, discussed education views derived from her home cultural context that extend to other refugees resettled from similar locations. Penance stated:

Education is important because we don't really have that back home. It's difficult for some people because education is not free. When you have an economy where half of the population – not even half, almost 95% of the population lives below the poverty line – not everyone can afford to send their children to school, so we come here. I think that's the reason why most refugees come here, because they want education for their children. That's like the main thing, because as soon as they get here, they ask, "Where's the school? We want to go to school!" and I know from my family, that's how we believe.

Penance's statements echoed those presented by refugee women. Penance and her family experienced living in contexts where education was limited to the wealthy elite that produced awareness of the advantages of resettlement in a place where refugees may freely obtain

compulsory, or kindergarten-12th grade, education. Furthermore, Penance depicted the generative role of her family's advocacy for children's education and a general sense that her clients' dispositions on education were similar. Penance also elaborated on her viewpoint that education is a priority for refugees resettled in the U.S. She additionally stated that education was essential for her and her family and related to her socialization to values prioritizing education. Penance, who also returned to school to pursue a graduate degree, stated these values for women refugees' education resulted in the dynamic in her personal life where "When the kids go to school, I study. I do my homework when they go to sleep." This statement conveyed Penance's multilayered role as woman, mother, refugee, and refugee support worker. She found time when feasible among her familial responsibilities as a mother and partner to prioritize her educational advancement.

Roux, another boundary spanner affiliated with a non-profit community organization, explained that, to her, higher education is much more than the qualifications or degree attainment. Specifically, Roux stated that:

Higher education teach[es] you... so many skills, life skills, how to write, how to write emails, to write for your group work, how to present. There [are] so many things, not just the paper [that says] this is your degree.

From Roux's perspective, higher education provided her intangible knowledge and relational, interpersonal skills, and could facilitate the same for additional refugee women. Gia, a boundary spanner colleague to Roux, explained that a perspective of college as expansive or providing intangible assets was deeper for her. Gia stated that her participation in higher education was not based in an expectation of a larger future income, which she gently chided younger refugees for

assuming. Instead, Gia explained that education for money missed “the point.” Gia elaborated her perspective on money and education as:

Education or a college degree does not mean that [increased earnings].

There are so many things that you can use [from] those things you've learned in four years of school for later on. It [relates to] personal improvement, and as I was saying, this is worth it.

Collectively, Penance, Gia, and Roux advocated for perspectives that account for education as an opportunity for more than an increased pay grade. They described women refugees’ higher education access as an asset for social mobility beyond poverty, expansive learning, and self-development.

Boundary Spanners on Forced Migration and Education

Conversely to their own educational beliefs and attainment, boundary spanners also shared that their clients who are younger generations of refugees contested the value and advantages of higher education, related to Research Question 2 that addresses “To what extent do refugee women’s forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?” Specifically, boundary spanner participants discussed their sense that younger generations in their refugee communities are less interested in continued education in favor of rapid employment and earning money, which mirrors rigid, legalistic interpretations of self-sufficiency: “We need to raise our voice, and we cannot just do so without going to school, without having knowledge” (Roux). Additionally, boundary spanners contrasted these perspectives with their own forced migration journeys, which contributed to philosophies of education as essential to secure lives and the ability to critically interrogate current events such

as “Start with the small stuff, and then you can really learn our history, what happened back in the day” (Gia).

Roux outlined how her experience of forced migration, that presented urgency for learning, contrasted with younger generations of refugees in her community. She described that her ethnic group is a “major minority in [redacted, country]” and through becoming a refugee, her and her community’s existence was threatened, which prompted her pursuit of education.

Roux stated:

We need to raise our voice, and we cannot just do so without going to school, without having knowledge. In my country, I read all the history I could find. We faced the possibility of being completely erased. Education is a way to find each other, to build back our shared history. So that's why I encourage them [younger members of her refugee community], and I wanted to use my life as an example.

For Roux, education specifically entailed reading, studying history, and obtaining formal academic credentials, which was a product of her forced migration experience. As she explained, she and her ethnically minoritized community faced cultural erasure and destruction through ethnic cleansing in her home country. This sociopolitical reality contributed to Roux’s pursuit of knowledge to locate herself in history and in the violent situation she faced in her country. Thus, education is not merely a credential to advance material wealth but rather functions as an anchor to personal and collective identity. Roux ended by connecting this element of her life story to how she seeks to convey these advantages of education with younger generations of refugees in her community.

Roux contrasted her educational experience and motivations with younger refugees' views: "There's... some debate from some people from our community. Some young people would say [that] school, education is second place. They want to work in order to make money."

Her colleague, Gia, added to this:

A lot of people just say they don't have time. Okay, but you got [a] phone, and you [are] on your phone all the time. Go to YouTube! There are a lot of different ways... to learn now. I think later on they will be like, "Well, thank you. I appreciate for pushing me back in the day." It doesn't mean only education, like "I want you to go to college" but any type of education, learning how to read and write, how to read numbers, how to make a phone call. Start with the small stuff, and then you can really learn our history, what happened back in the day.

Here, basic education is adamantly encouraged as building an educational foundation. From this basis, Gia contended, that basic education for forced migrants is a precursor or contributor to historicized learning of her and her community's past. From boundary spanners' explanations, it would seem that the doctrine of self-sufficiency permeates the thinking and decision-making processes of younger refugees, to the detriment of valuing higher education. These two boundary spanners argued that education is crucial for forced migrants, and they described differences in their valuation of higher education compared with younger generations of refugees.

Boundary Spanners Connecting Community to Immigration Law and Education Access

Community was the central concept among boundary spanners related to Research Question 3 that asks, "How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?" Participating boundary spanners' statements referred

to building community among refugees, community-based refugee networks, and supportive relationships with fellow minoritized groups. Notably, boundary spanners did not directly address the influence of immigration law, but rather they described how they engage in community as a form of protection against politicized notions about and against refugees within educational spaces.

Penance, for example, spoke about her high school and college experiences where she experienced prevalent racism and mocking from English-speaking and/or white people:

They made fun of the fact that I was African, that I spoke differently. They would ask me, “Did you wear clothes in Africa? Did you sleep in trees, have a pet lion?” Even when I went to college, someone ask[ed] me “How did you get here, by a train?” I thought they were joking, but they were actually serious. They actually thought I came here in a train.

In Penance’s school and college contexts, students demonstrated racialized, xenophobic assumptions of her background. Questions directed at Penance based on her African and ethno-racial identities revealed ideologies of white supremacy, ignorance, and racialization. These interrogatives, coupled with experiences of mockery and racial slurs, Penance conveyed her awareness of being unwelcomed, by no consequence of her own actions but rather due to pejorative derision rooted in other students’ mistaken and racist assumptions of her life before resettlement. In response, Penance relayed that in high school, her English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESL/ESOL) courses provided a safe community for students who contended with racialization, racism, and xenophobia:

...back then, if you were a foreigner, you have to be [in] ESL. I didn't need it, but I still had to be in it. ...People do feel safe in ESL because you are

surrounded by other kids who are almost like you, even though you have different countries. ...You've got to understand, there's no teasing; we [ESL students] don't make fun of each other's English. You... feel community with those people. So, it's your support system. I was in ESL in high school, even though I didn't need to be there, but I still would go.

In relation to Penance's experiences with racism and xenophobia during her education, she additionally conveyed that ESL classes were different at the individual interpersonal level of the classroom space. Specifically, she stated that ESL classes afforded mutual respect predicated on similar experiences of racialized oppression among the students. An inference here is that Penance and her colleagues in ESL similarly experienced racism and xenophobia and so were mutually invested in cultivating an alternative group dynamic, a third space where "you... feel community with those people," and the students participated in and built a shared system of support. Furthermore, Penance's clarification about the duration of her required participation in ESL class conveyed a structural element of her educational experience. Regarding race, racialization, and the linguistic hegemony of English, Penance's education experience evidenced racialized tracking; she clarified that she no longer needed English language instruction, yet she was marked as "a foreigner." The assumption that Penance's foreignness required supplemental English instruction conveyed a structurally racist component of her education, imposed at the level of the educational structure. Penance's educational access was delimited based on social assumptions of her otherness. A social framing of educational access based on hierarchies of worthiness equated with whiteness positioned Penance as an unworthy outsider. Not only did Penance experience racism from other students in the majority white school, but she also navigated structural racism within the education system.

Relatedly, Roux and Gia described the function of their community advocacy non-profit, which includes education. From their depictions, this community space had been hard-won and developed over time, for the purpose of protecting their refugee community from voyeurs and opportunists alongside advocating with and for basic education, interdependent alternatives to legalistic self-sufficiency, and collective community uplift. Gia was unequivocal in relating the frequency of interest from drive-by or passing-through volunteers or researchers who sought access to their refugee community, which she described as when those people do not fully grasp the potentiality of re-traumatizing, tokenizing, or perpetuating extractive, rather than reciprocal, engagement in their community.

Gia explained that her organization developed an advisory group that reviews requests for volunteer or scholarly entrance to their refugee community to establish a modicum of respectful “guidelines, protocols,” and requirements for ethical engagement and “trained interpreters.” The advisory group facilitates protection of their community from those with predatory intentions. This practical approach operationalized community as practice. Together, Roux and Gia detailed the generative role of the advisory group for refugees in their community, who share forced migration experiences from particular ethno-racial groups, and their hope that “other refugee communit[ies] in the future will form some kind of organization like ours, and then they will be able to serve their community.” As they explained, Roux and Gia are aware of the exigencies confronting individual refugees as well as the collective power of their refugee community’s advocacy group and related non-profit to stem the effects of inequities that seek to essentialize or dehumanize them. As they stated, refugees often experience ad hoc resettlement and must contribute a lot of effort in rebuilding community; collective refugee advocacy groups, like

Roux's and Gia's, protect refugee communities from politicized notions that seek to demean them.

Chapter Summary

Refugee women participants discussed forms of education, the negative and positive factors influencing their education, and the effects of education, specifically women refugees' empowerment and community uplift. Refugee women also described the concurrent dynamics of forced migration, gendered labor, and interrupted education, as well as supportive relationships that provided a buffer against interrupted education. Support workers, as a distinct case, expressed perspectives of basic education as a means to build confidence and community, community college as an alternative pathway from dangerous work in labor-intensive contexts like factories, and, through VOLAG affiliation, deficit perspectives on refugee education. Support workers additionally described forced migration as entangled with gendered labor, a cycle of poverty, and racism. Finally, support workers demonstrated implementations of self-sufficiency along a continuum from essentialized, or rigid and legalistic, to humanized, or viewed as a process of interdependence. Boundary spanners, as the third and final distinct case, described features of higher education, forced migration, and the function of immigration law in similar terms to refugee women and support workers.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS FROM CROSS-CASE SYNTHESIS

Findings from Cross-Case Synthesis

The following sections present the cross-case synthesis and conclusions. The three cases are refugee women, resettlement support workers, and boundary spanners. Thus, the synthesis first discusses cross-case patterns, then draws conclusions, and addresses the possibility of “replicative... relationships across the case studies” (Yin, 2018, p. 196). The following sections are organized by research question. Research Question 1 asked, “How do refugee women talk about higher education?” In sum, collective participants’ statements, among refugee women, support workers, and boundary spanners, related to this question represent forms of education, influencing factors on education, and the positive effects of education in their lives. Research Question 2 asked, “To what extent do refugee women’s forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?” Related conceptions that convey the function of forced migration resulting in interrupted education include gendered labor, supportive relationships, a cycle of poverty, racism, and intergenerational differences. Research Question 3, asked “How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?” All participants across cases discussed how refugee resettlement workers are pivotal in constructing a continuum of rigid-to-loose interpretations of self-sufficiency, which is a central component of resettlement law.

Refugee Higher Education

This section addresses cross-case synthesis pertaining to Research Question 1. Among refugee women participants, statements about refugee education ranged from forms like basic education and community college, detrimental and supportive factors that influence education, and effects of education contributing to refugee women’s empowerment and community uplift.

Support workers' depictions also addressed forms of education, yet they emphasized education's affective and material potential. Support workers described basic education as beneficial for all refugees to enhance confidence and as a space to build community. They additionally connected community college to a trajectory of social mobility, particularly as a mechanism to avoid high-risk, dangerous work and pursue job security. Boundary spanners discussed refugees' higher education access as an asset for social mobility beyond poverty as well as to achieve expansive learning and self-development.

Collectively across cases, participants representing all three groups conveyed positive perspectives on education, especially beyond content knowledge alone. Refugee women participants talked about education in terms of having "a good life" (Abeni) resulting in personal pride and confidence. Pursuing forms of education – basic, citizenship, and community college – led to lives refugee women were personally proud of; they also connected the effort toward educational attainment to intergenerational social mobility and empowerment. Jamila described her perspective on education: "because of my school, I'm someone. ...for me, my parents, my baby, all those girl kids. ...With education, you can be somebody, you can take pride in yourself." Completing high school and pursuing a college degree cultivated pride and positive sense of self that also relates to "all those girl kids," referring to young women who experience gendered norms that lead to interrupted education. Education for refugee women is not merely an individual endeavor; rather, education is a means to support their extended social and familial relationships, especially for younger generations of women.

Similarly, refugee support workers advanced expressions of education contributing to good refugee lives, especially by offering greater detail on the affective and material supportive effects of refugees participating in education. Support workers were direct in stating that "access

to education, to college, is more than the paper. It's access to social capital. It's access to relationships, networks, career advancement, ... and it's increasingly necessary to have a secure and safe life here” (Simon). Similarly, Andromeda relayed a pattern she has witnessed among refugee parents who must go to work rather than access education, basic or otherwise: “I tell my kids every day, ‘You have to go to school; you have to do your homework so you can get a better job, so you don't have to work in the chicken plant like I do.’” Both support workers’ perspectives advanced adult refugee participation in education. However, Andromeda’s anecdote accounted for the nuance of working adult refugees whose access to education is significantly limited as an effect of employment being the primary goal. Many jobs targeted to refugees involve shifts undesirable to other workers, like second and third shifts from early afternoon through the early hours of the morning. These working times mean adult refugees must rest in the mornings and middays, which conflict with many free or affordable education options available for adult refugees.

As an extension of the tension Andromeda names, adult refugees’ education is contested through expectations of work as well as by deficit perspectives that circulate among some refugee resettlement workers. Darby, affiliated with a non-profit refugee support entity, explained that some resettlement support workers view education as a luxury and “that refugees don’t have time for luxuries.” Clarke, a VOLAG-affiliated support worker, exemplified a related deficit mindset: “I can't force people to ...better ...themselves. ...Some of them can't even imagine a better future; they just can't, they won't even. It's hard for them to even think of what that will even be like. How can they even say?” Both of these mindsets relate to assumptions regarding for whom education and “better future[s]” (Clarke) are intended. These mindsets

additionally contest adult refugees' eligibility to access education and the social mobility it affords.

Boundary spanners' discussions of refugee education mirrored sentiments from refugee women and support workers. One boundary spanner, Penance, explained her experience with education past and present: "Education is important because we don't really have that back home. ... When the kids go to school, I study. I do my homework when they go to sleep." Education is foreclosed for some refugee women in places they live before resettlement. For Penance, she values education and pursues her master's-level studies once her children are asleep. As a former refugee, refugee resettlement worker, mother, and graduate student, Penance must strategize to advance her education. Roux, also a boundary spanner, echoed additional resettlement workers' perspectives that education is more than a diploma or cultivating content knowledge: "Higher education teach[es] you... so many skills, life skills, how to write, how to write emails, to write for your group work, how to present. There [are] so many things, not just the paper [that says] this is your degree." Here, education is described as affording relational and professional skills that are applicable to American life beyond college. Additionally, Penance and Roux conveyed how familial support mitigated the threats to their educational attainment, much like the participating refugee women who were pursuing or had completed their educational goals at the time of the study.

Forced Migration and Interrupted Education

Collectively, study participants described that interrupted education – across forced migration journeys and in the U.S. as a resettlement location – influenced refugee women's education access. Themes of gendered labor, supportive relationships, a cycle of poverty, racism, and intergenerational differences conveyed the effect of forced migration that resulted in

interrupted education. Interrupted education can occur across forced migration and refugees' life spans including after resettlement. Relatedly, educational practices in places of temporary resettlement are diverse. The range of educational affordances include possibilities of no schooling, informal but refugee-led and culturally relevant approaches, or integrated schooling, which is the practice of refugee children and youth attending local schools in places of temporary resettlement (UNHCR, 2014b). Cumulatively, these areas signaled refugee women's lives at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression.

