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**Opportunity Discrimination:**

**Resettlement Efforts Made by NGOs in the United States**

Sarah Rauf

School for International Training Graduate Institute, World Learning

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10 August, 2023

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Student Name: Sarah Rauf

Date: July 24, 2023

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**List of Abbreviations**

AI	Artificial Intelligence
HSR	Human Subjects Review
IRB	Institutional Review Board
NGO	Non-governmental organization

### **Abstract**

Social identity plays a key aspect in life. This research tests whether homogeneity between refugees and their host communities correlates to the immigration process and resettlement success. The analysis helps form a conclusion that people want to help those who look like themselves before those who appear more foreign. This is related to the central theories of social identity and prejudice stemming from stereotyping. Data collection comes from interviews with staff at a number of NGOs in the United States. The immigration and resettlement policies of these NGOs have been researched, and members were interviewed on the reformation of their policies. The data was then compared and contrasted to inspect differences among the organizations and any link of racial diversity or other social identity to the lenience of policies for certain groups of refugees. The analysis concludes that there is a level of positive correlation to homogeneity making immigration easier for certain ingroups of people. The distinctiveness of the theory of varying social identities being applied to the immigration of refugees is important to discuss, for discrimination is a concept we need to battle for the equality of humanity. The data and conclusions from this conduction can be further used in future research of social identity and discrimination refugees face.

*Keywords:* discrimination, refugees, homogeneity, migration, resettlement, social identity



### **Background and Study Objectives**

The purpose of this research paper is to explore the degree to which refugee resettlement success is attributed to high levels of homogeneity between refugees and their host community. To assess this correlation, interviews were conducted with a total of 5 staff members at refugee resettlement agencies across 3 American cities. Interview subjects were asked to reflect on three topics: 1) their experiences managing differences in identity among refugees and host communities, 2) the degree to which these differences interfere with resettlement efforts, and 3) if they do, strategies that have been or could be adopted to counter these challenges. The research stems from theories of discrimination and subconscious socio-psychological bias towards certain ingroups and outgroups based on stereotypes, prejudice and history. Previous research demonstrates that while there are more educational resources and policies to encourage inclusion, there are still major gaps between different minority groups (Boudreau et al., 2022, Raheem Lay, 2022). This study may help organizations adapt policies for themselves, or it may result in a sociological understanding of why the organizations do not agree upon certain issues. Finally, this examination is exceptionally important to further understand and improve future policies of, not only the NGO's being interviewed, but also large companies and corporations.

### **Significance**

This research adds to the broader data collection of social identity, immigration policies and reformations, and forms of discrimination. Other scholars can use the data to further support their work among these topics where needed. This work may intellectually impact the way scholars and other people interpret discriminatory procedures, even in forms outside of migration, and could encourage all to be more conscious about diverse identities when it comes to equity. General

society will benefit by interpreting the study for their enlightenment and research purposes. Spreading awareness and the enlightening of society can further advance social development through discussion of topics analyzed in this paper in terms of socioeconomic status, racial issues, segregation, and related fields. The awareness can lead to various events, like activism and major policy changes, in areas outside of migration as well, like general day to day businesses wanting to modernize their human resources department to new social norms as time goes on.

The United Nations sustainable development goal number 10 is “reduced inequalities” which specifies the need for immediate action to ensure safe migration processes for refugees (United Nations, 2023). This study aims to reach this goal by analyzing psychological research and providing data for the race related theme associated with the goal. Data from local NGOs goes a long way in the world of development in terms of the global impacts it can create. For example, political movements of the European parliament, like Volt Europa, work towards inviting refugees from more diverse backgrounds into the states rather than only Ukrainian refugees, so this work can be beneficial when they need to draft briefs to encourage their movement’s progress in policy change. The African Union, United Nations Human Rights Council, the Norwegian Refugee Council, and many other organizations can benefit greatly from this work in similar ways when they are requesting aid, marketing, or recruiting people to work in the field.

