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Abstract: *This paper discusses three factors that contribute to a lack of 'common information' among refugees, academic researchers, and humanitarian program workers. The first is power differentials between refugees and many individuals who work with them. Refugees produce information agentively (especially through personal communications), but are also subjugated as targets of research, beneficiaries of humanitarian projects, and contingent recipients of legal protection. The second factor is transitoriness. Refugees often experience prolonged uncertainties about where and how they will live. Researchers and program workers, however, often spend short times 'in the field'. They often negotiate their jobs' learning curves in relative independence, with limited opportunities to share key basic aspects of their work with others or collaborate to explore more complex ones. The third factor is a lack of common ground around what information is valuable to share, rooted in the abovementioned factors and differences among academic disciplines. To strengthen collaborations, we propose increasing direct involvement by refugees in academic and program development; longer-term engagements and relationship development; and collaborations among all involved in the further development of theoretical frameworks.*

Introduction

This paper discusses how information is used by refugees, academics and program workers in conflict and post-conflict zones. We define information broadly as knowledge which is written, spoken or otherwise conveyed amongst people. Its presence is ubiquitous in the 'information age', but in relation to seeking asylum it is notable how often knowledge must be shared among people with radically different social positions. With so much written documentation produced in relation to asylum, why is it often difficult to share what we know with each other – and what can be done to better understand and support refugees and asylum seekers? The short answer is that the differing goals and positions of members of each group contribute to a lack of common ground around what information they value. This paper explores these differences, how they contribute to informational priorities, and how closer collaboration might facilitate more mutually beneficial knowledge sharing and the creation of 'common information' usable by all.

Information is submitted to substantiate asylum claims. Gathering information is a crucial part of program workers' and academic researchers' jobs as they produce research and implement programs ostensibly in service of people seeking asylum. For researchers, information 'gaps' shape research questions and frame how publications are shaped. Identifying what is 'known' about a topic allows researchers to formulate what is 'unknown'. Information is the substance of journal articles, needs assessments, program evaluations, and border control databases. It is a foundation upon which policy, research analysis, and humanitarian engagement are based and while it is transferable, attempts to share information often leads to tensions. While refugees' and humanitarians' divergent goals has been discussed (e.g. Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010; Yarrow, 2008), less attention has been paid to the implications these different positionings have for how and why information is obtained and interpreted.

We identify three underlying and intersecting reasons for tensions around information. The first is power differentials between refugees and those who work with them. Refugees share the fact that they left their homes because of insecurity. They otherwise do not necessarily share the same education, class, gender, race, cultural background, religion or nationality. While they may travel far from home, they often lack the privilege to do so safely held by Western aid workers and researchers. The second reason relates to different experiences of time. Many academics and program workers stay in the 'field' for periods of weeks or months, where they expend effort negotiating steep learning curves in relative independence with fewer resources to share what they have learned with others who are in similar positions, or build on it to address more complex problems. This contrasts with the protracted waiting experienced by most refugees around the world (Brun, 2016; UNHCR, 2006), whether they live in camps or urban areas (Malkki, 1995a). The third reason is the breadth of disciplinary traditions in which studies of refugees are situated and a lack of shared theory among them. Bakewell (2007) described refugee research as "notoriously under theorised" (p.13), a view shared in two other journal editorial introductions (Landau, 2007; Voutira and Doná, 2007). The field lacks established theoretical mainlines to make more abstract comparisons amongst different refugees' experiences and situations.

With awareness of the challenges, we argue for the importance of establishing collaborative approaches to better produce written material that can be understood and used

by all involved. Our suggestions include an increase in direct involvement by refugees in research and program-planning and implementation; in projects that promote long-term, sustained engagement and relationship development; and in the development of interdisciplinary-comprehensible theory.

1. Refugees, information, and power

This section discusses information that comes into play in and around refugees' lives, and the power systems in which it is embedded and of which it is constitutive. Beginning with an examination of challenges associated with the label 'refugee' itself, it discusses how refugees, program workers and researchers are subjects and agents within institutional and informal power structures. This includes current research on refugees' use of personal communication devices.