Concepts with a negative or compounding relationship with interrupted education from the refugee women included entangled concepts of gendered labor, forced migration, and interrupted education. Specifically, participant refugee women clarified that being forced migrants threatened their access to education prior to and post-resettlement. Abeni's experience as a forced migrant and eldest girl child in her family meant she was sold as a domestic slave as a child prior to resettlement; this reality in her life meant that she was already an adult by U.S. legal maturity standards before returning to school post-resettlement. Similarly, yet under contrasting circumstances, Jamila's gender as a woman pertained to encounters in her U.S. high school that threatened her continued access to school and almost led to interrupted education. Jamila's principal attempted to prevent her from attending the final months of her last year in the 12th grade because she was pregnant. As a woman and expectant mother, her school's leadership attempted to interrupt her education based on imposed notions of the worthiness of her presence at school. Supportive relationships were central in mitigating the harms of interrupted education due to forced migration that refugee women experienced.

Despite disparate experiences of forced migration resulting in interrupted education, key supporting and encouraging relationships enhanced refugee women's commitments to

themselves and their educational advancement. From Jamila's story, family (particularly her mother) enhanced her personal and community-based commitments to education. In the affective and relational realm, Jamila expressed that her family has always supported her participation in education; she drew from this foundation to affirm her right to eligibility to continue her high school studies even despite experiencing sexist norms the school leadership attempted to impose upon her. Materially, Jamila explained that her mother's willingness to care for her infant child and not impose marriage on her while she attends community college classes made all the difference in disrupting those ideologies that sought to interrupt her education. Although Abeni did not have the same affective and material supports through family, her narrative included the transformative role of a pastor in her life who she trusted to offer comfort when she questioned her pursuit of education. This supportive relationship provided a productive barrier against the threat of interrupted education. The pastor reaffirmed and legitimated Abeni's education, from the perspective that she is as a part of humanity and on the heart of her god; this functioned to remind her that despite not having her family's support, the pastor and Abeni's god were with her, which resulted in her continuing her education. Since resettlement in the U.S., Abeni has successfully expanded on her literacy skills such that she successfully studied for and obtained U.S. citizenship and enrolled in a community college. She maintains her role as a woman of color entrepreneur to fund her education.

More specifically to the U.S. as a place of resettlement, support workers' narratives situated refugee's experiences with forced migration and interrupted education within localized systemic oppressions. In Angelique's experience, in a non-profit refugee-support setting, refugee clients' interrupted education connected to systemic oppression and poverty. Angelique explained that the cycle of poverty frequently begins because "older [refugee] kids are expected

to start working.” Although not gender specific to women, this anecdote highlights a component of expecting teenaged refugees who gain the U.S. age of maturity (18 years) to immediately enter the workforce. Going to work in industries advertised and familiar to refugees most frequently entailed second and third shifts in packing plants, factories, and meat processing. The hardships of the work on the body, the long commute times from the city of residence to these places of employment, and the conflicting times of wakefulness and working that conflict with times of instruction culminate in continued interrupted education post-resettlement. When the realities of pressure to work at the age of maturity are understood in relation to the refugee women’s experiences of gendered labor and the responsibilities placed on eldest girl children, refugee women bear the greater proportion of this dynamic within families.

Boundary spanners additionally addressed the relationship between interrupted education (due to being forced migrants) and education. Roux explained that she was a voracious reader, especially of history, because of the “possibility of being completely erased.” For Roux, education was essential to locate herself and her people amid geopolitical dynamics that pursued their collective erasure. Because Roux experienced interrupted education prior to resettlement and becoming a refugee support worker, she recognized the transformative capacity of education. Specifically, education herein serves as a relational space where people who are displaced can locate themselves, their cultural community members, and collective histories. Being a forced migrant resulted in Roux experiencing interrupted education. However, pursuing informal education through reading and formal education in obtaining a college degree enabled her to overcome the adverse effects on life chances of interrupted education.

Immigration Law and Refugee Education

Across cases, participants conveyed perspectives on immigration law and refugee education along a continuum from essentialized, or rigid and legalistic, to humanized self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency pertains to refugees' legal requirement to become employed as soon as possible post-resettlement, and the phrase is drawn directly from refugee resettlement law (Refugee Act, 1980). However, operationalization of the phrase in interactions with refugees are disparately deployed. From a favorable perspective, the language of U.S. law on refugee resettlement is vague; it does not operationally define or explicate the manner, degree, or quality of "sufficient." From an alternative standpoint, the U.S. political system is vastly hierarchical and relies upon a bureaucratic process that passes along (downward) actual policy implementation. This alternative perspective requires recognition of the inherent hierarchical, raced, gendered, and classed features of U.S. socio-politics. Specifically, the amalgamated confluence of U.S. social, cultural, and political norms likely already pervade the mindsets of those charged with distributing the legalistic concept of economic self-sufficiency. Also, it is not unlikely that the people charged with this task are likely over-worked and under-paid, tracking with the neoliberal facets of contemporary U.S. society. When combined, these processes inhere upon refugees and resettlement workers and constitute a double bind in the implementation of immigration law: refugees are instructed that they are expected to get a job immediately if they are at least 18 years old, and the sociopolitical ideologies about refugees accumulate to such a degree as resettlement workers espouse the idea that fast employment is the most expedient way to fulfill their legal obligations and to avoid positioning refugees as "risky".

Findings from this research suggest that personnel affiliated with voluntary refugee resettlement agencies (VOLAGs) espouse a strict interpretation of self-sufficiency, namely that

refugees must obtain employment above all other forms of resettlement support. Alternatively, a humanized form of self-sufficiency was present among non-profit resettlement workers and refugee women most closely reliant upon non-profits for guidance. A humanized approach and application of self-sufficiency acknowledges the vast diversity within humanity as well as the deplorable conditions of the types of work most readily available to refugees (e.g., second and third shifts in factories and meat-processing plants throughout the state).

Essentialized Self-Sufficiency

Both refugees and resettlement support workers primarily affiliated with VOLAGs expressed their understandings of immigration law relative to refugee education in essentialized terms. Specifically, anecdotes that reflect an essentialized view recounted how education is foreclosed – regardless of prior education and education credential attainment – in favor of work as well as the ambivalence of VOLAG workers on continued resettlement support once refugees gain a job.

Essentialization manifested as a dichotomy between eligibility for work (e.g., turning 18 years old) and eligibility for higher education (e.g. holding valid high school diplomas and transcripts). Anecdotes that exemplify this dynamic recounted that VOLAG-affiliated resettlement workers denied refugee women eligible for higher education knowledge of access. Beatrice, who holds a high school diploma that she earned in an English language school, faced this essentialization: her case worker deterred her from pursuing education by signaling her indebtedness to the VOLAG for her family’s flights to the U.S. Timing is noteworthy here; because Beatrice was within her first three months post-resettlement at the time of this study, her VOLAG contacts were the most trusted sources of information. Self-sufficiency was deployed as a mechanism that interrupted her continued education, introduced debt as a tool to delimit her

available decisions, and positioned employment in a packaging factory as her so-called best option to obtain the legalistic, essentialized version of self-sufficiency. This anecdote, in conversation with a VOLAG-affiliated refugee support worker, highlights the ambivalence inherent in essentialized approaches to self-sufficiency.

Support workers employed by VOLAGs demonstrated how rigid operationalizations of self-sufficiency are also related to ambivalence toward refugees' lives once employment is obtained. Specifically, essentialized self-sufficiency or a rigid interpretation of the law about this idea led to support workers moving on. Becky described that once refugees "find the job... I never really see them again." In short, self-sufficiency applied as employment alone means that this VOLAG support worker understood no pressure to continue to provide services. As many refugee women and non-profit support workers shared, this rationale is not uncommon.

Andromeda, a non-profit affiliated worker, also reflected on this essentialized approach she has witnessed through her work with refugees when she stated that "self-sufficiency is used as a deadline to stop providing services... when self-sufficiency is only tied to employment." An essentialized view of self-sufficiency expects refugees to rapidly acclimate to the U.S. and reifies the economic and work-based features of self-sufficiency. Essentializing self-sufficiency results in refugees' evaluation of worthiness for living in the U.S. determined singularly by their achievement of rugged individualism, particularly as determined by employment.

Humanized Self-Sufficiency

Refugees, resettlement support workers, and boundary spanners primarily affiliated with non-profit refugee support agencies expressed their understandings of immigration law relative to refugee education in humanized terms. For refugee women, ongoing mentorship relationships with non-profit support workers resulted in enhanced encouragement and access to knowledge

related to educational attainment as one component of humanized self-sufficiency. For non-profit affiliated resettlement workers and boundary spanners, humanizing self-sufficiency pertained to nurturing interdependence – over independence – and recognizing that (re)building lives is an iterative process, especially for post-resettlement refugees.

A non-profit affiliated case worker built a trusting relationship with Jamila over a span of years. From the outset of their introduction when Jamila was in high school, she reiterated and insisted on the primacy of education. Related to the relationship Jamila has with the non-profit, she stated “They always talk to me about school. They push me and they look after me.”

Through the non-profit’s ability to invest more time and contact in the space of resettlement support, Jamila succeeded in prevailing upon her support workers and caseworkers that education is the most important thing in her life and that she will obtain it with or without their help. Recognizing the urgency and insistence, the resettlement supporting non-profit personnel responded with support that began in high school and continues now while Jamila studies in a community college. The ability for this relationship to form led to a humanized expression of self-sufficiency; rather than requiring entering the workforce immediately after high school, further education was encouraged.

Similarly, participating non-profit affiliated support workers echoed that resettlement is a process and promoting self-sufficiency takes time, strong relationships, and responsiveness to refugees as whole human beings. Specifically, Darby stated that she and her non-profit colleagues recognize and operate from the understanding that “resettlement is an ongoing process.” Three months of intermittent support until refugees obtain any kind of job is insufficient and dehumanizing, so non-profit support workers who participated in this study shared that their approach extends a functional interpretation of self-sufficiency as employment

alone without consideration for the multiple affective and material pathways that promote mental and emotional health and wellbeing. Navigating a humanized approach to self-sufficiency is contentious for non-profit support workers who contend with the state-level mandates for functional, legalistic interpretations of the concept of self-sufficiency. As a corollary expression, Simon described that this tension requires a “constant negotiation... between what resettlement law says about self-sufficiency versus recognizing when somebody has or doesn’t have capacity.” A basic interpretation of immigration law specific to refugees and self-sufficiency suggests that employment is important, yet the phrase is adopted as employment being the only important facet, particularly among VOLAGs. However, non-profit personnel indicated their intentions to bridge the gap between a basic interpretation toward humanizing self-sufficiency. Simon expressed that he and his colleagues prioritize this approach when they help refugees “make the transition to the next level, just out of their reach.” Participating non-profit workers did not approach self-sufficiency as employment alone but instead chose to facilitate multiple iterations of building or rebuilding lives in the U.S. Darby also explained this approach: “I have worked with families who have been here for five years and still have things that they ask me about.” This expression relates how the humanized approach to self-sufficiency reinforces interdependence and a level of trust for ongoing communication.

Chapter Summary

As this chapter conveys, participants’ expressions added other dimensions to answer the research questions across the cases. Specifically, collective replicated patterns demonstrated the positive disposition of participants regarding refugees and education. Also conveyed were the affective and material effects of refugees’ forced migrations; related expressions additionally evoked refugee women’s lives as effected by multiple systems of geographic and temporal

oppressions. Finally, repeated patterns pertaining to the consequences of immigration law on refugee education showed a binarized conception of self-sufficiency from the legalistic and rigid form on one side and, alternatively, more humanized approaches, that account for the relational aspects of resettlement.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

Discussion

The global number of refugees has reached 82.4 million (UNHCR, 2021). At each educational stage of early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education, refugee enrollment is lower than similarly aged non-refugees (UNHCR, 2021). These statistics are unsurprising given the contexts that produce refugees, namely violence and persecution, which forces those affected to leave home and seek asylum in another country where education may or may not be afforded to refugees. Furthermore, associated, multilayered systems of oppression constrain refugees' time and capacity for education, largely due to highly bureaucratic and overly complex structures and processes to seek asylum and resettlement alongside attending to basic needs like housing or food while forcibly displaced. As a result of structural oppressions in refugee lives, globally, 76% of refugee youth - only ~16% of same-age non-refugee peers – are not in secondary school and refugee enrollment in college or university is only at 3%, compared with 37% across the world (UNHCR, 2021). The only available data disaggregated on refugee education is related to gender at the primary school level, “fewer than eight refugee girls” attend compared to 10 refugee boys, and at the secondary level “fewer than seven refugee girls” attend compared to 10 refugee boys (UNHCR, 2021). Collectively, these data reflect a spatial and temporal compounding of interrupted education and the limitation of higher education's contemporary equity agenda to incorporate increasingly meaning students with diverse identities and lived experiences. Consequently, with fewer girl children in primary and secondary school, it follows that fewer will have the education credentials required for higher education access.

This chapter discusses study findings in relation to extant research and the theoretical framing. First, the next section briefly outlines the overall study design. Then, the following

sections collectively theorize the findings to draw conclusions pertaining to each research question. Concerning exploratory multiple case methodology (Yin, 2018), the conclusions led to propositions in response to each research question. These propositions are discussed in relation to extant research and theory as well as the theoretical framework. Coalescing study findings with extant scholarship enables theorizing about refugee women and higher education in the U.S. place of resettlement. This study about refugee women and higher education addressed the following research questions, around which the following three conclusion sections are also organized:

1. How do refugee women talk about higher education?
2. To what extent do refugee women's forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?
3. How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?

Conclusions: Refugee Women's Education & Transnational Community Uplift

Across cases, participants discussed education as an important mechanism for pride in oneself as well as a way to give back to transnational communities. Specifically, participants addressed concepts of basic education to community college, detrimental and supportive factors that influence education, and effects of education contributing to refugee women's empowerment and transnational community uplift. The relationships among these concepts convey that pursuing continued education leads to building relationships and social networks, which in turn afford collective—not solely individually-oriented—social mobility, such as ease of cultural navigation, communication, career advancement, and housing and food security for the expansive refugee community. As Saelua et al. (2021) articulated, intergenerational community involvement is more than degree attainment; rather, transnational community uplift centers educational attainment alongside the “broader refugee communities [as] key to making a better

life” (p. 73). Peer networks, as synonymous with transnational community, additionally reinforced the generative collective uplift capacity and efforts among refugee higher education students (Bajwa et al., 2017). Similarly, Tsu (2021) accounted for non-educational, though generative, affordance of collective refugee engagement through community gardens, geared toward saving money and sharing basic needs resources within the refugee community. Furthermore, transnational community further constitutes an arena of collective healing and solidarity- and coalition-building (Khadkha & Rinker, 2018). Scholarly treatment of transnational community, both within education and broadly through inter-disciplinarily consideration, centers the affective and material functions of collectivism for the expansive and group-based uplift among transnationally socialized and forcibly displaced refugee communities.

Through transnational community uplift, refugee women then extend these features of their empowerment—their knowledge, assets, and social capital—with their family and friends across places of temporary and permanent resettlement, in the U.S. and abroad. Transnational empowerment is present across localities of scholarly inquiry with refugees; in the context of temporarily resettled refugee youth living in camps—where education is unavailable—Crea (2015) reported a sense of collective empowerment through an anecdotal implementation of higher education access as, similarly, Dykstra-DeVette (2018) reported the empowering function of buffering the hegemonic effects of self-sufficiency. Thus, participants suggest alignment with the proposition *Refugee women talk about education as empowering themselves and their transnational communities*.

Conclusions: Interrupted Education Occurs in the U.S.

Across cases, participants related experiences that inextricably linked their experiences with forced migration and interrupted education. Through the research and data collection,

participants conveyed multiple concepts that are interrelated with interrupted education across home, temporary, and resettlement contexts. They conveyed dynamics that exacerbated interrupted education related to gendered labor, supportive relationships, a cycle of poverty, racism, and intergenerational differences. In aggregate, these conceptual renderings across refugee participants experiences, alongside those retold through resettlement support workers' secondhand narrations, demonstrate how forced migration results in interrupted education transnationally (through pre-settlement forced migration) and post-resettlement. As described through extant scholarship and refugee international policy (Arvanitis et al., 2019; Dryden-Peterson, 2016a; UNHCR, 2014b), educational offerings in pre-resettlement locations remain an important place of educational acculturation, yet not all countries of asylum afford education to refugees. An important takeaway from these findings is that gendered labor, racism, and poverty are interconnected and dislocated in the sense that they do not only manifest in pre-resettlement locations. Specifically, conceptual features of this research—gendered labor, racism, and poverty—inhere upon interrupted education *across forced migration trajectories*, including in places of resettlement (Bragg, 2021; Hailu et al., 2021; Roth et al., 2018).