The development of social injustices may be recognized, and awareness is a step that can lessen the inequality amongst groups of people. The transformation of discrimination based on social identities may be impacted through the enlightenment of challenging prejudice stereotypes that people may have subconsciously. This can be used in communities around the world. The significant qualitative gaps this conduction covers includes spreading awareness to the research community and organizations in fields which have many diversity and development goals.

**Qualifications and Positionality of the Researcher**

I am a Muslim-American graduate student studying diplomacy and international relations in locations around the world. My family and I immigrated to the United States from Southern Asia in order to improve our opportunities. My background and experiences with migration, Islam, and Asian culture had sparked a passion in me to study immigration policies and to help ease the transition for Middle Eastern refugees arriving in the United States. The topic of this research regarding refugee resettlement in the United States holds a personal significance for me due to my identity and empathy I feel towards Syrian refugees and Muslims in general. Witnessing events leading to discrimination regarding the immigration process of certain refugee groups has led me to recognize the unequal treatment and systemic biases that exist. This has driven me to comparatively study policies and resettlement opportunities related to various refugee groups to further understand and address the challenges faced by marginalized communities.

To avoid bias, interviews were conducted in the same manner across all organizations and qualitatively compared to previous research correspondingly as well. Also, specific refugee groups were not mentioned in the research, rather a generalization of biases from the interview subjects were referred to for the purpose of limiting personal biases.

## **Literature review**

The literature review provides a comprehensive examination of intergroup prejudice, bias, and the challenges faced by people in contemporary society. Drawing from a wide array of scholarly articles and research studies, this review explores the prevalence of stereotyping and discrimination in the context of refugee resettlement. It combines these topics by delving into the impact of intergroup biases on the lives of refugees and the agencies involved in their resettlement efforts. Moreover, the review discusses the barriers encountered by refugees during the resettlement process and the urgent need for inclusive policies and strategies to address these challenges. This highlights the persisting issues of discrimination and the necessity to foster empathy, understanding, and inclusivity to create a more welcoming environment for those seeking refuge. Finally, this section also sheds light on the vast scale of forced migration, driven by conflicts and crises, which calls for urgent attention and a global response to support the millions of displaced people worldwide.

### ***Intergroup Prejudice and Bias***

Social psychology supports the theory that bias and stereotyping are a natural perception of others based on what we know as humans. It also supports the idea that we generally feel more comfortable with people that are homogenous to us, or resemble our common genetic phenotypes (Simon, 2011). This idea was tested and supported by members of the American Psychology Association in Washington D.C.: Drew S. Jacoby-Senghor, Stacey Sinclair, and Colin Tucker Smith (Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2015). To summarize their research, they had compared across 4 different studies who people of different races choose to select to be part of their innermost circles. In all cases, people naturally selected people who looked more similar to them, or were the exact

same race, thus supporting their hypothesis that implicit homophily, or the connections formed by individuals with similar backgrounds, is natural and very much existent. Further studies continue to support the idea that there is a preference for people in the groups as one rather than completely foreign people (Stephan, 2010). Favoritism is suggested more within ingroups because we want to identify ourselves as a part of a more meaningful social group; this helps us feel better about ourselves (Abbink & Harris, 2019). Furthermore, it is “evolutionarily functional” to categorize members of different groups as “potentially dangerous” (Jhangiani & Tarry, 2015). This translates to a negative connotation on the influx of refugees because they are perceived as threatening to jobs and government benefits, carrying diseases, and changing social norms to name a few (Hagan, 2020; Parekh, 2020).

Intergroup prejudice and bias persist as significant issues in contemporary society (Eichstaedt et al., 2021). Despite the existence of various policies in the United States aimed at promoting diversity and inclusiveness, there remains a substantial level of stereotyping that often goes unacknowledged (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Chippendale, 2022; Hirsh & Kornrich, 2008). Psychological evidence supports the notion that intergroup biases are closely linked to ignorance, which stems from false beliefs and common stereotypes (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2008; Kelly et al., 2010; Lester, 2005). Engaging in discussions and understanding the impacts of growing up in diverse environments has facilitated cultural globalization and contributed to the resolution of numerous discrimination battles (Barlow, 2003; Pileggi, 2019). Unfortunately, several scholars claim that instead of the conflicts due to discriminatory matters truly coming to an end, they are just being much less discussed, thus undermining the value of cultural diversity and encouraging social and political actors towards turning a blind eye so that every person turns towards a more “modern” or “westernized” society (Bonam et al., 2018; Brown, 1985; Lindner & Hawkins, 2012).