1.1. Information and institutional power

Information is intimately connected with the goals to which it is put to use. It inherits biases and emphases of those who produced it, both in its content and how it is organized (e.g. Bowker and Star, 2000; Barocas and Selbst, 2016). Official records are often used for pursuing the goals of the nation-states that create them (Graeber, 2015). Much of the information created around refugees is used to exercise power over them, for instance in order to assess the credibility of the evidence presented in asylum claims (Madziva and Loundnes, 2018; Jubany, 2011; Thomas, 2006). This also becomes evident in the widespread practice of biometric identification in Europe (Ajana, 2013).

Contentions around the terminology of the refugee bear out how intertwined challenges of power are with information (here, a fundamental piece of 'information' being the definition itself). In the United Nations' definition (1967), a refugee is someone who:

> "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted... is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the

country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

Individuals who wish to be protected as refugees by signatories of the Convention must conform to this definition - or, more specifically, must provide evidential information that they conform to it. The definition refers to the individual's subjective experience of "fear", but governmental assessors determine if that fear is "well-founded". Jubany (2011) and Souter (2011) describe how UK immigration officers come to subjective decisions on whether the information presented meets the criteria. In France, refugees' experiences may be 'authenticated' as traumatic by psychoanalysis (Fassin and Rechtman, 2008). In practice, whatever mortal or visceral fears the asylum seeker experiences, their credibility is established on terms set by countries offering protection.

The inadequacy of the definition to cover the present group of migrating people reflects the assumptions built into it. As Zetter describes, refugee movement motivations often include a mixture of seeking safety and better economic opportunities (2007, p.183). As Malkki (1995b) discusses, the UN definition was modelled on post-World War II Europe and the then pervasive ideas regarding nation-states and military conflicts. Presently, the global majority of displaced persons are from and residing in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, where countries are configured by European powers whose colonial legacy lives on within them. Bauman (2007, p. 32) suggests these "latecomers to modernity" - those in countries that the West tends to describe as 'developing' - "are obliged to seek *local* solutions to *globally* caused problems - with at best a meagre, but more often than not non-existent chances of success." The movement of people seeking safety in another locality is one way individuals attempt a solution.

Hayden (2006) discusses how the terms of 'need' required by the earlier mentioned definition create a division in which conspicuously exercising agency is considered evidence that protection is not needed. In the official narrative, "[refugees] are not permitted to care about pull factors and are defined purely in terms of overwhelming reasons to leave." (p.474). To the institutional structure, the refugee is defined by necessity and a lack of choice: the refugee must flee, whereas economic migrants – conceived as rational actors – move of choice. At the same time, even asylum seekers fleeing relatively 'clear cut' instances of threat

(for example, the Syrian conflict that began in 2011) may face scrutiny, doubt, and long waits for their claims to be processed. Given these pressures and expectations, the act of framing one's experiences to meet the 'image' or legal definition of the refugee to acquire benefits (such as the legal right to presence in a country) may be read as an act of agency, even as asylum applicants remain at an overall power deficit.

Demonstrating that one is in need of international protection may seem straightforward, but in practice becoming a 'refugee' involves fulfilling a set of criteria (legal, and sometimes popular) to which the applicant must conform, may ambiguously meet, and is often not permitted to act too agentively as this would negate the vulnerability necessary to fulfil expectations tight to the label.