Where an increase or exacerbation of any one feature of oppression can heighten the effects of the others, intergenerational differences among refugees present a temporal dimension. Valuation of education may relate to intergenerational differences where elder generations who directly experienced forced migration more highly-value education and younger generations of forced migrants, born in places of temporary or permanent resettlement and do not have first-hand accounts of forced migration, may value education less than their elders. Those generations born in places of resettlement may be critical or cynical toward places of resettlement. Younger generations of refugees may devalue education because of witnessing elder generations

experience the interconnected systemic oppressions of gendered labor, racism, and poverty. However, these conceptual relationships are difficult to theorize as this study did not select cases that facilitated multi-generational comparisons among generational groups of refugees; in fact, no participants included in the study were each other's family members. Although not an intergenerational investigation, Roth et al. (2018) documented how staff in a U.S. South immigrant and refugee serving organization felt afraid to advocate for their organization's clients because of the regional and national sociopolitical climate of xenophobia and the polarizing politicization of immigration.

In defiance of anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S., extant refugee-centric scholarship (Saelua et al., 2021) empirically presented the reality of intergenerational connections as a generative feature of refugees' transnational and intergenerational solidarity. Alternatively, supportive relationships disrupt the deleterious effects of forced migration on education; specifically, these relationships block threats that would otherwise interrupt refugee women's education. Thus, a proposition that emerges across cases from these concepts and their relationships is *the extent of influence of refugee women's forced migrations and resulting interrupted education is ongoing while encountering systemic oppression in the U.S. resettlement context, yet supportive relationships mitigate threats that would interrupt education.*

Conclusions: A Continuum from Essentialized to Humanized Self-Sufficiency

Statements across the cases reflect a continuum from essentialized (rigid and legalistic) to humanized self-sufficiency. Self-sufficiency pertains to a facet of refugee resettlement law about employment occurring as soon as possible post-resettlement. Economic self-sufficiency and a vague description of "sufficient" training are afforded to U.S.-resettled refugees (Refugee Act, 1980). However, scholars from educational migration studies to social work have problematized

the functionalist operationalization of self-sufficiency as only employment (Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018; Koyama, 2015; Perry & Mallozzi, 2017; Shaw et al., 2021). Regardless, the operationalization of self-sufficiency in the U.S. largely hinges upon placing refugees in the first and most readily available employment opportunities, regardless of time since resettlement. Many placed in work are still grappling with the residual trauma of forced migration, the unsettling experiences of constant interaction with multiple geopolitical, cultural, and governmental contexts, and the unfamiliar social terrain of life in the U.S. Relatedly, findings from the present research that demonstrated a continuum from essentialized – rote application of economic self-sufficiency as any job – to humanized, or a processual and interdependent approaches, reflect Bottici's (2014) assertion that the variability in human rights applications are due to evaluations of refugees based on the perceived degree of their humanity, e.g. determinations of full- or less-than-human status.

An essentialized view of self-sufficiency, presented by refugee women and support workers most closely affiliated with voluntary resettlement agencies (VOLAGs), included concepts of denied education access information and insistence on all adult refugees becoming employed regardless of prior education credentials or careers as well as motivations for continued educational advancement. Conversely, humanized approaches to self-sufficiency, gleaned from refugee women and support workers affiliated with non-profits, included concepts like interdependence and resettlement as an interdependent process over time.

While the surface relationship between essentialized and humanized approaches may imply a binary of oppositional approaches, there is a more subtle relationship at play here. Across participants, the most prevalent, problematic, and ubiquitous conceptualization of self-sufficiency prioritized employment of any kind, regardless of refugees' past skills, vocations, or

educational attainment and additionally subverted the applicability or relevance of past experiences or in-progress plans for educational attainment in the U.S. resettlement context. Substantively, refugees' experiences and college-going ideologies were subverted in the service of a rote and basic application of refugee resettlement law (Refugee Act, 1980). It is imperative to note that the 1980 Refugee Act is opaque in its discursive use of the language of "sufficient" education and training as well as "economic self-sufficiency." Nonetheless, as popularized and operationalized among resettlement agency personnel, getting a job—any job—is synonymous with economic self-sufficiency. Furthermore, resettlement agency personnel comprise the core group of informational and cultural insight for most recently resettled U.S. refugees. This ascription of proximity is in large part due to agencies (VOLAGs) facilitating refugees' transnational relocation from places of asylum or temporary resettlement into the U.S. as a resettlement context. Cumulatively, the operationalization of economic self-sufficiency and the functional role of VOLAG personnel in conveying expectations for employment write large as economic self-sufficiency comprise a concept of *the doctrine of self-sufficiency*.

The Refugee Act's (1980) depiction of economic self-sufficiency is vague; there is not clarification or operational guidance for the conditions or qualities ascribed to "sufficient" as related to education and training nor for "economic self-sufficiency." Regardless, participants across refugee, non-profit, and VOLAG affiliations indicated that the VOLAG conception of self-sufficiency does not account for education, unless it does not interfere with refugees' work, which aligns with theorizing the doctrine of self-sufficiency. However, participants most closely affiliated with non-profits additionally problematized enactments of a doctrine of self-sufficiency by attributing value to refugees' empowerment through education, recognition and support for their passions and interests, as well as their transnational community investments. Cumulatively

and in consideration of cross-case variations, deployments of self-sufficiency among cases in this study more closely reflect a continuum. Thus, the following proposition accounts for how refugee women explain their understandings of immigration law relative to education: *The doctrine of self-sufficiency is deployed along a continuum from essentializing to humanizing.*

Discussion of Conclusions and Propositions with Extant Literature

As a place-conscious (Greenwood, 2003) theoretically framed research, the previously outlined conclusions are elucidated through the perceptual, sociological, ideological, political, and ecological dimensions of places. In brief, the propositions proposed thus far relate to findings from the present study, as informed by extant literature. The following section seeks to theorize connections among the propositions, derived from research question-informed conclusions, extant literature, and through place consciousness that Greenwood articulated in (2003) five dimensions of place.

The proposition based on findings from Research Question 1 is: *Refugee women talk about education as empowering themselves and their transnational communities.* The proposition based on findings from Research Question 2 is: *The extent of influence of refugee women's forced migrations and resulting interrupted education is ongoing while encountering systemic oppression in the U.S. resettlement context, yet supportive relationships mitigate threats that would interrupt education.* The proposition based on findings from Research Question 3 is: *The doctrine of self-sufficiency is deployed along a continuum from essentializing to humanizing.*

Perceptual Dimension: Refugee Women's Experiences

When place is understood as multifaceted and divergently experienced, Greenwood's (2003) perceptual dimension offers an accessible method for recognizing space. The perceptual dimension of place refers to how humans experience and perceive through the senses – smell,

sight, touch, taste, sound, awareness of heat and cold, proprioception (the body's perceptions of distance or close objects – to interact with people, objects, and places, or “multisensory perception” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 624). Specific to this study of refugee women and higher education, attending to sensory details enables insight on the co-occurrence of multiple senses and experiences among participants, especially as participants recounted diverse experiences from home countries or places of temporary resettlement to the U.S. This dimension prioritizes perspectives of place through individual's multiple senses.

Two propositions derived through this study's conclusions relate to Greenwood's (2003) perceptual dimension: Proposition 1 states *Refugee women talk about education as empowering themselves and their transnational communities*. Connections to sensory indicators from this proposition include the sensations of pride that participants conveyed as a feeling produced through their educational attainment. Relatedly, this effect is not only individual but also transnationally distributed from individual refugees to other people throughout their global networks.

Additionally, the *humanizing* approach to self-sufficiency also parallels Greenwood's (2003) perceptual dimension, conveyed through the multiple senses of participating refugee women, workers, and boundary spanners. Proposition 3 states *The doctrine of self-sufficiency is deployed along a continuum from essentializing to humanizing*. In practice and as empirically demonstrated through this research's findings, the humanization of refugees entails engaging with and treating them as whole people, where their dignity, selfhood, and agency are respected and integrated within the resettlement process. Furthermore, this theoretical proposition aligns with Bottici's (2014) work that theorized the variability of human rights implementations as rooted in evaluations of people as fully or sub-human. The humanizing end of the continuum of

self-sufficiency aligns with a stance of refugees as fully human and, subsequently, deserving of the full measure of humanity. Thus, humanizing approaches are also related to the theoretical framework's perceptual dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003). Humanization is pertinent to this proposition because it reinforces the validity of refugees' experiences and perceptions.

Perceptions of Refugee Women's Education as Transnational Community Uplift

The case of refugee women suggests that Proposition 1 holds; specifically *Refugee women talk about education as empowering themselves and their transnational communities*. Within the case, refugee women discussed education as important in their lives, families, and, from refugee mothers, specifically for their children. Education was presented as necessary to rebuild their lives post-resettlement, avoid high-risk work in factories or meat-processing plants, and achieve personal, familial, and community pride. This element of pride is enmeshed with the multi-sensory feelings central to a perceptual dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003). However, empowerment through education for the case of refugee women is mediated by a multitude of factors such as their educational background, availability of credentials, age and familial role, and access to funds. Regardless of these mediators, the case of refugee women related beliefs that empowerment is achievable through education. Furthermore, empowerment is extended to transnational connections through knowledge, access to educational information, and network sharing. Thus, this individual and transnationally collective sense of pride is related to a perceptual dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003).

Within the case of resettlement workers, the proposition seems to align, partially in positively and partially in negatively connoted senses that *Refugee women talk about education as empowering themselves and their transnational communities*. Resettlement workers in the study shared stories of adult refugee women who were able to access education and experienced

related empowerment (e.g., better jobs, higher income, access to safer and more desirable housing, and education-derived social capital) that they shared within their transnational communities in the U.S., places of temporary resettlement, and home countries. These examples pertain to positive connotations of the sense of pride within the proposition. However, not all women refugees can access education, especially if they are the primary or sole earners in their families. These instances controvert the proposition of education as empowering and represent negative connotations of or lack of a sense of pride.

The boundary spanners' case also demonstrates partial alignment with the proposition that *Refugee women talk about education as empowering themselves and their transnational communities*. More than the other cases, boundary spanners conveyed comparative perspectives among their homes, temporary places of resettlement, and permanent resettlement countries; many of these reflections espoused education was and remains expensive, presumed to be more important for men than women, but also that these challenges spurred their motivation for education. Participants' multinational reflections indicated that these sense-laden realities may have manifested for different reasons but that they are consistent across places. The contradictory realities of first experiencing diminished personal and transnational pride from interrupted education followed by enhancement of the sense of pride through education after resettlement situates these reflections within a perceptual dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003). How participants felt without access to education sharply contrasts with their sensory indicators of selfhood and ability to share information about, knowledge of, and access to pathways to pursue higher education with their transnational networks. Consequently, the boundary spanner case additionally corresponds with the perspectives expressed within the refugee women case that education produces the sense of empowerment at the levels of personal and transnational

community. However, similar to the resettlement worker case, the boundary spanner case also accounts for place-based affordances and barriers to education that challenge developing empowerment through education and consequently also diminishes a sense of pride.

Humanized Self-sufficiency

Refugees, resettlement support workers, and boundary spanners primarily affiliated with non-profit refugee support agencies expressed their understandings of immigration law relative to refugee education in humanized terms, related to proposition 3 that states *The doctrine of self-sufficiency is deployed along a continuum from essentializing to humanizing*. Humanization refers to prioritizing and working from the understanding that refugees are whole people with agency and valid life experiences. As corroboration, scholarship has reported on the adverse—and dehumanizing—effects of sociopolitical dynamics such as racialized and xenophobic othering (Hailu et al., 2021), discursive positioning of refugees as vulnerable, especially by higher educational power brokers (Bragg, 2021), and the discounting of refugees' experiences and knowledges, or misrecognition (Mangan & Winter, 2017).

As a corresponding resistance to these manifestations of essentialization, additional scholars posit transformative and humanizing approaches. For examples, generative assets and supports derived through humanizing approaches ensure that refugee students feel heard and accepted at school (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2021). Furthermore, Koyama and Ghosh (2018) advanced the humanizing role of boundary spanners, or those who occupy multiple subjectivities and organizational involvements, who can collectively contribute to refugees' access to a humanistic viewpoint on resettlement priorities. Additionally, the refugee resettlement campus model advanced through Abdo and Craven's (2018) evaluation and depiction of the Every Campus a Refuge, founded by Dr. Diya Abdo at the flagship campus at Guilford College,

presents a particularly profound example of humanizing approaches by affording cost-free housing and utilities for recently resettled refugees. From refugee women, ongoing mentorship relationships with non-profit support workers resulted in enhanced encouragement and knowledge related to educational access and attainment as one component of humanized self-sufficiency. Subsequently, a humanized approach to self-sufficiency contributed to refugee women's trust in those relationships predicated on humanization that led to their sense of personal and collective, transnational pride.

Sociological Dimension: Temporality of Forced Migration and Identities

This dimension directs attention toward the relational aspects of place. A sociological perspective of place attends to how intertwined facets of human experience shape connections to places or how “experience, identity, and culture... [are enmeshed with] relationship[s] with places” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 627). This dimension prioritizes a relational perspective of place that extends from the personal perspective that extensively draws from the senses, or perceptual dimension, to account for relationships. Specifically, the sociological dimension is concerned with the intersubjective connections among individuals' experiences of place with additional people, how identities are shaped through relational space, and how culture presents among groups. The sociological dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003) coalesces with the sociopolitical influences on refugees and higher education. Where Greenwood's (2003) dimension of sociology attends to relationships among people and place, a sociopolitical lens, derived through literature, additionally accounts for how relationships evidence beliefs and actions evocative of localized society. Thus, the second proposition (*The extent of influence of refugee women's forced migrations and resulting interrupted education is ongoing while encountering systemic oppression in the U.S. resettlement context, yet supportive relationships mitigate threats that*

would interrupt education.) developed through conclusions from the findings, relates to Greenwood's (2003) sociological dimension.

Considerations of risk and vulnerability are especially relevant to a sociological consideration of place. As Koyama (2015) documented, refugees are positioned within a matrix of risk discourses ranging from risky for educational or workforce investment, at risk of a loss on those investments, or as risks to the imperialist project of national security. Correspondingly, Bragg (2021) reported how Canadian research ethics reviews posited refugees as vulnerable and high-risk. The accumulated effect of these scholarly contributions is how relational, sociological connections in places of resettlement construct, from an *a priori* perspective, refugees' positionality. Effects of sociopolitical dynamics present in this research correspond with these scholars' theorizations; some spaces of so-called refugee support were more open to hearing the full recounting of refugees' lived experiences than others. Refugees' ability to transnationally traverse boundaries to secure their own safety requires significant savvy and agency; refugee personnel evidenced an array of dispositions, some of which were rooted in deficit ideologies. Particularly, this boundary disrupts the possibility of relationally connecting with refugees and perpetuating ongoing interrupted education in the U.S. place of resettlement.

Time is especially pertinent to the present study's treatment of sociological elements; specifically, refugee women's forced migratory journeys account for *at least* three different nation-states including their home countries, a country of asylum and/or temporary resettlement, and the U.S. as a place of resettlement. The realm of sociological possibility involves interaction among people with different worldviews, experiences, cultures, and identities. This space is not benign. Instead, it is alive with potential friction and sparks where worldviews may be so antithetical or antagonistic as to result in potential harm toward people with minoritized

identities. The act of negotiating relationships – pertaining to the sociological dimension – also contains an element of calculated risk in naming, sharing, or explaining one’s background, or perceptual sense of place, relative to another person’s divergent worldview.

Relational Space Negotiations of Multiple Worldviews

From non-profit affiliated resettlement workers and boundary spanners, humanizing self-sufficiency pertains to nurturing *interdependence* – over independence – and recognizing that (re)building lives is an iterative process, especially for post-resettlement refugees.

Interdependence, or the prioritization of how people can help each other through building trust and relationships, reflects these features from the findings that pertain to the relational, intersubjective, and sociological features of place (Greenwood, 2003). Particularly, the relational components featured in this research’s findings demonstrate that trusting relationships, built over time, are beneficial in enhancing refugee women’s involvement in higher education.