Despite awareness of racism and a shared understanding that discrimination based on physical appearance is wrong, prejudice and discrimination persist, even in matters concerning human rights. Social identity theory explains that humans naturally distinguish between situations as a survival mechanism, often feeling safer within familiar environments and social groups. They are more likely to feel safe in their comfort zone where they have familiarity, according to Esra Cuhadar and Bruce Dayton's article: *The Social Psychology of Identity and Inter-group Conflict: From Theory to Practice* (Cuhadar & Dayton, 2011). The theory, as discussed by Cuhadar and Dayton, provides insights into international events and analyzes how certain ingroups may exhibit favoritism while subjects outgroups to unjust prejudice.

### *Refugees and Discrimination*

Refugees are often met with hostility as they attempt to settle in new countries, driven by concerns such as fear of terrorism and job scarcity for citizens, which appear to be worsening over time (Le Normand, 2020; Näre et al., 2022). While tragic historical events related to conflicts stemming from discrimination are taught in the U.S. school system, efforts to prevent biased policies in the workforce and other spaces have not yielded significant societal impact. Recent news has shed light on racial discrimination and strict immigration policies in the United States, drawing attention to the discrimination faced by racial and ethnic minorities (Boudreau et al., 2022). Despite the desperate circumstances that force individuals to flee their homes, refugees encounter suspicion and animosity upon arrival. Concerns about terrorism, amplified by media narratives, perpetuate a perception that refugees pose a threat to national security. Simultaneously, citizens worry that accepting refugees will exacerbate competition for jobs, heightening economic anxieties (Alexseev, 2006; Institution & West, 2010). Regrettably, the historical lessons taught in

schools are often insufficient to dismantle deeply ingrained biases in society. Efforts to promote inclusivity and fairness in the workforce and other realms have not yielded the transformative outcomes necessary to counteract discriminatory attitudes. This failure is glaringly evident in the recent revelations about racial discrimination and the restrictive immigration measures employed by the United States. As society continues to grapple with the challenges faced by refugees, it is imperative to confront and address the underlying fears and misconceptions that fuel hostility (Raheem Lay, 2022). By fostering empathy, promoting education, and implementing inclusive policies, societies can strive towards creating a more welcoming environment for those seeking refuge.

The issue of racial socioeconomics further exacerbates the challenges faced by minority populations, who are often born into disadvantaged societies lacking the same privileges afforded to white Americans by not being born into societies with the same resources as them (Hardaway & McLoyd, 2008). This is one example of how the economic systems in the US themselves are prejudiced, and it reflects when people of color are more likely to undergo judicial punishments than others (IPNO, 2020). “Modern-day policing that can be traced back to ‘Slave Patrol’... with one mission: to establish a system of terror and squash [colored] slave uprisings with the capacity to pursue, apprehend, and return runaway slaves to their owners” (NAACP, 2021). When applied to the immigration of refugees, national defense may perceive individuals of color from other countries as a potential threat due to differences in opinions, like religion or culture, which can lead to conflicts. Refugees and asylum seekers flee their countries due to inhabitable circumstances making their status a human rights issue, not a quest for imposing their cultures and opinions on others. Ethically, they all should be assisted regardless of socioeconomics, of which the racially dissimilar groups are usually lower on the gross domestic product (GDP) scale as well. The beliefs

shaped by these circumstances may be accurate, yet unfair, and should not be further reinforced if discrimination is to be prevented in the future. To break the cycle of stereotypes, it is essential to regularly implement better strategies that promote understanding and inclusivity.