1.2 Refugees' communications with journalists and program workers

An emphasis on suffering is further aggravated by the interests of researchers and journalists alike, who tend to be interested in dramatic aspects of migration and gravitate toward refugees who most fit (or are willing to play toward) stereotypes (Andersson 2014, p.53-55). This perpetuates a sensationalized image of refugee life. Refugees themselves may not see direct or indirect benefits from the work of researchers and program workers who ostensibly arrive to 'help'. Many grow frustrated by interviewers (including journalists and academics) who "take our stories", a wording that appears in both Foster and Minwalla (2018. p.59) and Andersson (2014, p.48). Foster and Minwalla's (2018) research found that Yezidi women who survived ISIS captivity felt pressure to talk to journalists undermining their personal and emotional security as well as that of their relatives. At the same time, they believed it was their duty to share their experiences, even though their expectations for international humanitarian and military responses to their stories were greatly unmet, and they had no recourse to hold anyone accountable for unmet promises and expectations.

1.3 Information, power, and program workers

Information is often a pragmatic part of program workers' jobs. It is produced while creating, implementing and justifying programs. Input can come from direct research, program evaluations and reports. Program workers are agents of information creation. Yet they are also subject to information, facing expectations to communicate their actions in terms

acceptable to superiors and funders that are not necessarily otherwise relevant to their work or the refugees who it is supposed to benefit.

Program workers seek to help refugees, yet they are constrained by the following factors. Often early career professionals (even those holding advanced degrees) learn the bulk of their roles and the context in which they operate on the job (Autessere, 2014). During this learning process, they design programs navigating between clients' needs as they are perceived from the operational level; the funding priorities of donors; and headquarters-level strategic priorities. Governmental agencies and NGOs adopt policies which promote their values and principles (such as democracy, human rights, and gender equality) (Anderson et al, 2012, p. 51-52). These may be in conflict, as when personal desires to help may be at odds with different governments' desires to increase local economic development and discourage economic migration. Gulrajani (2017) explores the motivations of bilateral aid investment as a "dialectic relationship between humanitarian and strategic interests" in which national aims are often a stronger driving force than humanitarian interest in the well-being of non-citizens (p.376). Additionally, program workers navigate rapidly changing funding priorities and donor "fads" as governmental and international NGOs continuously shift their interests, making sustained engagement on priorities difficult (Anderson et al, 2012, p. 59). The workers themselves balance between these formal, overarching aims of international aid; unspoken goals and moral values they personally hold onto; and the goals of their home countries' governments to which they might feel they have to abide. As Hilhorst and Schiemann describe in their study of Médecins Sans Frontières Holland, program workers shape organizational principles through daily practice as they negotiate how to apply their principles within their lived daily reality and operational constraints (2002).

In recent years, many NGOs have expected increased accountability for resources used and the impact (both positive and negative) their activities has on the operational contexts. Two key moments in this were the establishment of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action in 1997 and the 1999 publication of Anderson's *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War*. NGO accountability processes often falls under the heading of 'Monitoring and Evaluation' (M&E) and involve exercises for measuring programmatic effectiveness and impact. Depending on program design, M&E systems compile raw program data through surveys, focus groups, and interviews, which is

used to generate donor reports or internal assessments that feed back into future program design (see "Ends Goals" of the American Evaluation Association, 2014).

Chapman et al. (2016) describe M&E as often being an ad hoc process, generated by key individuals or organizations both in the field and in headquarters, based on feedback from beneficiaries and program workers judgment and experience (p.43). Producing these reports are one way in which program workers navigate the agendas of the organizations for which they are working and the funders that make their work financially possible. The information priorities and collection methods applied in delivery and evaluation of these projects however tend to be donor-driven, and bear limited resemblance to realities that workers see on the ground. They may be focused on single dimensions that appear somewhat arbitrary, for example, measures of the number of food bags delivered - without providing attention to how this fits into the overall dietary quality of life of beneficiaries or collecting data on seemingly simple and important factors such as gender or other demographic details (Chapman et al, 2016, p. 43). As asylum applicants may seek to 'fit' the definition of refugee under ambiguous circumstances, program workers may seek to mould outputs for external consumption that are drawn from complex situations.