Supportive relationships provide a twofold insight on buffering effects against interrupted education from Jamila’s story. First, a non-profit affiliated case worker built a trusting relationship with Jamila over the years since she was resettled as an early teenager. From the outset of their introduction when Jamila was in high school, she reiterated and insisted on the primacy of education. Related to the relationship Jamila has with the non-profit, she stated “They always talk to me about school. They push me and they look after me.” Through the non-profit’s ability to invest more time and contact in the space of resettlement support, Jamila succeeded in prevailing upon her support workers and case worker that education is the most important thing in her life and that she will obtain it with or without their help. Jamila’s relationship with her case worker evokes a stance of supporting her in her educational advancement. Relatedly, this relational approach relates to Perry and Mallozzi’s (2017) call to action for refugee support

workers to reevaluate their “worldviews and how they compare with those of prospective refugee students so that they can better support their education” (p. 511). Embodying this call to action through recognizing Jamila’s urgency and insistence, the resettlement supporting non-profit personnel responded with support that began in high school and continues now while Jamila studies in a community college.

Second, Jamila’s mother, also a refugee, is the caretaker for Jamila’s child while she attends classes. This is an example of intergenerational refugee support. Jamila’s education was not interrupted because her mother, who is also a refugee, offered gendered labor in support. These relationships between a refugee and a non-refugee support worker as well as a young refugee woman and her refugee mother enhanced Jamila’s education: both relationships prevented Jamila’s education from being interrupted. Thus, these relationships, integral to Greenwood’s (2003) sociological dimension of place, also facilitated stronger relationships to the place of resettlement through supporting educational advancement. Both relationships, built over time, led to a humanized expression of self-sufficiency. The case worker and mother each reinforced education as a viable pathway after high school rather than the requirement of entering the workforce immediately.

Ideological Dimension: Spatial Organization, or the Neighborhood

An ideological, or belief-based, dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003) affords additional insight on the notions of power that inhere upon refugee and support worker interactions. More concretely, ideology is a direct consequence of power. Specifically, the thoughts (ideologies) that presented through this research are inscribed within the systems and structures of power present through participants’ diverse socialization contexts as well as the ascriptions of validity given by individual participants. Importantly, the power-laden ascriptions

of power are also grounded in literature. For example, Crea (2015) reported how educational access in the context of a temporary resettlement location facilitated collective empowerment across refugee youth from multiple geographic and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, Arvanitis et al. (2019) corroborated this perspective that education contributes to refugees' capacity to transnationally envision their futures over time and in relation to the past. However, Dryden-Peterson (2016b) advocated for refugee resettlement locations to address the misalignment between refugee education and refugees' delimited professional opportunities.

This introduces a question of access to education and a tension among support workers' beliefs about education. When education is framed as a "luxury," as Darby explained is a sentiment she has witnessed among VOLAG-affiliated resettlement workers, then by extension, empowerment may also be framed as a luxury. Consequently, education may be treated as irrelevant or essential dependent upon refugee support workers' beliefs. As a further extension of the perceptual and sociological dimensions, ideology addresses how beliefs are formed through systems of power and their structuring function. This dimension of place addresses how beliefs inform "the organization of space... [and] facilitates and legitimizes any culture production" (Greenwood, 2003, p. 629). Spatial organization and requisite effects circumscribe individual sensory perception and the intersubjective attributes of a sociological dimension of place. Ideological aspects of place account for beliefs that result from the effects of power and construct refugee women's interactions with people and places.

Ideologies that Perpetuate Interrupted Education in the U.S.

Through attention to ideologies, contestation becomes legible of the proposition: *Refugee women talk about education as empowering themselves and their transnational communities.* Why is it that some within the refugee women case are able to access education, experience

personal empowerment, and share these resources with their transnational networks while others are tracked into grueling factory and meat-packing plant jobs? Thinking through Greenwood's (2003) ideological dimension affords insights on the beliefs that are transmitted through relationships with people and places – the sociological dimension (p. 626) – and then filtered through “multisensory perception” – the perceptual dimension (p. 624).

One component of scholarly evidence addressing these questions arises from Damaschke-Deitrick and Bruce (2019) whose work reported the employment outcomes of refugee women in EU countries compared to non-refugee women disaggregated by educational background. In brief, this scholarly contribution reported that regardless of educational background, refugee women fared comparatively worse in education-to-workplace alignment than their non-refugee peers (Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce, 2019). Essentially, a theoretical extension of this work is the supposition that ideological (i.e., power-laden) beliefs pervade the landscape of refugee resettlement and delimit refugee women's professional possibilities. As a caveat the United States and European Union are not uniform, which limits the utility of directly or synonymously comparing the two countries, yet both geographic contexts are considered high-income countries. Additionally, both localities share a common historicity of coloniality and contemporary manifestations of endemic racism.

Specific to the U.S., Darby explained that some resettlement workers erroneously believe education is a so-called “luxury” and should not be a priority for refugees. However, others included in this study presented education as a foundational component of personal and transnational community empowerment. Jamila, for example, connected her high motivation for becoming a lawyer via higher education with sociopolitical beliefs she has encountered, which subjugate women and attempt to deem them unworthy of education. Additionally, Beatrice held

a high school diploma with a specialization in software engineering, yet she was told, repeatedly, by her VOLAG-affiliated case worker that she must work to repay her and her family's debt to the agency for purchasing their flights into the U.S. The contrast between these two anecdotes demonstrates the effects of power, or ideology, through beliefs that people hold which pervade refugee women's access to education.

Political Dimension: Refugees' Resistance

This section on the political dimension diverges from ideologies, or beliefs. A central difference is that the political dimension centers the convergence of multiple systemic oppressions that result in "marginalization..., economic exploitation, cultural imperialism, and violence" (Greenwood, 2003, p. 631). Beliefs, or ideologies, provide some grounding for the political dimension because it attends to how ideas are operationalized and translated to actions. Specifically, the political dimension suggests connections to the first Proposition, which states, *Refugee women talk about education as empowering themselves and their transnational communities* and Proposition 3, which states, *The doctrine of self-sufficiency is deployed along a continuum from essentializing to humanizing*. However, unlike other sections discussing dimensions of Greenwood's (2003) place-conscious theory, this section devoted to the political dimension highlights alignment with Proposition 1 as well as some features of productive tension, or contexts from the research where participant sentiments contrast with the propositions. Specifically, this tension manifests between the political alignment contrasted between VOLAGs and non-profits as well as neoliberalism and humanization.

Refugee non-profits tend to align with Proposition 1 and the "humanizing" end of the continuum of Proposition 3 as well as trouble the systemic oppressions outlined in the political dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003). For example, Unangst and de Wit's (2020) scholarly

contribution was theoretically framed through Hurtado's (2015) transformative paradigm and evidenced the connectivity from ideology, or beliefs, to action. More specifically, the transformative paradigm (Hurtado, 2015 as cited in Unangst & de Wit, 2020) aligned the inquiry to the manifestations of power surrounding refugees' higher education access. Furthermore, Unangst and de Wit's (2020) use of Hurtado's (2015) transformative paradigm foregrounded the transformative capacity of non-profits to trouble the neoliberal tendencies of westernized higher education and sociopolitics. Through identifying non-profits as less commonly recognized power brokers, Unangst and de Wit (2020) shifted notions of power away from profit generation and instead toward refugees' equitable participation in institutions of higher education. More recently, Ramos and Sarubbi (2021) additionally foregrounded refugees' power in educational advocacy, based on refugee parents involved in a non-profit organization. These scholarly conclusions highlighted the influential capacity of non-profits to re-organize the spaces of higher education and thus unsettle normative conceptions of who or what groups are included, accepted, and recognized as agentic in higher education.

Capitalistic features of productivity and consumption, in contrast, are at odds with Proposition 1 yet are in philosophical alignment with Proposition 3 and economic exploitation and cultural imperialism, which, Greenwood (2003) notes are central features of the political dimension of place. Specifically, neoliberalism, or the prioritization of refugees earning and spending money to be deemed successful in the resettlement contexts, is an additional influential component of the political dimension. Specific to the U.S., both Damaschke-Deitrick and Bruce (2019) and Dykstra-DeVette (2018) noted the rote prioritization of economic production and consumerism as a supposed corollary for refugee integration. As these scholars addressed, this political priority of earning and spending is at odds with Proposition 1, that refugee women

conceptualize higher education as a feature of personal and collective empowerment, yet it is also in alignment with the “essentializing” end of the continuum described in Proposition 3. Specifically, Proposition 1 highlights education as a mechanism for refugees’ personal and communal empowerment, so neoliberal tendencies in U.S. higher education and refugee resettlement law, as scholars noted (Damaschke-Deitrick & Bruce, 2019; Dykstra-DeVette, 2018) controvert the propositions’ purposeful omission of any financial or meritocratic features of refugees’ higher education. Furthermore, Proposition 3 accounts for a self-sufficiency continuum from essentializing to humanizing; thus, the neoliberal tendencies in U.S. higher education and sociopolitics described by Damaschke-Deitrick and Bruce (2019) and Dykstra-DeVette (2018) are aligned with an essentialized approach but not the humanization also featured in Proposition 3. However, the imposition of U.S. neoliberalism does evidence the features of structural oppression outlined by Greenwood (2003), namely cultural imperialism and economic exploitation.

Lastly, an educational aspect pertinent to the political dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003) addresses the function of legal recognition, or citizenship. Through a multi-site, multi-national ethnographic investigation, Dryden-Peterson (2016b) argued for refugee educational access expansion to be developed in tandem with full legal recognition through citizenship. In sum, Dryden-Peterson (2016b) articulated how refugee educational pathways *without* concurrent citizenship divests any educational advancement from its potential capacity for “future economic, political, and social participation” (p. 479). In essence, this line of reasoning addresses how education presents a multitude of generative capacities for societal engagement, but that all of these functions are barred without legal recognition.

The political dimension also addresses how beliefs are used to structure the organization of space. Specific to this study, an orientation guided by the political dimension asks questions such as: Where do refugee women reside, work, learn, shop, access physicians? How do they travel? With whom do they interact? How do their identities, and local perceptions and assumptions, shape their closeness or distance to others living or working in their place of resettlement? What foundational ideas are behind why or how certain spaces are welcoming or not? Are refugees politically recognized and afforded human rights? Collectively, these questions evoke the facets of place unified by the political dimension that interrogates how beliefs structure space and place socially, physically, culturally, and economically. From this perspective, Proposition 1 is similarly delimited in that refugee women's discussions of education as personal and transnational collective empowerment is only as expansive as legal recognition for full capacity allows.

Politically Humanizing Refugee Self-Sufficiency

Participating non-profit affiliated support workers presented refugee resettlement as a process best suited to a humanizing approach. This segment of participants indicated that promoting self-sufficiency takes time, strong relationships, and responsiveness to refugees as whole human beings. In alignment with the political dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003), humanizing self-sufficiency as one component of refugee resettlement, among many, contests the notion that employment of any kind is sufficient actualization of self for newly-resettled refugees, regardless of educational or professional background and intellectual capacity. Humanizing approaches to self-sufficiency directly controvert VOLAG-affiliated notions that a job, any job, fulfills even the vague groundwork of economic self-sufficiency (Refugee Act, 1980). Economic self-sufficiency as any job dangerously conflates work with the full measure of

human capacity for intellect, art, or community contribution. Furthermore, the types of work commonly targeted to refugees resettled in the place of this research disregard dehumanizing working conditions, such as long hours of repetitive motion with miniscule if any breaks, during customary familial or restful hours between 5pm and 5am, and in extreme conditions of loud factory floors, cold meat rooms, or the unrelenting sun and humidity of agriculture in the South. The uptake of self-sufficiency as employment reflects action on beliefs predicated on refugees as financial risks to the U.S. as the country of resettlement and, by extension, a drain on public or social services.

Specifically, Darby stated that she and her non-profit colleagues recognize and operate from the understanding that “resettlement is an ongoing process” or, as Darby explained, they work from the disposition of “self-sufficiency with an asterisk.” Three months of intermittent support until refugees obtain any kind of job is insufficient and dehumanizing. Correspondingly, Gia and Roux, non-profit boundary spanners, addressed their advocacy efforts for younger generations to pursue education for long-term, as opposed to immediate, advantages. Non-profit support workers who participated in this study shared that their approach avoids a rigid interpretation of self-sufficiency as employment alone. Instead, non-profit affiliated participants incorporate consideration for the multiple affective and material pathways that promote refugees’ holistic wellbeing and self-actualization including mental, emotional, physical, and relational human needs, alongside financial independence.

From a refugee woman’s perspective through the present research, Abeni’s life story presents a compelling contradiction and contestation to the legalistic forms of political belonging. Specifically, Abeni maintained a rigorous pursuit of literacy and educational attainment alongside her commitment to being a small businesswoman. As a mother of two

school-aged kids who arrived to the U.S. with no English language facility, Abeni maintained a laughter-fueled and incisively savvy approach to her life in the U.S. by recognizing her capacity to creatively contribute to her family and her transnational community. For Abeni, hair braiding began as her pathway out of enforced child slavery and became the mechanism to facilitate her ability to pay for the U.S. citizenship exam and enroll in community college. Abeni is an entrepreneur, and she is a mother, wife, sister, daughter, friend, and... refugee. Abeni's agentic and creatively constructed transnational pathway stands in direct confrontation with the flat and dehumanizing explanation of refugees' economic self-sufficiency, as outlined in the Refugee Act (1980) and as operationalized by those who ascribe to an essentialized approach to refugees' self-sufficiency.

Navigating a humanized approach to self-sufficiency is contentious within resettlement work that requires navigating state-level mandates for functional, legalistic interpretations of the concept of self-sufficiency. As a corollary expression, Simon described that this tension requires a "constant negotiation... between what resettlement law says about self-sufficiency versus recognizing when somebody has or doesn't have capacity." A basic interpretation of immigration law specific to refugees and self-sufficiency suggests that employment is important, yet the phrase is adopted as employment being the only important facet, particularly among VOLAGs. A noteworthy component of refugee self-sufficiency (Refugee Act, 1980), as deployed as work of any kind, is also present in the very law codifying U.S. refugee economic self-sufficiency; specifically, the act also refers to English and employment training. However, because the law is consistently opaque as to the degree and quality of "sufficient," the resulting operationalization has been politicized and thus spatially delimited to the least common denominator form across all aspects of refugee resettlement which, in the Refugee Act (1980), are preceded by the

qualifier “sufficient.” Notably, this flat and monolithic uptake of “sufficient” is related to capitalism’s influence on laborers’ assumed value. Refugees, when presumed to be less familiar with the U.S. or to have less capacity for abstract or intellectual work, are positioned as cheap labor in the production systems in the U.S. In fact, this dynamic dangerously defines refugees as less valuable and as a commodity to be “used” for capitalistic ends.

However, non-profit personnel indicated their intentions to bridge the gap between a basic interpretation toward humanizing self-sufficiency. Simon expressed he and his colleagues prioritize this approach when they advocate for refugees to “make the transition to the next level, just out of their reach.” Participating non-profit workers did not approach self-sufficiency as employment alone but instead chose to facilitate multiple iterations of building or rebuilding lives in the U.S. Darby also reinforced this approach: “I have worked with families who have been here for five years and still have things that they ask me about.” This expression relates how the humanized approach to self-sufficiency is predicated on interdependence and a level of trust for ongoing communication.

In relation to the political dimension of place (Greenwood, 2003), participant expressions that humanize refugees in their pursuits toward self-sufficiency eschew “marginalization..., economic exploitation, cultural imperialism, and violence” (p. 631). Humanizing refugee self-sufficiency indicates awareness of the exigencies of political awareness and goes a step beyond bare minimum requirements to disrupt the political dynamics that attempt to use prejudiced ideas to systemically oppress refugees by deeming them worthy of work alone. Humanizing refugees amid the flat and VOLAG-imposed conditions of doctrine self-sufficiency includes holistic recognition of humanity and selfhood that transgresses the bounds of legalistic, juridical citizenship.

The matter of citizenship is an aspect of the political realm that is essential in this investigation of refugees. Refugees are without formal, juridical, or legal recognition as citizens, from the time they forcibly depart from home to flee violence or persecution and if or until they achieve naturalization and citizenship in another country. In the realm of politics, for which legal recognition and representation are prerequisite, this functionally means refugees are without *formal* political voice or mechanisms to speak back to the establishment or state-based power structures. Dryden-Peterson (2016b) highlighted the fractured nature of refugees' recognized political rights and how educational institutions are complicit in producing the nationalistic and state-based ideologies of legitimated forms of political power yet also unsettled the notion of education as a panacea in lieu of citizenship in a global society structured—largely and geopolitically—by nation-based forms of inclusion, specifically through citizenship. To summarize Dryden-Peterson (2016b) this scholarly contribution troubled the empty promise of education as a proxy for social, economic, and political inclusion customarily achieved, at a minimum level of potential participation, through citizenship.