Previous research highlights the resettlement process of refugees and mentions the several examples of barriers and other challenges that refugees face when trying to establish themselves in host countries. These barriers include gender discrimination, linguistic complications limiting access to educational opportunities, socioeconomic barriers, societal barriers, differences in religious beliefs affecting healthcare access, deficiency preparatory programs, and lack of psychological support due to excruciating circumstances such as separation from family. (Darawsheh et al., 2021; Hatoss & Huijser, 2010; Sheikh-Mohammed et al., 2006). Scholars agree that the United States and other host countries need to reevaluate their policies to ensure the self-sufficiency of resettled refugee communities from an early stage (Watkins et al., 2012). As highlighted by an article by Lui et al. (2019), “although resettlement allows for refugees to live in a safer place, there are many issues that accompany this drastic life change”. The article argues that there is a lack of support and perceived discrimination based on non-homogenous social identities faced by refugees that enter host countries when trying to escape from the dangerous situations of their origin country (Lui et al., 2019). The general danger and disruption to mental health makes it an excruciating process to resettle out of one’s comfort zone. The findings from previous research, including an in-depth analysis of databases unveil common themes of these challenges (Vermette et al., 2014). The *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care* recommends solutions to ease daily situations refugees face, such as expanding access to English language schools, allowing more time for resettlement instead of expecting immediate employment, and reducing public fees for healthcare and transportation (Kaplan et al., 2021).



### Contemporary Refugee Resettlement Efforts

Since World War II, there has been a displacement of refugees that has required international attention, with devastating events such as conflicts and crises leading to unprecedented levels of forced migration. (Zucker, 1983). During the war, there were over 60 million refugees displaced, and right now in 2023, there are over 108 million displaced people recorded by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2023). These refugees come from varying situations of unsafety in their origin countries around the world, like the violent government in Syria, violence of poverty in Afghanistan and Sudan, and the armed conflict in Myanmar, to name a few examples (Haidari, 2022; Refugee Council of Australia, 2021; USA for UNHCR, 2022). This is a stark rise of nearly 20 million from the previous year alone. The largest and most recent displacement of people since World War II is the situation faced by the Ukrainian people as a result of the Russian invasion in 2022 (Mbah & Wasum, 2022). In light of dire circumstances, it is crucial to recognize the immense scale and urgency of the global refugee crises, driven by various conflicts and socio-political challenges.

The Refugee Act of 1980, as highlighted by Anastasia Brown and Todd Scribner in their article in the *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, solidified the relationship between resettlement agencies and the U.S. federal government. The act established political asylum in U.S. law, created the refugee resettlement program, and implemented a series of assistance programs to facilitate refugees' transition into American life (Brown & Scribner, 2014). The article, *Unfulfilled Promises, Future Possibilities: The Refugee Resettlement System in the United States*, discusses the government's involvement with the refugee resettlement process through its partnership with NGOs and private-public partnerships that still exist to this day. Brown and Scribner (2014) note

that the government has not fulfilled its duty to these agencies, resulting in a lack of support and resources that places pressure on the agencies responsible for the efficient resettlement of migrants. Recent administrations have “treated refugees as a burden and potential threat to our nation, rather than a source of strength, renewal and inspiration” (Kerwin, 2018). Consequently, the promised support from the government to aid refugees has fallen short, as the United States prioritizes its self-interests and values above humanitarian considerations.

**Research design & methodology**

This paper investigates how homogeneous social identities relate to the ease of immigration resettlement for refugees in the United States. Specifically, the study interviews staff members of refugee resettlement organizations in order to better understand the challenges posed by identity differences between refugees and their host community during resettlement and identifies strategies to alleviate these difficulties.

To ensure a comprehensive examination within the constraints of this research, five individuals from three different cities were interviewed. The cities were randomly selected based on the convenience of contacts that the researcher had in each city. Careful consideration was given to selecting non-governmental organizations whose mission statements were in harmony with the research's purpose. Specifically, organizations engaged in immigration-related work concerning refugees were chosen. The researcher personally contacted and invited interviewees via email. Volunteers for the research were required to possess substantial knowledge of mission statements, processes, and general aspects of their respective organizations. The interviews that were conducted with the members of the selected NGOs were recorded and subsequently qualitatively compared. The aim was to gain insight into how similarities and differences in the collected data correlated with potential discriminatory policies that may impede the immigration and resettlement of specific groups of refugees. During the interviews, resettlement policies were discussed in detail along with personal opinions on what bias may look like in refugee communities and what each organization is doing to fight those biases and possible discrimination that may arise. The interview process involved engaging specialists in the field, comparing various policies, and conducting qualitative analyses based on extensive research. Propositions were then formulated regarding the influence of homogeneity on immigration policies and resettlement.