Meanwhile, more ground-relevant insights gained through M&E may not be utilized outside of the evaluative process. Information generated through M&E often rests on hard drives or email archives not made available to researchers or program workers engaged in similar work. While NGOs have a responsibility to protect individual data, sharing data regarding overall economic impact, conflict assessments or program impact could prevent duplicative efforts. Decisions regarding information are influenced by power relations. For example, as a program worker and researcher, Watne experienced conflicts regarding information sharing. After completing one research project, the funding NGO specifically withheld detailed findings that could have been used for improving refugees' wellbeing in order not to jeopardize its own relationship with the host government.

Similarly, informational outputs of the process are rarely accessible to the programs' intended beneficiaries. Anderson et al (2012) found that those on the receiving end of aid programs reported that "aid providers often do not communicate clearly about decision-making processes, project plans, the selection of beneficiaries/ participants, and actual results

achieved—and that this leads people to speculate about what is being hidden and why" (p. 26). Aid tends to be perceived as a one-way flow of resources from those who have privilege to those in need of help. Beneficiaries often have no mechanism to feed back into program design, to contribute to and challenge the interventions that are used. Cea and Rimington (2017) discuss the challenges that prevent what they call "for impact" organizations from involving "end users" or beneficiaries in their program design (p.103). There are entrenched formal power structures in decision-making and program design in which donors, executive directors, and program staff are unwilling to challenge their assumptions. Cea and Rimington further attest from their interviews that "this environment encourages for-impact practitioners to infantilize, dehumanize, ignore, and even fear its end-users" (p.106).

Overall, the concentration of decision-making power in the hands of donors, foreign project designers, and program implementers reinforces a dynamic in which foreign knowledge and information priorities supersedes the interests of locals and beneficiaries and may not reflect on-the-ground realities.

1.4 Refugees' personal communications

Recent research and media coverage has gravitated toward the figure of the 'tech savvy refugee' – smartphone in hand as he or she navigates long, dangerous journeys while staying in touch with distant family (Economist 2017, O'Malley 2015, Gillespie et al 2016). Indeed, Information Communications Technologies (ICTs) such as the Internet, social media and the mobile phone create many communication opportunities for refugees within (and outside) institutional structures of immigration. With the rise of digital communications, researchers have examined how refugees in camp and urban settings communicate with globally-dispersed friends and family (Gillespie et al 2016, Cassar et al 2016, Witteborn 2014, Witteborn 2015, Harney 2013 and Leung 2011). These technologies, however, provide both opportunities and potential dangers to refugees, as they may be employed to more closely observe them and regulate their movement (Gillespie et al, 2016). Wilding and Gifford write that ICTs foreground "issues of power: on one hand, the power held by governments and other bodies to employ ICTs as instruments of surveillance and control over forced migrants and, on the other hand, the potential of ICTs to empower forced migrants in their quest for

agency and control over their current and future circumstances" (2013, p.495-496). Gillespie et al (2016) summarize similarly:

> Smartphones are an essential tool and also a threat for refugees. They are essential in that they allow them to navigate their journeys, use translation tools, access vital services (legal, medical, food and shelter, support networks) and to keep in touch with friends and family, especially those refugees who have already made the journey. But smartphones are also a threat because the digital traces that they leave behind make refugees vulnerable to surveillance by state and non-state actors, and intimidation by extremist groups. (p.5-6)

Gillespie et (2016) further highlight how European governments could assist in providing information to help refugees travel safely, but which they decline to do out of political priorities and challenges - a critique which could be extended to many other governments and institutions. There have been reports of plans by Frontex and Eurosur to monitor asylum seekers as they travel (Taylor and Graham-Harrison 2016) but as for now – as far as the authors are aware - how or if this has been implemented has not been discussed in academic literature or news media. In detention, however, personal communications devices are often confiscated as part of larger systems of control as Leung (2011) described in Australia and Lemaire (2014) and Debono (2013) in Malta.