Ecological Dimension: Exploitation of Women and (Natural) Places

This dimension addresses how the natural environment and women similarly experience exploitation and subjugation. The earth's natural resources are over-used and extracted for capitalistic purposes which leads to species extinction and, at the very least, a massive degradation of natural environments to the extent that the livelihoods and continuation of plant and animal species are threatened. Similarly, when women are viewed as “less than” in comparison to men, they experience subjectification, and this hierarchical, gendered dynamic manifests as contemporary realities for women of lower wages (when compared with men for the same work), barriers to educational and professional advancement, and gendered expectations

that they be primarily responsible for family and community caretaking. The ecological dimension accounts for the similar patterns of environmental or natural environment degradation and subjugation of women when “capitalist societies construct nature and women as something ‘other’ to have ‘power over’” (Greenwood, 2003, p. 635). Women and nature can be understood as connected through the attempts to overpower them through the devastation of natural environments as explained through the ecological dimension (Greenwood, 2003) and in alignment with Proposition 3 that states *The doctrine of self-sufficiency is deployed along a continuum from essentializing to humanizing*. Specifically, an ecological perspective (Greenwood, 2003) highlights how ending natural environment devastation and refugee women’s exploitation are intertwined.

Ecologically Essentialized Self-sufficiency. Both refugees and resettlement support workers primarily affiliated with VOLAGs expressed their understandings of immigration law relative to refugee education in essentialized terms. Specifically, anecdotes that reflect an essentialized view recounted how education for refugee women is foreclosed – regardless of prior education or education credential attainment – in favor of work. Specifically, this conclusion from the present research is in alignment with scholarship that treats dehumanization in refugee treatment (Bragg, 2021; Clark-Kazak & Thomson, 2019; Hailu et al., 2021; Koyama, 2015; Mangan & Winter, 2017). Specifically, Clark-Kazak and Thomson (2019) addressed the dehumanizing treatment of refugees evidenced through an overabundance of attention to processes of identifying refugees. Furthermore, an essentialized view of self-sufficiency relates to the ambivalence of VOLAG workers on continued resettlement support once refugees gain a job. Essentialization in these contexts refers to a flattened approach to refugees as sub-human, and thus, unworthy of dignity and respect.

Essentialization manifested as a dichotomy between eligibility for work (e.g., 18 years of age) and eligibility for higher education (e.g., holding valid high school diplomas and transcripts). Anecdotes that exemplified this dynamic recounted VOLAG-affiliated resettlement workers denied refugee women eligible for higher education knowledge of *access*. Although participant statements did not directly address the degradation of the natural environment and resources pertaining to this component of the ecological dimension (Greenwood, 2003), they were clear on how women are subjugated. Beatrice holds a high school diploma that she earned in an English language high school in a country of temporary resettlement. As a woman, she expressed that “without education her life will not be good” (Beatrice). This statement presents the connections among womanhood, education, and looming threats of what life may be like without credentialed skills. She faced this essentialization in the form of subjugation that relates to Greenwood’s (2003) ecological dimension of place: her case worker deterred her from pursuing education by signaling her indebtedness to the VOLAG for her family’s flights to the U.S. Fundamentally, Beatrice’s VOLAG contacts were the most trusted sources of information because she was within her first three months post-resettlement at the time of the study. Self-sufficiency was deployed as a mechanism that interrupted her continued education, introduced debt as a tool to delimit her available decisions, and positioned employment in a packaging factory as her so-called best option to obtain the legalistic, essentialized version of self-sufficiency. These discursifying tactics of essentialization relegate refugee women to a sub-human status rendering them unworthy of full rights to dignity, respect, or humanity. This anecdote, in conversation with a VOLAG-affiliated refugee support worker, highlights the ambivalence inherent in essentialized approaches to self-sufficiency that result in subjugating women (Greenwood, 2003), particularly refugee women.

Support workers employed by VOLAGs demonstrated how rigid operationalizations of self-sufficiency are also related to ambivalence toward women refugees' lives once employment is obtained. Specifically, essentialized self-sufficiency or rigid interpretations of the law about this concept results in VOLAG-affiliated support workers simply moving on. Becky described her stance that once refugees "find the job... I never really see them again." In short, self-sufficiency applied as employment alone means that this VOLAG support worker understood she had no further responsibility or obligation to provide continued services to employed refugee women. As many refugee women and non-profit support workers shared, this rationale is not uncommon. Refugee women are frequently subjugated to high-risk and low pay work in dangerous fields that readily exploit refugee populations and have no ethical qualms with subjugating women.

Correspondingly, non-profit-affiliated refugee workers—who themselves advocated for humanizing approaches to self-sufficiency throughout refugee resettlement—conveyed their chagrined awareness of how essentialized self-sufficiency approaches are complicit in subjugating refugees. Andromeda, a non-profit affiliated worker, reflected on this essentialized approach she has witnessed through her work with refugees when she stated that "self-sufficiency is used as a deadline to stop providing services... when self-sufficiency is only tied to employment." An essentialized view of self-sufficiency expects refugees to rapidly acclimate to the U.S. and reifies the economic and work-based features of self-sufficiency. Specifically, nonchalant dispositions to refugees that abnegate responsibility for attending to newcomers as whole people are myopic and monolithic. Essentializing approaches to self-sufficiency conflate so-called success in resettlement with working in a high-risk, low-wage, and high-physical taxation context that results in refugees' evaluation of worthiness for living in the U.S.

determined singularly by their achievement of rugged individualism, particularly as determined by employment.

Recommendations

This critical qualitative study with refugee women, resettlement workers, and boundary spanners in the U.S. South concludes with recommendations for humanizing approaches for higher education and policy. Place-consciousness, through Greenwood's (2003) five dimensions, shaped and informed these recommendations. Each component of the recommendations relates to possibilities for enhancing refugees' relationships with other people as well as the place of resettlement in the U.S. South. As an expression of this humanistic approach, Greenwood (2003) concluded the manuscript from which this research's theoretical framework is drawn by stating "...a place-conscious framework of accountability must begin to assess the places in which we (and others) live in relation to the kind of education that we provide and the pedagogical impact of places in and outside school" (p. 644). This theorization of place-consciousness calls for a critique of educational injustices and related responsibility toward people and places as entangled with educational spaces. Recommendations derived from this orientation toward place-consciousness and the findings of this research call for specific higher education practice and policy changes that are accountable to refugees and their experiences of the place of resettlement.

Humanization in practice and policy is an expression of movement for equity. Humanizing approaches acknowledge and welcome multiple lived experiences; equity addresses how to actively acknowledge and welcome divergent lived experiences. Thus, to humanize refugees' higher education experience first requires movement beyond language of diversity alone and, instead, to substantively address how systemic oppression disrupts equitable higher

education access. As Tienda (2013) cautioned, focusing on diversity alone does not achieve the full measure of equity in higher education, which entails the inclusion of minoritized populations including the full range of ownership over educational spaces and involvement in decision-making. Thus, these recommendations align with an equity disposition that does not erroneously conflate a diverse institutional student body with the “term inclusion as if both terms imply each other” (Tienda, 2013, p. 2). The recommendations specifically address venues of higher education practice and community-to-university partnership as well policy that guides higher education and refugee resettlement. Specific attention is given to women refugees.

Recommendations conclude with opportunities for future research.

Higher Education Practice

Advancing and advocating for humanizing approaches is one recommendation for the practice of education across levels derived from this research. In short, humanizing approaches affirm a range of lived experience along with related constraints or affordances. Specific to this research, refugees are resettled and (re)build lives in the U.S., even if their presence is hidden by structural oppression; yet they arrive in places of resettlement with a range of educational backgrounds, training, and intentions for further and higher education. Practically, institutions of higher education can respond to the reality of the refugees’ plans for pursuing higher education by humanizing approaches. The success of any humanizing approach to higher education systems and practices first requires uprooting deficit perspectives toward refugees. Findings from this study suggest that refugees encounter a range of xenophobic, racist, and othering dynamics upon resettlement in the U.S. As social ideologies, deficit notions of refugees are not unlikely to be present within systems of higher education and in the beliefs of people who work in them. Education and interpersonal contact with refugees are the best ways to confront deficit beliefs

about refugees. Furthermore, and in alignment with scholarship from Maringe et al. (2017), higher education institutions are advised to approach internationalization efforts thoughtfully, especially by directly interrogating the reification of certain groups of students with international backgrounds deemed worthy while refugees are overlooked. Attention to neoliberal intentions for recruiting certain groups of geographically-based students is a generative approach to addressing this recommendation.

Humanizing higher education should be implemented across divisions, especially in areas of access information, application process, admission requirements, and funding structures. Access to information about colleges and universities achieves a humanizing approach by offering marketing materials in a variety of formats and languages; decisions about specific languages to feature are easily informed by reviewing the local or state-based demographics and statistics for refugee and international populations; given the frequent occurrence of multiple linguistic fluency, refugees may also be sought to fulfill such translation and interpretation services. Formats are humanizing when they account for multiple means of communication (e.g., verbal and interpersonal), especially given the preference among refugee populations for important information to be conveyed or vetted through established relationships built over time and through trust; more on the relational component can be found in the following section on “community-to-university partnership.” Humanizing approaches to application and admissions procedures require divesting from elitist, Eurocentric techniques for credential evaluation. This is beneficial in accounting for multiple lived experiences because not all refugees: 1) have had the full measure of access to higher education, and 2) the realities of forced migration may also mean that refugees who have accessed and completed prior education will not have verifiable proof. Frequently, the haste of departing places of violence and persecution does not allow for

gathering all important documents as well the possibility that essential educational documentation may have been destroyed.

The last area of recommendations for humanizing higher education practice pertains to funding. Access to higher education is not meaningful unless refugees are provided adequate resources to fund their participation. Notably, the Refugee Act (1980) outlined that refugees who are eligible for public assistance may not receive that financial support if they are also enrolled in higher education. One practice to humanize higher education funding is for colleges and universities to establish scholarships and tuition waivers for which refugees are eligible. Another outlet for funding is also present on the University Alliance for Refugee and At-Risk Migrants (n.d.) webpage; this resource features a variety of scholarships for refugees based on region and state of resettlement in the U.S. as well as scholarships designated for specific ethnic groups. Finally, higher education institutions should assess any efforts toward humanization by considering the extent of interaction, recruitment, and retention of refugee women. For example, culturally responsive approaches to evaluation may shed light on this area.

Community-to-University Partnership

Community-to-University partnerships may take a variety of forms, and they are best initiated with input from existing refugee community groups and non-profit organizations. Specifically, humanizing higher education does not only pertain to institutional practice because humanizing approaches attend to the full humanity of all people and building communities of support. Relatedly, a recommendation for higher education institutions is to invest time in gaining awareness of the local demographic makeup of their community, including refugee populations. Similarly, institutions that espouse and advocate for racial, ethnic, gender, or refugee and immigrant equity would advance those equity agendas by attending to segments of

the national population that are not represented or only marginally represented on their campuses. Establishing or cultivating relationships among universities and community-based organizations, termed community-to-university partnership, is particularly advantageous towards these ends.

Furthermore, given the affordances possible through relational trust-building over time—which is most beneficial when engaging with refugee communities—connecting with local community-based advocacy and advisory boards (CABs) is strongly advisable. A central distinguishing feature of CABs compared with VOLAGs or non-profits, is that CABs are not financially or policy bound. As grassroots organizations, CABs are beholden to community members and trustworthy stakeholders, not federal, state, or NGO funders with their own lists of stipulations and guidelines oriented to fulfill funders' agendas. CABs also frequently serve communities through ethical considerations and requirements procedures for non-community members to engage with the organization or their refugee members. Educators and educational institutions can also demonstrate humanizing approaches by assessing to what extent they engage with community-based or non-profit organizations for refugee outreach and support.

Higher educational institutions should also consider expanding refugee educational opportunities beyond postsecondary education, in conversation with refugee-serving community organizations that are well-positioned to offer awareness and insight on refugee community preferences and beneficial topics or modalities. Institutions can leverage expertise and resources to develop or expand refugee educational opportunities from basics like English language learning and introductions to the place of resettlement to topics like financial literacy and banking. Furthermore, institutions with undergraduate or professional degree programs that require students to participate in an internship or practicum could synergistically implement

humanizing approaches by urging placements with organizations that serve refugees. Schools of education, peace studies, public health, social work, and world languages are particularly well-positioned to offer skills and expertise in alignment with refugee resettlement priorities.

Correspondingly, institutions can embody humanizing approaches by inviting refugees to spend time on campuses, through tours, but also, more meaningfully, by hosting educational or training events for refugees on campuses. Engaging refugee participation on institutions' campuses are particularly humanizing when there are curricular or co-curricular options for cross-experiential engagement (e.g., among refugees, students, staff, and faculty, who may or may not have refugee backgrounds). Well-suited curricular offerings through African, Asian, and Middle Eastern cultural studies programs and world languages may be especially beneficial for this purpose. Co-curricular opportunities might include opening workshops or skill-development opportunities to locally-based refugee populations offered through, for example, career or professional development offices. Finally, institutions can demonstrate humanizing approaches for refugee community partnership by funding and staffing research and practice centers devoted to (forced) migration, within the institution and also through community efforts.

Additionally, an institution-level recommendation is to become an Every Campus a Refuge® campus (Abdo & Craven, 2018; ECAR, n.d.), which is an exemplar of humanizing approaches to refugee resettlement. ECAR began at Guilford College in North Carolina and is a program to host a refugee family for 90 days on higher education campuses while also offering a supportive and welcoming transition into the U.S. for resettlement. The ECAR model is a collaboration between higher education campuses and refugee resettlement agencies (VOLAGs); succinctly, campuses provide “as much as they can” (ECAR, n.d.) to facilitate and support refugee resettlement while a resettlement agency (VOLAG) partner facilitates the official, legally

required components of resettlement. Campus supports may include access to campus housing, dining services, programs for enrolled students to engage in tutoring or conversational English practice, or even college classes for-credit. Some ECAR campuses offer a minor for enrolled students in conjunction with hosting refugee families (ECAR, n.d.) to educate college students about the realities of forced migration, thus reinforcing efforts for humanizing higher education with and for refugees. Every Campus a Refuge® is a laudable model of directing the resources and assets of higher educational institutions to be a protective buffer against the strangeness and magnitude of unfamiliarity in rebuilding home (again) central to refugees' early resettlement experiences, similarly akin to the supportive relationships that fostered educational motivation among participants in this study.

Policy

The most immediate and pressing policy implication from this research is related to self-sufficiency. Notably, refugees have varied backgrounds and experiences and possess transnational subjectivities that traverse and transgress the imperial, artificial boundaries among or between countries as well as among and between higher educational institutions and the local community. However, and to reiterate, self-sufficiency is discussed and applied, primarily through VOLAG-affiliated resettlement spaces, as if getting a job were the only valid component of refugee resettlement. Conversely, non-profit affiliated personnel depicted humanizing and process-oriented approaches to resettlement that incorporated educational backgrounds, interests and passions, and future ambitions. A humanizing policy approach to self-sufficiency acknowledges that employment is one, among many, equally important and valid facets of building a good life. To translate this to policy, U.S. adoption and co-signing of the accords affirming education as a human right would be a productive first step. The broad ideologies and

operationalizations of the doctrine of “self-sufficiency” accounted for in this study also signal recommendations for education policy.

Higher Education

Policies concerning higher education must center refugee education pathways and opportunity for advancement and professional application. This requires re-evaluating operational definitions of, for example, residency and international student status. Refugees are resettled to the U.S. without documentation and are coached through the bureaucratic procedures to obtain green card status as a quasi-legalistic form of recognition. However, institutions of higher education are not broadly equipped to facilitate access for green card holders; broad higher education policy reform is needed to garner a sense of urgency among institutions in this regard. In parallel, higher education is increasingly interested in recruiting international students, which is coded language for students with monied, full-price backgrounds, under the guise of internationalizing or globally diversifying college and university student populations. At best, these priorities are misguided, and, at worst, they are blatant manifestations of capitalistic and neoliberal attempts to enroll students from foreign countries as cash cows to subsidize institutions’ bottom financial lines. In summation, any policy-level initiative toward internationalization or recruiting international students that does not account for local students with international backgrounds is fraudulent. Higher education tendencies toward developing a global perspective or “internationalizing” must also give due credence to the multiplicities of international backgrounds among potential students who do not currently reside outside the U.S.