Convenience sampling was used to select organizations and participants for this study. This was the most practical and efficient method given the time constraints of the research. The NGOs were simply chosen based on their availability and existing connections within the researcher's network rather than trying to scientifically analyze the entire world of refugee resettlement agencies. The selection process also aimed to address the research question by having various degrees of racial diversity; this means that each organization selected resettled either one type of refugee group or multiple racial groups of refugees. Having organizations with varying backgrounds added a more diverse pool of opinions rather than each interviewee discussing the general resettlement process. It has helped in the analysis by comparing the assorted responses to the interviews. It should be noted that racial diversity in this study refers to the nationalities of refugees within the organizations, which correlates with their ethnicities and religions, as countries of origin often have distinct populations with unique social identities. Apart from racial diversity, no other factors influenced the selection of NGOs, which were primarily focused on refugee resettlement in the United States.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted based on about 8 carefully crafted questions tailored to each member of the organization to obtain the most information from each perspective (see Appendix A for a copy of the interview protocol). The duration of each interview ranged between 30 to 45 minutes. By strategically selecting questions, potential bias was mitigated, and ethical considerations were upheld to ensure the comfort and wellbeing of the interviewees.

Data management involved recording, transcribing, and coding the interviews. The interviews were conducted via the widely used Zoom platform and were recorded for further analysis. To transcribe the interviews accurately and efficiently, an online artificial intelligence

tool (AI) called Otter.AI was employed. This specialized tool is designed specifically for transcribing voice meeting notes. To commence the analysis, coding was employed to identify common topics and themes across the literature reviews and interview transcripts. Coding consists of reviewing the transcripts and literature and deciding on a topic name for every few paragraphs. The transcripts generated by Otter.AI were automatically and manually subject to coding by identifying frequent words and themes within the transcripts which enabled a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the data. The coding process facilitated the identification of common ideas across all interviews, providing valuable insights into the influence of homogeneity on immigration policies and potential avenues for policy implementation. The most common words depicted across all of the interviews include: refugees, immigration, resettlement, and biases, which are related to common themes found in the literature.

The qualitative analysis was conducted by examining differences in responses and establishing connections with existing literature to draw meaningful conclusions. Comprehensive background information, such as qualitatively critiqued data from well-respected journals, was considered to enhance the analytical process and deepen the understanding of individual cases.

The chosen methodology provided a systematic and comprehensive approach to investigate the relationship between racial/religious homogeneity and the ease of immigration resettlement for refugees in the United States. Through careful participant selection, data collection, and a qualitative analysis, the research aims to shed light on the challenges faced by refugees and inform policy recommendations for more effective resettlement practices.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The following analysis presents an in-depth examination of the research findings and their implications, exploring their alignment with the existing literature on intergroup prejudice, refugee resettlement, and the challenges faced by refugees. To contextualize and support the analysis, the data collected through the interviews is compared to the existing literature on intergroup prejudice, discrimination, and refugee resettlement to identify areas of convergence or divergence. The literature review, conducted prior to the interviews, examined relevant studies and scholarly articles that shed light on the prevalence of intergroup biases, and the impact of discriminatory practices on refugee communities, and the barriers faced by refugees during the resettlement process. In doing so, a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by both refugees and the agencies involved in their resettlement efforts will be gained, as well as the strategies employed to address these challenges by highlighting areas where improvements can be made to enhance the resettlement process and foster greater inclusivity.

### *Discrimination Preliminary to the Immigration Process*

One of the key themes explored in this research is the influence of stereotyping outgroups based on their social identities during the migration process to the United States, with a focus on varying federal policies. All resettlement interviewees acknowledged the presence of bias against people based on their physical appearance and nationality. For instance, Interviewee 1, a member of an NGO in Washington, D.C., highlighted that there is racial discrimination regarding immigration of refugees into the area. When asked how the degree of homogeneity/heterogeneity impacts his work, he mentions:

There is definitely a degree of discrimination. This is all about race. Because [the displaced Ukrainians] are European and white and popular right now, and since we are allied with them in war our people think maybe they should be expedited through [the borders]. It's racism and favoritism. Border patrol and politicians are more okay with it... (Interviewee 1).

Interviewee 1 reinforces the role of race in shaping immigration policies, with recent events like the Russo-Ukrainian War bringing this issue into sharper focus.

Further insights from interviewees 2 and 3, who represent a displaced Ukrainian-only NGO, reveal that the Ukrainians are not officially referred to as refugees as Syrian or Sudanese immigrants are, but the politically correct term is “displaced persons” (Interviewee 2; Interviewee 3). This distinction allows them easier access to the United States because they are not looking to necessarily resettle for the long term as someone with refugee status is. However, some individuals have faced challenges as the Russo-Ukrainian War continues, leading to instances of overstaying their acceptance into the US.

Interviewee 4 mentions that the needs of non-white races are “not ready to be addressed, and it isn't deliberate, but it is because of how the system was built. There is race discrimination. It may not be on purpose. Systems have been built in the US based on race indirectly” (Interviewee 4). Interviewee 4 then gives the example of generational wealth and discusses those who had the privilege of generational wealth during times of slave trade have an advantage to society automatically regardless of any external factors. Hardaway and McLoyd (2008) also discuss the socioeconomic disadvantages for certain groups based on factors like generational wealth in the literature review. It is difficult to fix a system that has been set up based on favoritism in the first place. Another example is the criminal justice system disproportionately targeting communities of

color because it was established to target these communities, also mentioned in the literature. “Modern-day policing that can be traced back to ‘Slave Patrol’... with one mission: to establish a system of terror and squash slave uprisings with the capacity to pursue, apprehend, and return runaway slaves to their owners” (NAACP, 2021). These examples support the theory that systems are corrupt to begin with, and it reflects among the world of NGOs and their policies regarding topics on societal discrimination.

Finally, interviewee 5 adds that those who come to new host communities do often tend to feel out of place, and it is a matter of the heterogeneity from the community. It is not a matter of the NGO or within the NGOs range of duties, so interviewee 5 did not add more to the answer of racial comfort within the community.

### *Stereotyping During Resettlement into Host Communities*

This section delves into the resettlement process and explores the biases immigrants encounter upon arrival in their new host communities. All interviewees mentioned that there are general perceptions of what refugees and displaced persons may be like by host communities. These generalizations are usually that the immigrants are uneducated or coming to the US to take advantage of benefits and jobs. When asked how each NGO combats these stereotypes, they mentioned a range of local cultural workshops, training and regular meetings with volunteers, searching for partners for advocacy, information sessions, increased points of interaction, and combating the “white savior complex” with self awareness training. The workshops are led by experts in both the local US culture and the culture of those who have immigrated in order to compare and contrast both cultures. These experts and volunteers are educated and can be sensitive to both cultures when addressing migration. Sometimes, the information sessions are led by former



refugees themselves to help their fellow ingroup members adjust to their new lifestyles with ease. The self awareness trainings are conducted by professionals to help volunteers be more mindful when handling sensitive situations regarding refugees, like PTSD or other issues that people may be undergoing.

Notably, Interviewee 4, who comes from a small town with a predominantly Caucasian demographic, noted that while the community is generally welcoming, immigrants may feel uncomfortable due to the limited cultural diversity and challenges finding ingroups. This data, along with what is frequently discussed in the literature, strengthens the theory of social psychology which posits that people are more likely to feel at ease with those with similar characteristics to them. Even among friendly communities, there is favoritism towards those who have similar characteristics to oneself.