Refugee Resettlement

Recommendations for resettlement agencies (VOLAGs) and non-profits are specific to the policy that guides refugee resettlement. Foremost among these recommendations is the need

to lobby for divestment from *economic* self-sufficiency and, instead, endorse holistic self-sufficiency. Specifically, refugee resettlement policy is opaque on the defining terms of “sufficiency” and, as demonstrated through the varied implementations in this study, people who work with refugees are left to interpret and apply the vague policy without adequate guidance. As a caveat, this ambiguity in policy guidance does afford a modicum of interpretation for more humanistic-oriented resettlement workers to facilitate a relational and process-oriented approach to refugees amid requirements of economic self-sufficiency. Non-profit refugee organizations provide ample evidence for the advantages of humanizing approaches (Abdo & Craven, 2018; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2021; Koyama & Ghosh, 2018; Ramos & Sarubbi, 2021). However, amid the contemporary situation of variability in approaches to self-sufficiency evidenced through this research between VOLAGs and non-profits, resettlement support entities that are more autonomous (e.g., not dependent on federal funding) should assess their implementation of or discursive treatment related to self-sufficiency and the extent to which their practices evidence humanizing approaches. Particularly, given the broader possibilities for humanizing approaches through refugee non-profits, these organizations have significantly greater capacity to evaluate and assess their approaches and the degree of humanizing approaches they demonstrate.

Funding is an additional key component of policy considerations for refugee resettlement agencies (VOLAGs) and non-profits. Policy that generates expansive services, staffing, and resources is a pressing need across both types of refugee-supporting organizations. This need is acutely apparent given former U.S. Ambassador Andrew Bremberg’s financial commitments, on behalf of the U.S., for UNHCR refugee support (\$125 million) and, comparatively, for the asylee denial efforts of customs and border patrol (CBP) at the U.S. Southern border (\$8.3 billion), which demonstrates a striking difference (U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Geneva,

2019). The difference between these two measures of funding presents a telling story of paying lip service to European Union efforts to facilitate refugee resettlement, relatively geopolitically and geographically distanced from the U.S., compared with the U.S. sociopolitical and ideological outlooks of xenophobia perpetuated against asylum seekers geopolitically and geographically close to the U.S. The financial backing in this example presents a telling story of anti-(im)migrant sentiment at “home” (e.g., in the U.S.) as compared with attempting to convey solidarity with refugees in the international arena. In summary, the level of funding previously directed toward CBP should be redistributed to efforts ensuring asylum seekers’ rights are guaranteed rather than flatly denied.

Personnel cultural competency is an additional recommendation that corresponds with the recommendation for policy changes to refugee resettlement funding. Refugee resettlement support hiring decisions should be guided by policy that defines, outlines, and specifies examples of cultural competence before an individual can be afforded access to refugee populations. Specifically, culture accounts for so much more than food and flags ascribed to a given country, and to be deemed culturally competent or humble, resettlement workers require an attentive disposition to their own and refugees’ cultural backgrounds. As a brief starting point, resettlement workers should be able to articulate detailed responses about their own and potential refugee populations’ cultures. For example, how is verbal, gestural, and gendered communication conveyed? Who or what groups are dominant, or oppressed, power brokers? What are the regional linguistic dialects and do they conform to or diverge from dominant languages? How are variations in communication, power, and language addressed? Do differences (between or among) powerful and minoritized groups result in differential treatment throughout a given society (e.g., home or resettlement)? To what extent does gender afford or

circumscribe life chances? Cultural competence cannot be reductively presented as a checklist of skills or attributes; instead, a humble and adept approach to cross-cultural engagement includes a willing and reflexive engagement with one's own and others' cultures. Furthermore, cultural competence must be evaluated and refined on a case-by-case basis as resettlement workers deepen their own cultural awareness and encounter additional people from disparate cultural backgrounds.

Women Refugees

The element of gender expression among refugees cannot be discounted. Particularly, gendered labor and discrimination are prevalent in the findings and conclusions from this research. Correspondingly, refugee policy must account for the gendered experiences of refugees that shapes their experiences of resettlement. This recommendation is especially pressing and difficult to achieve, considering the ongoing inequity of earnings between women and men in the U.S. However, the hierarchical distribution of labor along xenophobic, anti-immigrant, and classist divisions in the U.S. also further reinscribe the resettlement experiences of refugees, and especially women. Findings from this research signal participants as embedded with transnational communities. Relatedly, a recommendation follows that facilitating refugee women's participation in and contributions to their transnational communities is advantageous. More specifically, the U.S. should provide refugee women's access to mobile phones and Wi-Fi networks without cost. This affordance would directly and positively contribute to refugee women's ability to connect, share resources, and engage with transnational communities for transnational community uplift.

Furthermore, aligning U.S. higher education and refugee resettlement/immigration policy to specifically address refugee women's access will additionally facilitate refugee women's

participation in transnational community uplift. Based on findings from this research, refugee women are disinterested in education for personal gain or traditionalist conceptions of social mobility. Instead, participants in this study indicated their pursuit of education for the benefit of other refugee women—in their home countries and places of temporary resettlement, including family members, cultural community members, and friends gained through forced migration.

Recommendations for Future Research

Scholars who work with groups such as refugees and forced migrants will benefit from relevant language and culture skills. Even with the best translators or interpreters, there is a relational component to direct, common language and cross-cultural interaction. For example, shared language can enhance awareness of the deployment of tone, idioms, or cultural relevance through specific references. Specifically, scholars who wish to work with refugees must share a common language and build trusting relationships over time and not solely for the purpose of research.

Relationships and trust are essential in research with refugees. Given the alienation of encountering multiple bureaucratic intergovernmental processes and procedures to reach a resettlement context, refugees become accustomed, unfortunately, to people who abruptly enter their lives and extract something from them. Across resettlement processes and research, information is the item sought from refugees, especially through this dynamic where refugees may be dehumanized or treated like objects through transactional interactions, which is negative from several perspectives. A transactional approach to research with refugees reinscribes the harmful and oppressive ideologies of unquestionable power dynamics and, dependent on other identities held by refugees and researchers, may also include additional axes of oppression. Researchers are advised that transactionally engaging with refugees is unethical and must be

avoided. To overcome this potentiality, researchers are additionally advised to seek the counsel and permission of community advisory boards (CABs) as well as devoting considerable time and effort to relationship-building significantly in advance of any attempts of formal research. An additional recommendation is to integrate community-engaged and participatory approaches to research. Even if the entire research design is not paradigmatically grounded by these approaches, scholars can draw from these approaches for ethical engagement. For example, offering participants opportunities for member checking, even if only of a coding schema or manuscript headings, can elicit vital feedback on how the researcher(s) interpret data from refugee participants.

Pertaining to knowledge production, a transactional or extractive approach with refugees can only garner a limited view of lived experiences, which may dangerously lead to a variety of epistemological and axiological quandaries, such as a flat or monolithic perspective of refugees or leveraging refugees' lives for scholarly, personal advancement without consistent or comprehensive ethical attention to the purposes of the research. Relatedly, developing relationships with refugees that extend through and beyond the course of research affords potential ameliorations for these challenges. Specifically, when refugees and researchers spend time together through non-research activities, there is a possibility to develop mutual trust. As a result, when moments requiring clarification occur in the course of research (e.g., IRB requirements or the foundational ideas of particular interview questions) an established relationship with trust enables open and clear communication.

Limitations

One limitation of this research is its reliance on English as the medium of communication. Recruitment materials were translated into the most prevalent languages in the

study context. However, no interested and eligible refugees, workers, or boundary spanners responded who were not also able to communicate in English. This linguistic emphasis on English may have limited some participants on fully conveying their thinking or the cultural elements that inform what they expressed verbally. Protocols were in place, should they be needed, to facilitate verbal exchange with speakers of other languages facilitated by the translation and interpretation services offered by the Center for New North Carolinians' Interpreter Access Program (CNNC, 2021).

Additionally, the reach and scope of this research was limited by the essential and necessary component of building relationships over time within refugee and refugee-serving spaces. I was not able to successfully connect with and schedule interviews or observations with refugees from all home countries resettled nor all VOLAGs and non-profits operating in the research context. However, this research does account for almost all VOLAGs and non-profits in the study context. The aspect of coverage can be attributed to two elements. First, I have been a volunteer instructor for refugees since 2015 in the context of the present study, which has afforded developing multiple relationships with refugees and their friends, families, and neighbors. Through case replication, consenting participants were asked if they would pass along study information to additional eligible participants, again refugees, resettlement workers, and/or boundary spanners. Several participants supported this request, but most were workers or boundary spanners. Refugee women participants also shared study information in their networks. However, most of the people contacted by participating refugee women did not know me. Again, trusting relationships built over time are essential to connect with refugee communities, so it is unsurprising that eligible refugee women who did not know me were hesitant to participate. Also, at the time of the study, the U.S. departure from Afghanistan resulted in an especially

urgent refugee crisis whereby VOLAGs and non-profits experienced a high volume of resettlements along with the corollary task of managing community sponsorship, since many Afghan people entered the U.S. with alternative, rather than refugee, status. This is also an understandable circumstance that may have limited resettlement worker and/or boundary spanner participation in the present research.

As a place-based study, it is especially important to name the geographic location as a limitation. This study was situated in one U.S. South state and did not pursue participants from regions throughout the country. Thus, findings and conclusions must not be considered in specific relation to the cases included in this study, including refugee women, resettlement workers who are VOLAG and non-profit affiliated, and boundary spanners. Additionally, the particular context of the U.S. at the national level and in a Southern state, regionally, are additionally relevant to the particular conclusions and propositions of this work.

Lastly, this study's methodological foundation in exploratory case study means that the intended replication is within and across cases (e.g., participating refugee women, resettlement workers, and boundary spanners). Yin's (2018) methodological guidance presented fundamentals of case study research, some of which seem to approximate laboratory-like research conditions, which are evocative of alignment with a post-positivist paradigm and could be viewed as a limitation for critical research. However, the critical qualitative inquiry paradigm that guided this dissertation research, instead, reinforced approaches grounded in equity and social justice, which is in alignment with Yin's (2018) descriptions of the centrality of theoretical development through case study research methodology including case study methodology's relevance to "social justice theories" (p. 37). The paradigmatic framing primarily through a social justice orientation to critique and sustained ethical commitments to refugee educational opportunity

aligned multiple case study methodology with the overarching research aims to unsettle the inequity of women refugees' foreclosed access to forms of education.

Conclusion

Briefly, this research was an exploratory multiple case study, grounded in the critical qualitative paradigm. A primary impetus for this work was to highlight the social inequity of refugee women's educational access and opportunity in the U.S. resettlement context. Elements of the importance of place—or interpersonal and person-to-place relationships—were present in the findings, gleaned through interviews and observations with three cases: refugee women, resettlement workers (through resettlement agencies, or VOLAGs, and non-profits), and boundary spanners. Findings across cases suggested that interpersonal relationships across geophysical and affective spaces of forced migration structure refugee higher education. Specifically, the study sought insights on participants' views on adult refugee women and higher education, prior experiences with education and interrupted education, and if there was any relationship between interpretations of U.S. refugee and immigration law and refugee higher education access. Three cases were included: 1) the case of refugee women included nine participants; 2) the case of resettlement workers included nine participants, representing VOLAGs and non-profits; 3) the case of boundary spanners included four participants who were originally resettled to the U.S. as refugees and are now women who work in refugee resettlement. Participants from each case discussed refugees' education as beneficial, although influenced by forced migration and distributed along a continuum of essentializing to humanizing approaches to self-sufficiency. Exploratory multiple case methodology (Yin, 2018) enabled addressing a scholarly gap pertinent to refugees and higher education in the particular place of the U.S. Findings from within- and cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2018) empirically

extended current scholarship and promoted generating three theoretical propositions, specific to the U.S. refugee resettlement context. The proposition based on findings from Research Question 1 is: *Refugee women talk about education as empowering themselves and their transnational communities.* The proposition based on findings from Research Question 2 is: *The extent of influence of refugee women's forced migrations and resulting interrupted education is ongoing while encountering systemic oppression in the U.S. resettlement context, yet supportive relationships mitigate threats that would interrupt education.* The proposition based on findings from Research Question 3 is: *The doctrine of self-sufficiency is deployed along a continuum from essentializing to humanizing.* Accordingly, recommendations call for responsible action regarding higher education practice, community-to-university partnership, policy guidance for U.S. higher education and refugee resettlement, and regarding women refugees.

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APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Adulthood was operationally defined based on the American conception of adulthood achieved at 18 years of age.

Boundary Spanner participants represented multiple roles, specifically those who were previously resettled refugee women (beyond the five-year time limitation) who worked in refugee resettlement support, including education. This definition derives from Koyama and Ghosh (2018) who defined boundary spanners as people with affiliations in both educational and refugee resettlement support.

Community uplift is operationally defined for the purpose of this research as referring to the collective advancement of groups of people connected through solidarity, resource sharing, and navigating life from a collectivist, rather than individualist, perspective. This concept derives from Saelua et al. (2021) who articulated the centrality of refugees' educational opportunities in building community empowerment.

Cross-case synthesis, a methodological technique for analyzing data from multiple case study, accounted for patterns across the cases of refugee women, resettlement workers, and boundary spanners guided by exploratory multiple case methodology (Yin, 2018).

Neoliberalism constructs refugees' economic participation, such as earning and spending money, as essential to successful resettlement in Western contexts (Dykstra-DeVette, 2018).

Refugees are "...unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (UNHCR, 2010, p. 5).

Resettlement worker refers to people who work in refugee resettlement including those affiliated with voluntary agencies, or VOLAGs, and non-profit organizations.

Sociopolitics, is operationally defined for the purpose of this research, are the accrual of social and political beliefs and actions of a society that, combined, relate to policy and law dynamics, but that manifest at the local, community, and interpersonal levels where these dynamics can be felt and perceived.

Transnationalism draws attention to refugees' multiple geographic places of socialization through which refugees amalgamate cultures, languages, and sociopolitical dispositions across their forced migration experiences.

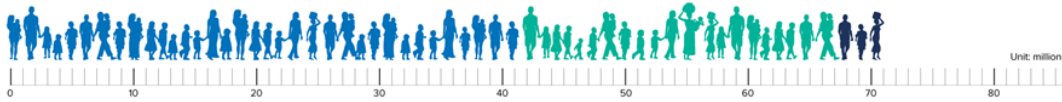
VOLAG (voluntary agency) refers to federally-funded organizations that facilitate refugee relocation from places of first asylum or temporary resettlement to the U.S. for resettlement. Within three months post-arrival, VOLAGs additionally support social security applications, public health screenings and vaccinations, children's enrollment in compulsory school, and acclimation to the local community (U.S. State Department, n.d.).

Within-case comparison, a methodological technique for analyzing data from multiple case study, included patterns across participants of each case, e.g., refugee women, resettlement workers, and boundary spanners, guided by exploratory multiple case methodology (Yin, 2018).

Womanhood is defined inclusively and regardless of sex assigned at birth.

APPENDIX B: DISPLACED PERSONS STATISTICS

70.8 million forcibly displaced people worldwide



Internally Displaced People
41.3 million

Refugees
25.9 million

Asylum-seekers
3.5 million

20.4 million under UNHCR's mandate
5.5 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA's mandate

Where the world's displaced people are being hosted



About 80 per cent of refugees live in countries neighbouring their countries of origin

57% of UNHCR refugees came from three countries

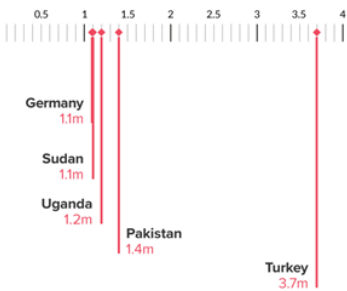


341,800 new asylum seekers

The greatest number of new asylum applications in 2018 was from Venezuelans



Top refugee-hosting countries



UNHCR has data on

3.9 million stateless people
but there are thought to be millions more



92,400 refugees resettled

37,000 people

a day forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution

16,803 personnel

UNHCR employs 16,803 people worldwide
(as of 31 May 2019)

134 countries

We work in 134 countries (as of 31 May 2019)

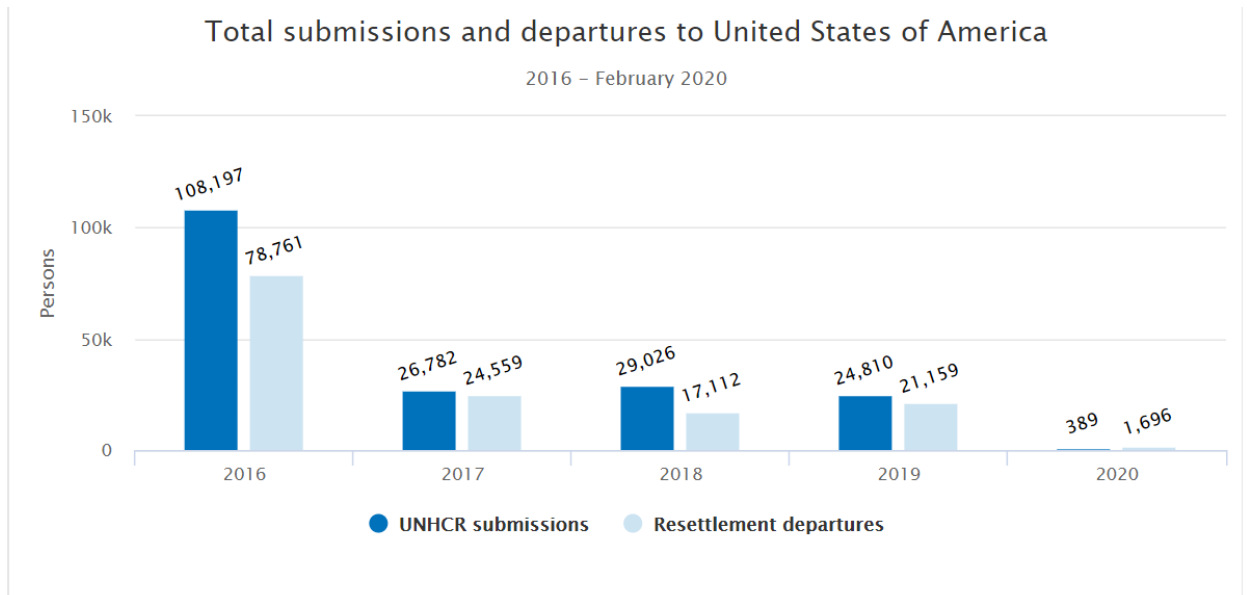
We are funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, with 86 per cent from governments and the European Union and 10 per cent from private donors

Source: UNHCR / 19 June 2019

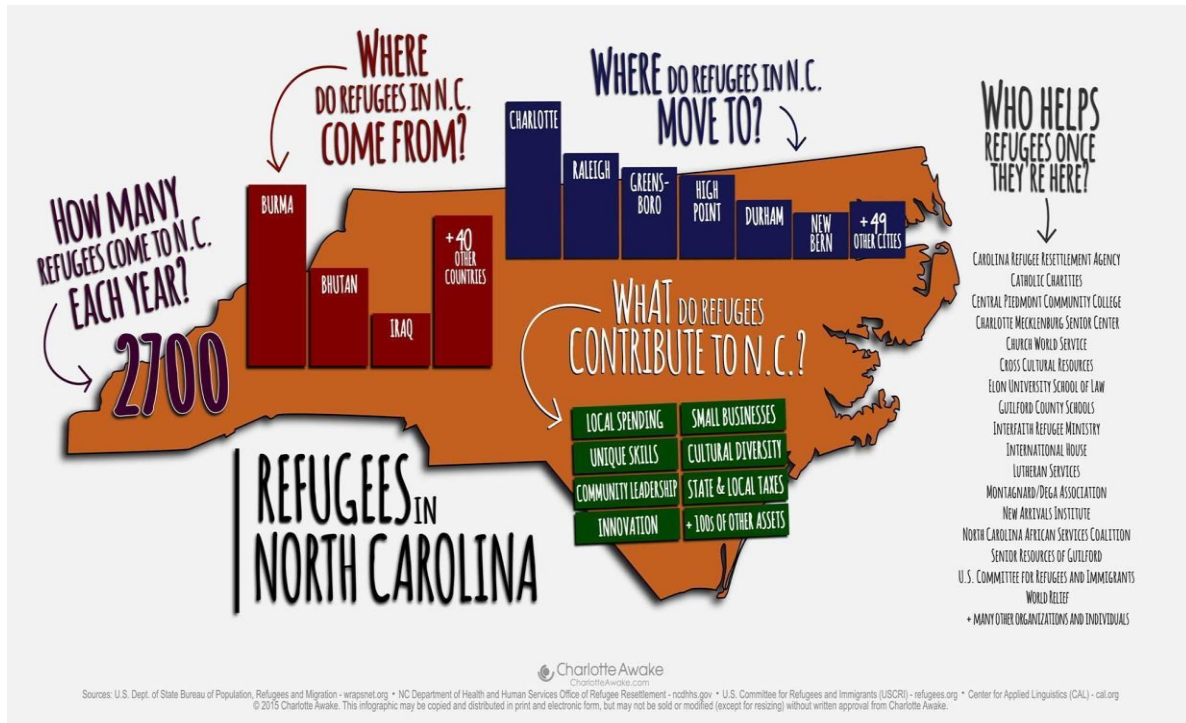


UNHCR (2019a) data

APPENDIX C: REFUGEE APPLICATIONS AND ACCEPTANCES, U.S. 2016-2019



APPENDIX D: INFOGRAPHIC OF REFUGEES IN NORTH CAROLINA



Charlotte Awake (2016)

APPENDIX E: NC REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES, LOCAL AFFILIATE

OFFICES FOR NATIONAL VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

<p style="text-align: center;">North Carolina African Services</p> <p>Coalition</p> <p>Voluntary Agency: Ethiopian Community Development Center (ECDC)</p> <p>122 N. Elm Street, Suite 1010</p> <p>Greensboro, North Carolina 27401</p> <p>Phone: 336-574-2677</p> <p>Fax: 336-574-2672</p> <p>www.ascafrica.org</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency, Inc.</p> <p>Voluntary Agency: Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)</p> <p>5009 Monroe Road, Suite 100</p> <p>Charlotte, North Carolina 28205</p> <p>Phone: 704-535-8805</p> <p>Fax: 704-535-8806</p> <p>www.carolinarefugee.org</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte – Charlotte Office</p> <p>Voluntary Agency: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)</p> <p>1123 S. Church Street</p> <p>Charlotte, North Carolina 28203-4003</p> <p>Phone: 704-370-3262</p> <p>Fax: 704-370-3370 or 704-370-3377</p> <p>www.ccdoc.org</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Church World Service – Durham</p> <p>Voluntary Agency: Church World Service (CWS)</p> <p>112 S. Duke Street, Suite 4B</p> <p>Durham, North Carolina 27701</p> <p>Phone: 919-680-4310</p> <p>Fax: 919-680-4320</p> <p>www.cwsrdu.org</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Church World Service – Greensboro</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Interfaith Refugee Ministry – New Bern Office</p>

<p>Voluntary Agency: Church World Service (CWS)</p> <p>122 N. Elm Street, Suite 607</p> <p>Greensboro, North Carolina 27401</p> <p>Phone: 336-617-0381</p> <p>Fax: 336-617-0654</p> <p>http://cwsgreensboro.org/</p>	<p>Voluntary Agency: Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM)</p> <p>1913 Trent Boulevard</p> <p>New Bern, North Carolina 28560</p> <p>Phone: 252-633-9009</p> <p>Fax: 252-638-7570</p> <p>www.helpingrefugees.org</p>
<p>Lutheran Services Carolinas – Child and Family Services</p> <p>Voluntary Agency: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS)</p> <p>4020 Wake Forest Road</p> <p>Raleigh, North Carolina 27609</p> <p>Phone: 919-832-2620</p> <p>Fax: 919-832-9876</p> <p>www.LSCarolinas.net</p>	<p>United States Committee for Refugees & Immigrants</p> <p>Voluntary Agency: United States Committee for Refugees & Immigrants (USCRI)</p> <p>3824 Barrett Drive, Suite 200</p> <p>Raleigh, North Carolina 27609</p> <p>Phone: 919-334-0072</p> <p>Fax: 919-334-0077</p> <p>www.refugees.org/field-office/north-carolina</p>
<p>World Relief Refugee Services – Durham Office</p> <p>Voluntary Agency: World Relief (WR)</p> <p>801 Gilbert Street, Suite 209</p> <p>Durham, North Carolina 27701</p> <p>Phone: 919-286-3496</p>	<p>World Relief Refugee Services High Point/Winston Salem</p> <p>Voluntary Agency: World Relief (WR)</p> <p>155 Northpoint Avenue, Suite 102</p> <p>High Point, North Carolina 27262</p> <p>Phone: 336-887-9007</p>

Fax: 919-956-5918

<http://worldreliefdurham.org>

Fax: 336-887-5245

<http://worldrelieftriad.org>

APPENDIX F: NC REFUGEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

North Carolina African Services Coalition – Greensboro

122 N. Elm Street, Suite 810 Greensboro, NC 27401

Phone # 336-574-2677

Fax # 336-574-2672

Agency Website: <http://www.ascafrica.org>

Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency, Inc. – Charlotte

5007 Monroe Road, Suite 101, Charlotte, NC 28205

Phone # 704-535-8805

Fax # 704-535-8806

Agency Website: <http://www.carolinarefugee.org/>

Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte – NC Western Regional Office (Asheville)

50 Orange Street, Asheville, NC 28801

Phone # 828-255-0146

Fax # 828-253-7339

Agency Website: <http://www.ccdoc.org>

Catholic Charities Diocese of Charlotte – Charlotte Office

1123 S. Church Street, Charlotte, NC 28203-3405

Phone # 704-370-3262

Fax # 704-370-3370 or 704-370-3377

Agency Website: <http://www.ccdoc.org>

Central Piedmont Community College – Charlotte

P.O. Box 35009

Phone # 704-330-4855

Fax # 704-330-4821

Agency Website: <http://www.cpcc.edu/>

Charlotte Mecklenburg Senior Center – Charlotte

3925 Willard Farrow Drive, Charlotte, NC 28235

Charlotte, NC 28215

Phone # 704-531-6900

Agency Website: <http://www.cmseniorcenters.org/>

Church World Service – Durham

112 S. Duke Street, Suite 4B, Durham, NC 27701

Phone # 919-680-4310

Fax # 704-531-6008

Agency Website: <http://www.cwsrdu.org>

Church World Service – Greensboro

620 S. Elm Street, Suite 315, Greensboro, NC 27406

Phone # 336-617-0381

Fax # 336-617-3654

Agency Website: <http://cwsgreensboro.org/>

Cross Cultural Resources, Inc. – Charlotte

4801 E. Independence Drive, Suite 608, Charlotte, NC 28212

Phone # 704-469-5638

Fax # 704-208-4018

Agency Website: <http://www.ccrlanguages.com/>

Elon University School of Law, Humanitarian Immigration Law Clinic – Greensboro
Mailing Address: Humanitarian Immigration Law Clinic; P.O. Box 5848 Greensboro, NC
27435

Physical Address: 210 W. Friendly Avenue Greensboro, NC 27401

Phone # 336-279-9354

Fax # 336-272-9667

Agency Website:

<http://www.elon.edu/eweb/law/academics/Immigration%20Clinic.xhtml>

Guilford County Schools – Greensboro

120 Franklin Boulevard, Greensboro, NC 27401

Phone # 336-370-8982

Website: <http://gcsnc.com>

Interfaith Refugee Ministry – New Bern

Fax # 336-370-8939

1233 Colony Drive New Bern, NC 28562

Phone # 252-633-9009

Agency Website: <http://www.helpingrefugees.org>

Interfaith Refugee Ministry – Wilmington Sub Office

25 S. Third Street Fax # 252-638-7570

Wilmington, NC 28401

Phone # 910-264-7244

Fax # 910-762-5115

Agency Website: <http://www.helpingrefugees.org>

International House – Charlotte

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 5429, Charlotte, NC 28299-5429

Physical Address: 1817 Central Avenue, Suite 215, Charlotte, NC 28205

Phone # 704-405-0962

Fax # 704-334-2423

Agency Website: <http://www.ihclt.org>

Lutheran Services Carolinas – Child & Family Services – Refugee Resettlement Services
– Raleigh

616 Hutton Street, Raleigh, NC 27606

Phone # 919-832-2620

Fax # 919-832-9876

Agency website: <http://www.LSCarolinas.net>

Montagnard/Dega Association, Inc. – Greensboro

611 Summit Ave., Suite 10, Greensboro, NC 27405

Phone # 336-373-1812

Fax # 336-373-1832

Agency Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/mdagreensboronc/>

New Arrivals Institute – Greensboro

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 5315 Greensboro, NC 27435

NAI Main Office: 2616-G Lawndale Drive; Kirkwood Commons Greensboro, NC 27408

New Arrival School: 101 W. Vandalia Road, Greensboro, NC 27406

Phone # 336-937-4701

Agency Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/newarrivalsinstitute/home>

Senior Resources of Guilford – Greensboro

PO Box 21993, 301 East Washington Street, Greensboro, NC 27401-27420

Phone # 336-373-4816

Fax # 336-373-4922

Agency Website: <http://www.senior-resources-guilford.org/>

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants – Raleigh

The Raleigh Building; 5 West Hargett Street, Suite 202, Raleigh, NC 27601

Phone # 919-334-0072

Fax # 919-334-0077

Agency Website: <http://www.refugees.org/about-us/where-we-work/north-carolina/>

World Relief Refugee Services of North Carolina – High Point

155 Northpoint Avenue, Suite 102, High Point, NC 27262

Phone # 336-887-9007

Fax # 336-887-5245

Agency Website: <http://worldrelief.org/highpoint>

World Relief Refugee Services – Durham

801 Gilbert Street, Suite # 209, Durham, NC 27701

Phone # 919-286-3496

Fax # 919-956-5918

Agency Website: <http://worldreliefdurham.org>

APPENDIX G: IRB INFORMATION SHEET

IRB Information Sheet

Project Title: Refugee women and higher education across space, place, and time

Principal Investigator: Cathryn Bennett

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Delma Ramos

What is this all about?

I am asking you to participate in this research study because you are a refugee or someone who works or volunteers with refugees who can add to understanding how refugee women think about education. This research project will only take about 10-11 hours and will involve you participating in two interviews (60-90 minutes each) and one observation (1 day). Your participation in this research project is voluntary.

How will this negatively affect me?

No, other than the time you spend on this project there are no known or foreseeable risks involved with this study.

What do I get out of this research project?

You and/or society will or might contribute to how refugee women think about education in the U.S.

Will I get paid for participating?

You will not be paid for participating.

What about my confidentiality?

We will do everything possible to make sure that your information is kept confidential. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. We will store your information securely on Box, a cloud server provided by UNCG, and your names will not be used when results of this research are shared. Identifiable information, like your name and contact information, will be kept separate from all other data related to the research. If you so choose, a pseudonym will be used to refer to you when the data from the research are shared.

For Internet Research, include this wording:

Because your voice will be potentially identifiable by anyone who hears the recording, your confidentiality for things you say on the recording cannot be guaranteed although the researcher will try to limit access to the recording as described in this section.

What if I do not want to be in this research study?

You do not have to be part of this project. This project is voluntary and it is up to you to decide to participate in this research project. If you agree to participate at any time in this project you may stop participating without penalty.

What if I have questions?

You can ask [Cathryn Bennett, (336)953-8410, cbbenne2@uncg.edu AND Dr. Delma Ramos (336)334-3437] anything about the study. If you have concerns about how you have been treated in this study call the Office of Research Integrity Director at 1-855-251-2351.

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL REFUGEE WOMEN

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview related to refugee higher education access. I am grateful for your time and sharing your expertise. You had a chance to review the consent form to participate form that I previously shared. Do you have any questions?

As a reminder, you may choose to end your participation at any time during the interview. Also, I will record the interview for later reference. Only I and my faculty advisors will have access to the recording, data, and any of its uses since this interview is for educational purposes only.

Note: These interviews may occur in the form of sit-down conversations or as active interviews (e.g. while doing an activity like walking, cooking, playing with children, etc.) depending on participant preference.

Research Questions

- How do refugee women talk about higher education?
- To what extent do refugee women's forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?
- How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Section 1 – Intention: to express interest and create a comfortable, conversational dynamic

Q1: How are you? How is your family?

[category: service, support, programs]

Q2: What can you tell me about your life in the U.S.?