### *Final Adaptation to a New Life*

The theme of this section entails life once the resettlement process is complete and the migrants feel more comfortable in their new countries. The average duration of the resettlement process is 7 years and encompasses various aspects, including securing furnished housing, stable employment, education for children, and adapting to local social life and culture. There were no relevant factors related to social identity that made the resettlement process easier for one family over another. The factors that have such an impact on resettlement are less related to social identity and more situational. Interviewee 4 mentions “typical things individuals struggle with, like obviously a single mom will have more trouble.” Interviewee 4 continues to add factors like success regarding housing provided by the federal government and access to a good transport to work has an impact on resettlement. His colleague, interviewee 5 adds that “a bigger family size

and skill sets for [finding] employment” play a role as well as luck as to whether or not there is already an existing homogenous community to connect with for support.

All interviewees agreed that having an existing ingroup community facilitates a smoother transition. Interviewee 1 emphasizes this statement by stating “any similar [racial] community, of course, makes things easier for people in general, not [only] immigrants.” Because of the wide diversity within cities in the US, there is no one group that adjusts more easily once they are already on American soil just by racial characteristics because there are communities for most immigrants. Once in the US, the immigrants are given equal benefits from the government, regardless of race. However, interviewee 1 mentions this does not include societal challenges they may face, like “bullying at schools” because of differences in culture, during the resettlement process. These challenges are outside of the scope of work for the NGOs interviewed, so this research has very limited information on post-resettlement. Several articles in the literature support the idea that we, as humans, are more comfortable with those who have similar experiences and characteristics to us. This is a common theme of social psychology which is very prevalent in this research.

### **Study Limitations**

Aside from the positionality stemming from a person of Middle Eastern roots as mentioned above, another limitation that may be a factor in this study is that the NGOs being interviewed were from 3 US cities, rather than a wider array of many cities and NGOs nationwide. The reason for this narrow pool of case studies is the time and resource constraint that may skew data, but it is important to consider that this study was performed to support the much broader theory of race and its impacts on opportunities. It may not reflect the policies, intentions, diversity or inclusion

of the rest of the entire United States. Because this is a small sample and unlikely to be accurately representative of all opinions, it is vital to make clear that this is theory-building research to form correlations to a greater theory rather than a conclusive study.

It is important to note that placement of refugees is not a task that is performed by any of the NGO's interviewed. Rather, it is done by the federal government itself, so there is a gap in the data regarding placement of refugees once they arrive on American soil. The only data collected on this topic is that there are general cities that large groups of immigrants settle in. For example, there are many Somali immigrants in Wisconsin and Minnesota, Ukrainians generally settle in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, and central Africans gravitate towards Arizona while other places, like Washington D.C. and New York City are a hub for all groups of refugees. Further understanding on why these people are placed where they are would require additional research.

Finally, as mentioned in the analysis, the NGOs have a limited scope of work, so questions stemming from the central research question of refugee resettlement may not be thoroughly answered. The central question of whether or not homogeneity between host communities and refugees has an impact on the migration process and immediate resettlement success was supported by the research. Resettlement satisfaction over a longer course of time (approximately 7 years) was not explored in detail in this study.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The primary aim of this study was to explore the degree to which refugee resettlement success is influenced by the level of homogeneity between refugees and their host communities. The study suggests ways to be conscious of sensitive policies within all types of communities for fostering inclusivity and facilitating a smoother resettlement process for refugees, which is a significant broader impact of this project. By recognizing and understanding the impact of homogeneity on the experiences of refugees, communities can take actionable steps to create a more welcoming and supportive environment, even outside of policy reformation. As mentioned earlier, everyone has had different obstacles and privileges that have shaped their lives, and these policies are not an exception; they have also been created due to the best morals people think they have (Chippendale, 2022). This is also significant in terms of coming to humane reformations in terms of inclusivity for refugees.

After investigating extensive literature and analyzing the abundance of data collected, the research question of whether or not homogenous features impact the resettlement process for immigrants to the US has been supported. It seems as though there is a positive correlation, according to the interviewees from the research.

One actionable recommendation for communities hosting refugee populations is to prioritize cultural exchange and intercultural understanding. Encouraging interactions and shared experiences between refugees and host community members can help break down barriers and dispel stereotypes. Community-based initiatives, such as cultural festivals, language exchange programs, and community gatherings, can provide opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to connect on a personal level. These interactions foster empathy and compassion, leading to a stronger sense of community and a deeper understanding of one another's experiences.

Furthermore, community leaders and policymakers should actively engage with resettlement agencies and NGOs to develop inclusive policies that address the unique needs of refugees. This collaboration can ensure that refugees have access to necessary resources, such as while facilitating their integration into society. It is essential to recognize that every refugee brings with them a wealth of skills, talents, and perspectives that can enrich the host community as well. By creating policies that value and utilize these strengths, communities can promote a more inclusive and vibrant environment for everyone.

Education and awareness are also vital in promoting inclusivity within host communities. Implementing educational programs that provide accurate information about refugees' backgrounds, cultures, and experiences can help dispel misconceptions and prejudices. Schools, community centers, and local media can play a crucial role in fostering understanding and empathy among community members. When individuals are well-informed, they are more likely to support and advocate for inclusive policies and practices.

In addition to these recommendations, ongoing dialogue and communication between host communities, resettlement agencies, and refugees themselves are vital. Regular feedback sessions and community forums can provide a platform for open discussions, enabling residents to express their concerns, share their experiences, and collaborate on finding solutions. These forums also allow refugees to voice their needs and contribute to the development of policies that directly affect their lives.

Finally, recommendations I would make for future research is to try to collect data from the federal government as opposed to NGOs for a more top down approach. This could also answer many of the questions that stemmed from this research, like why the government places certain groups of refugees where it does or why certain refugee groups are allowed expedited access into

the US while others are waiting for years. It should be kept in mind that studying this topic from a federal and international perspective is tedious and time consuming.

In conclusion, the success of refugee resettlement hinges on embracing diversity and inclusivity within host communities. By actively engaging in cultural exchange, implementing inclusive policies, promoting education and awareness, and fostering ongoing dialogue, communities can create an environment where refugees feel valued, supported, and integrated. Through these efforts, host communities can truly become places of refuge, offering hope, opportunity, and a brighter future for those seeking safety and a new beginning.

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## **Appendix A**

### Interview Protocol

This appendix includes the forms attached to the Human Subjects Review (HSR) submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure an ethical interview protocol. The forms include the HSR application, a proposal of the project, the participant consent form and blank interview questions, my CITI program completion certificate for Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research (1 - RCR), and an email draft sent to the participants. The proposal consisted of the abstract, an excerpt from the literature review, and a brief overview of the methodology. Following are the verbal consent form, email draft sent to participants, and interview questions.

#### **Email Draft for Participant Recruitment**

Hello, [name],

My name is Sarah, and I am a student at SIT Graduate Institute completing my Masters in Diplomacy and International Relations. I am working on my end of the year thesis on how the degree of homogeneity between refugees and their host communities in the US impact integration success. I am looking for 2 people in 3 NGOs across the US, and [city] is one of the cities I am doing the research in.

I received your contact information from [contact, or skip this sentence if it's a direct contact of mine] who suggested that you or your colleagues may be able to connect with me for a brief interview regarding your opinions on the topic.

Please let me know if you are available for a 45 minute recorded zoom interview anytime in the next few weeks.

Thank you,

Sarah Rauf

### **Capstone Interview Questions**

1. Please describe your organization's mission and the work you do to achieve that mission.
2. How do you define success regarding refugee placements?
3. What happens with host communities after resettlement in terms of assistance with housing, jobs, and other opportunities? What exactly does resettling look like?
4. How do you decide where to place refugees?
5. Do certain groups of refugees have more success during resettlement than others?
6. Social psychology supports the idea that we naturally gravitate towards people that resemble similar characteristics to us. I'm interested in exploring this dynamic in light of your work. How has the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity specifically impacted your organization's work to settle refugees?
7. What are examples of biases you've observed within the resettlement host communities that you work with?
8. What steps have you taken to address bias, or other barriers to your refugee resettlement efforts?