(probe) What is a typical day like for you?

(probe) Do you interact with other refugees here? (If so, where? If not, why is that?)

(probe) Where do you go when not at home?

(probe) How do you travel (walking, bus, driving, with a friend)?

(probe) Are you working? (If so, where? If not, what job would you like to do?)

(probe) Who do you talk with? (children, children's teachers, family, neighbors, case workers?)

Section 2 – Education in Resettlement

Q3: Do you go to school here in the U.S.?

IF YES:

(probe) How does school here relate to your life?

(probe)

(probe) Do you take English classes?

Are they important to you? [why/why not]

How does English class help you?

(probe) Do you take jobs skills classes?

Are they important to you? [why/why not]

How do they help you?

IF NO:

Would you like to go to school in the U.S.?

What are your learning interests?

Is it a problem to take the classes offered, e.g. English, job skills? [childcare, transportation, working hours conflicts?]

Section 3 - Compulsory & Higher Education Experiences

Q4: What did you want to be when you were child? (Alt phrasing: how did you imagine yourself as an adult when you were a child?)

(probe) Where did you live before the U.S.?

(probe) Elaboration – was that your home or another place?

(probe) Did you go to school there?

(probe) Did you go to school in your home country / temporary location?

(probe) What was your school like?

(probe) Did your teachers help you?

Q5: Did you have to stop school before you came to the U.S.?

(probe) If yes:

-What level of education did you complete?

-Why did you have to stop? [fleeing violence, no access in temporary resettlement locales, expenses, family care giving/responsibilities]

-What kept from you continuing with school?

-Did you want to continue with school?

-Did you want to finish your education?

-Did you want to attend university?

(probe) If no:

-What level of education did you complete?

-How were you able to continue with school?

-Did you have access to schools after you left your home country?

-Who helped or encouraged you to continue?

Q6: When you were young, did you plan to go to college?

(probe) If yes, why? What did you think it would be like? Did others encourage you to go?

(probe) If no, why? Who went to college when you were young? Do you know why they did it? Was it a good thing for everyone when you were a child?

Q7: Did you ever think about your studies when you traveling away from your home?

Q8: Have you thought about college since you came to the U.S.?

(probe) Has anyone you know gone to college in the U.S.?

(probe) Has anyone talked with you about going to college since you came to the U.S.?

Q9: Tell me about your child / children's education.

(probe) What grade level(s)? Which subject(s) are preferred?

(probe) Do they talk about college?

Q10: Do any refugee support people talk to you about education for you or your child/children?

(probe) What kind of education do they discuss with you?

(probe) Are those relevant to you / your child/children?

Q11: If you could study anything, what would it be and why?

(probe) why?

Potential Follow-up Questions

You used the (word/phrase XYZ). Can you tell me more about what that means to you?

Do you find that the educational opportunities for college-interested refugees are sufficient? Why, why not?

What can the local community do to support knowledge and resource sharing about higher education opportunities for refugees?

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL RESETTLEMENT WORKERS

Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview related to refugee higher education access. I am grateful for your time and sharing your expertise. You had a chance to review the consent form to participate form that I previously shared. Do you have any questions?

As a reminder, you may choose to end your participation at any time during the interview. Also, I will record the interview for later reference. Only I and my faculty advisors will have access to the recording, data, and any of its uses since this interview is for educational purposes only.

Purpose

The purpose of this conversation is to learn more about refugee higher education access that is directly or indirectly involved in your work. Questions central to this study relate to opportunities, supports, and barriers to refugees' ability to know about and access higher education. For this conversation, "higher education" may refer to high school completion or GED programs, technical and vocational education and training, or four-year college and university education. Although it is an essential aspect of refugee supports, this study does not include educational opportunities for children and school-aged (K-12) youth and instead focuses on educational opportunities, programs, and pathways for any adult, aged 18+.

Research Questions

1. How do refugee women talk about higher education?
2. To what extent do refugee women's forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?
3. How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?

Interview Questions

Section 1 – Intention: to express interest and create a comfortable, conversational dynamic

[category: service, support, programs]

Q1: Can you tell me about your primary responsibilities?

(probe) Do you coordinate with other areas or people within your organization?

(probe) What about coordination beyond your organization / with other organizations?

(probe) Does law or policy come up with these areas?

Q2: How do educational opportunities for clients come up or not in your work?

If NO:

(probe 1) Why is that?

(probe 2) Who is responsible for education opportunities in your organization?

If YES:

(probe 1) How did education come to be part of your work?

(probe 2) Does anyone else support clients with educational opportunities?

(probe 3) Can you describe those educational opportunities?

Section #2 – Express ignorance to explore educational opportunities for refugees

[category: educational needs, values, access]

Q3: How would you describe clients' educational backgrounds?

Q4a: What are clients' educational needs once they are here?

Q4b: Do clients talk about their educational needs?

(probe 1) What kinds of education do clients want?

(probe 2) What does education mean to your clients? [values]

(probe 3) Is education important to your clients?

Q5: If you had unlimited time and resources, how would you approach education for refugees?

(probe) Any idea why this isn't possible right now?

(probe) Is policy a limitation?

Q6: Do you know of higher educational pathways (community college, vocational training, certified training, college, university) for clients?

If NO:

(probe 1) Why do you think that is the case?

(probe 2) Do you think higher education pathways are needed?

If YES:

(probe 1) How did you hear about these?

(probe 2) Do clients know about them?

Section #3 – Explore intersection of clients' identities at the individual or group level with higher education access

[category: identity, peer networks, social cohesion, bonding]

Q7: Are some clients more successful than others in accessing education, perhaps based on an aspect of their identities (gender, ethnic identity, small vs. large local network)?

(probe 1) Can you estimate which client groups are the least successful in accessing educational opportunities? Why is that?

(probe 2) Which groups are most successful? Why?

Q8: What is your understanding of how clients' identities support or hinder accessing education?

Q9: How do clients support each other in obtaining education?

(probe 1) How are these peer networks helpful for education?

(probe 2) Does peer-to-peer information sharing result in misinformation about education?

Q10: Do issues with transcripts or formal documentation of education inform clients' ability to access education?

Section #4 – Explore intersection of social perceptions of clients' identities at the community or national level with higher education access

[category: citizenship, culture, xenophobia]

Q11: How does the local or national culture relate to clients' educational access?

Q12: Does Federal funding influence the topic of education for refugees in your work?

Q13: Does citizenship inform clients' educational access?

Q14: Do you wish you had more resources related to education for clients?

Q15: How do local perceptions of clients relate to accessing education?

Section #5 – End on a familiar, positive topic for the informant

[category: asset- and/or deficit-based perspective]

Q16: How do educational offerings align with the empowerment model of self-sufficiency?

Q17: Anything else you'd like to add? Other questions?

Potential Follow-up Questions

You used the (word/phrase XYZ). Can you tell me more about what that means to you?

To refugees? To educational provider partners you work with?

Do you find that the educational opportunities for college-interested refugees are sufficient? Why, why not?

What can the local community do to support knowledge and resource sharing about higher education opportunities for refugees?

APPENDIX J: OBSERVATION GUIDE REFUGEE WOMEN

Research Questions

- How do refugee women talk about higher education?
- To what extent do refugee women’s forced migration journeys influence how they talk about higher education?
- How do refugee women express their understandings of immigration law and its impact on higher education access?

Observation Guide

(Note: For multi-person observation environments, I will use one guide per person.)

Participant Name:	
Date of Observation:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	
<i>Field Notes:</i>	
Person (Role, interactions, attitudes, mood, posture)	
Location (Setting, objects used / not, in relation to other places)	

<p>Actions</p> <p>(What do they do, say, gesture?)</p>	
<p>Affect / Words</p> <p>(Emotion, words indicative of emotion)</p>	
<p>Ambiance</p> <p>(Overall feeling of place; tone of interactions, mood among others; cultural elements)</p>	
<p>Other</p>	

APPENDIX L: TIMELINE

<i>Phase I: Preparation</i>		
Researcher Responsibility	Participant Responsibility	Timeframe
Submit IRB application	NA	4 weeks August 13, 2021
Seek Participants (refugee women & resettlement workers)	Ask and answer questions Review and offer IRB information sheet Offer contacts of other potential participants	6 weeks Sept. 15-Oct. 25, 2021
<i>Phase IIa: Semi-Structured Interviews (Refugee Women)</i>		
<i>Initial Observation</i>		
Researcher Responsibility	Participant Responsibility	Timeframe
Identify times and places for interviews. Prepare to offer explanations, if needed Write reflective memos	Consent to audio recording Feel at ease and able to discuss Offer contacts for resettlement workers close to them	6 weeks Sept. 15-Oct. 25, 2021
<i>Phase IIb: Semi-Structured Interviews (Resettlement Support Workers)</i>		
Researcher Responsibility	Participant Responsibility	Timeframe
Identify times and places for interviews.	Consent to audio recording Feel at ease and able to discuss	6 weeks Sept. 15-Oct. 25, 2021

Prepare to offer explanations, if needed Write reflective memos		
<i>Phase III: Observations (Overlapping with Interviews)</i>		
Researcher Responsibility	Participant Responsibility	Timeframe
Observe all included participants in their daily lives/work. Take notes and create memos	For refugee women: engage in everyday life For resettlement workers: engage in business as usual	6 weeks Sept. 15-Oct. 25, 2021
<i>Phase V: Initial Inductive Analysis (Overlapping with phases I-III)</i>		
Researcher Responsibility	Participant Responsibility	Timeframe
Complete all transcription (interviews, reflective researcher memos) Begin inductive coding Create initial codebook	NA	2 months Oct.-Nov., 2021
<i>Phase VI: Final Analysis</i>		
Researcher Responsibility	Participant Responsibility	Timeframe
Refine and finalize codebook Begin final analysis	NA	1 month Nov., 2021

APPENDIX M: MEMBER CHECKS

As an introductory note, I kept running memo documents for each participant and an additional memo for the research overall, each with dated entries. Many of the digital files are comprised of transcripts of recorded audio memos I made to myself immediately following interviews and observations as well as the hand-written jottings from my pocket notebook. The memo excerpts presented here are edited to show continuity from holding an initial belief developed through interactions with participants that were then corrected, refined, or nuanced through the process of member checks.

Sample 1: Clarification during/after interviews

Memo Excerpts September 25, October 2, October 23, 2022

Just in case it was challenging to hear any of what Rosie had to say, she talked about in her home country, not being able to go to school past sixth grade. She said she learned in French through sixth grade and she really liked it but she had to stop at that point because to quote, "her country was no good." She shared that, she stopped school because there was shooting, and war broke out and the schools were even shut down. It wasn't so much a choice on her part. As it was the reality that the schools weren't opening. And then she and her family left her country and spent time on the run and gone away from home. This is an example of interrupted education and how variable access to education in places of temporary resettlement are also tied up in that.

I asked if she went to school in [redacted, country of first asylum]. She said, no, not at all. She was just working, only trying, to make some money, to be able to survive. She shared that she had a bucket that she would fill with fruit and take and sell on the street. She also shared that when she got to the US, she went to [redacted, non-profit] for about three months and studied English there. But after three months their bills started piling up. And she and her husband

realized that they needed to go to work. So they started working; Rosie was also pregnant at the time and so was only able to work for a short period and but now she works three days a week and the morning in the factory. And her husband works night shift. So in the mornings, he takes her to work. Watches the baby. While the older kids are at school, goes to pick her up and then she takes over childcare and he goes to work. She really wants to go to [redacted, community college] to study English and maybe even computer science because she heard that that's a good job. In the interview Rosie said, "Not pregnant, next year? Then, I am going to school!" So she seems pretty committed. She's wanted this for a long time, I think.

Today, Rosie had more questions for me start with. I think she and her friends and neighbors were talking about why I'm talking with them about these things. But they usually talk about things that matter together, so that feels good. She wanted to know exactly what I'm doing and why. Why am I doing this? Why do I care? What does it really matter anyway? It was super tough at first cause these are the things I ask myself too. So I tried to share that I want other people, with power, money, to see refugees as people, just folks trying to do right by their families and make a decent life in a place that doesn't really care beyond getting them tucked away, hidden in far parts of the city. She just sat there for a minute, and I didn't know what to make of her face, so I just sat there, too. She said, "No questions today. Today, you help me read." I stopped the recording. So instead we practiced reading with a citizenship exam prep book. She was smiling when I left and asked me to come back next week, on her day off when she wouldn't be so tired.

Soon as I got in the door, Rosie's kiddos were swarming everyone, bubbly, laughing, asking for hugs. Love spending time with them! She wasn't having it, though. Kids got sent over to the park and big kids put in charge. It wasn't just her kids either. There had to be like 5 extras

today but all kids I know from the neighborhood. In the quiet we talked through our check in routine. How's the family, mom? Everybody healthy? Did you talk to your case worker about that form yet? The pace was gentle, sweet, comfortable between us and only punctuated by the occasional neighbor kid at the door asking after the others before going off after them to the park. I asked a followup question from our last talk. But Rosie had something she wanted to share. She asked me again like last time. Why are you doing this? "So how will you help the refugee people? Are you going to tell Other people, yes, How they can access to education?" I said I didn't know exactly how just yet but that the big picture is to try to make a change, to make sure everybody who wants to can go to school. A portion of the transcript is helpful here:

Cathryn: So what I want to do is I will write a paper and give it to lawmakers in North Carolina, and say, this is the condition. And these are the things you need to do to make it easier. Like, for example, any place that offers education for refugees has to have childcare. Because most people have families, right? You've got a little one. So if you want to take class, someone has to look after the little one. You know what I mean?

Rosie: The problem I have is languages. I just don't catch it all, understand... we don't have documents, education document, for example. You go to apply a job. You cannot get it. They say you don't qualify because you can't qualify without documents." When someone take care of the little one and one go to class, who will go to the job? ...we have many challenges, and challenges for me I wish to start it but I don't know how I can make it work.

Cathryn: So you want to go to school, right? But the job and the money is the problem?

Rosie: Want? Yes! [pause] Can? I don't know... Tomorrow, I go to the factory.

From the start I thought Rosie wanted to get back into school. First English then something else. I still think she desires this, but I don't know. She seems so aware of the immediate needs she and her family have. So it sounds more today like school is this impossibility that she wants in a perfect world but the daily requirements of working, earning, paying bills keep it out of reach.

Sample 2: Clarification during the within case analysis

Memo Excerpts November 14 & December 22, 2022

I'm thinking through the interviews with workers these past few days and sitting with the wide variation in their thinking about self-sufficiency, the values embedded with these beliefs, and how they are conveyed to women refugees. It's striking how strict the VOLAG workers seem to be when it comes to upholding the value of work, especially knowing that the work they talk about as enabling a fresh start to life and getting refugees "on their feet" refers to hard labor in rough conditions with little to no path to advancement, increased pay, or safety from exploitation. The participating refugee women I've already interviewed are working in the chicken plant, boxing mills, as cleaners, and at a corrugate factory.

The support workers at the non-profits recognize that these paths are hard for work and that the refugees they've known who start working in these places generally don't leave until

they are injured. In one interview, Andromeda conveyed that “self-sufficiency is used as a deadline to stop providing services in many ways.” It was hard to read this coming from Andromeda, who maintains friendship and mentorship relationships with her past clients. I wondered if she personally espoused this idea was referring to other (Rigid? Strict? Dehumanizing?) approaches to interacting with refugees around self-sufficiency. In our first interview, she shared that she acts as an “Auntie” to her past clients’ children and still visits with them and fields questions about things like taxes, big purchases, and if telephone calls asking for social security numbers are “true.” This depiction Andromeda conveyed didn’t track with treating a refugee’s job as an “deadline.” I need to ask her what she meant.

We recently had the chance to talk through this again, at a local Middle Eastern eatery, one of our favorites. So many people there knew Andromeda, the workers and patrons. The conversation started with catching up about current events and reflecting on how different the response to government-affiliated Afghans was playing out when compared with even Syrians or Haitians. The conversation turned to Andromeda’s comment about self-sufficiency; I shared that the comment was unclear to me, and I asked if she could say more about what she meant. Andromeda stood by the point but clarified that “the part that just rubs me the wrong way is when self-sufficiency is only tied to employment.” That’s when she elaborated that there could be so many other ways to advance this resettlement priority including attention to refugees’ “interests and hobbies and the [redacted, specific non-profit] approach tied to other concepts and help with them like making doctor appointments, help getting around town.” The main thing that Andromeda said was that it was a problem for her that resettlement service agencies believe that once “they are employed, they are self-sufficient.”