The veracity of information to which refugees have access is equally a matter of concern. Jack (2015) and Turner (2004) found word-of-mouth communication and rumors to be common in, respectively, a Burmese refugee camp in Thailand and a Burundian refugee camp in Tanzania. Matters discussed relate to both the immediate and the international. "Often they would know more about recent world politics than I did, only listening to the BBC world service when I had time," wrote Turner (p. 236) of his research community. Jack wrote of camp communication that "[c]amp residents tended to have poor knowledge of how to navigate the resettlement process, … [residents used] a cyclical pattern of word-of-mouth communication among camp residents..." (p.252). Though communication is abundant, reliable information is lacking. Twigt noted that urban Iraqi refugees in Jordan used social media to fact check news viewed on television news sources (2016, p. 36). The BBC described how the unreliability of information sources erodes trust in institutions like the UNHCR or

governments (2016), and how face-to-face communication with other refugees was often more trusted than information distributed through official sources (p.23-27).

This section discussed refugees and program workers are both agents and subjects of information, as they seek, generate and are subject to it. Overall, much of the information produced 'about' them is not necessarily 'for' them, and is often used to constrain their movements. The UNHCR definition of 'the refugee' seeks to define who is worthy of international protection, and evidence of meeting the definition is presented through evidentiary information. Information Communications Technology enables refugees to communicate across distances and seek information. At the same time, practical, reliable information from official sources remains difficult to find, and ICTs and biometric identification may be used to monitor and restrict refugees' movements. Program workers employ information to plan programs, yet are subject to justifying their work through M&E terms that may not correspond to the practicalities of their work supporting refugees. The following section describes how transitoriness comes into effect during programmatic and academic work with refugees.

2. Transitory experiences in the field

As described above, refugees seek information for their own use and become sources of information as subjects of research, nation-states, and program beneficiaries. This section discusses a second communication challenge outlined that is deeply related to the power differentials discussed in the previous section. A notable contrast exists between the transitoriness of academics and program workers who come and go into 'the field', and refugees' often prolonged experiences of legal, social and personal limbos.

The challenges researchers (including academics and journalists) face for communication may seem small in light of those they study. 'Western' researchers occupy a privileged position of international mobility that become even more tangible and evident in non-Western countries and camp settings. Refugees' movements are controlled, while researchers' lives are marked by mobilities, choice and the ability to drop in and out of the field (Korff et al 2015). They have the financial means, institutional organizational support, and necessary legal documents required to engage with refugees' situations at relative will and then return 'home'. This power differential is highlighted in quote from Foster and

Minwalla (2018)'s Yezidi participants about journalistic attention: "they come from everywhere, and they take our stories and they don't do anything for us" (p. 59).

In addition to reflecting privilege, however, the transitoriness of refugee research and program work creates challenges for the work itself, including allowing professionals to develop skills over long careers. As mentioned in the above section, many program workers learn 'on the job', and foreign organizations may allocate comparatively large financial resources to bring in high value workers for relatively short periods of time only. Many journalists, volunteers, and researchers may not have experience with refugees before they arrive at the field site. They may change careers as funding opportunities come and go. Sometimes, the 'field' itself disappears or radically changes. An example is the island of Lesvos, which became a major site of arrival in Europe through the summer of 2015, resulting in the construction of an infrastructure to support them (see Hernandez 2016 as well as the editorial of this special issue) that was reduced in scope as arrival numbers decreased.

Transitoriness for program workers is often a necessity that is driven by short term contracts, challenging field conditions, greater advancement opportunities available in headquarters locations, and the challenge of maintaining social relationships or raising children in conflict affected areas. These and other challenges tends to encourage experienced program workers to leave after brief work experiences and their replacement by younger, less experienced staff (Autesserre, 2014). Korff et al (2015), for example, found only a 40% retention rate (returning for a second assignment) in a study of 1,955 Medicin Sans Frontieres (MSF) Holland field staff.

A high turnover results in at least two informational challenges. One, they make for missed opportunities to explore situations in-depth. Two, they exacerbate a steep learning curve on site, as previously established knowledge must be re-learned as new staff enter old positions. Logistical information is lost, and frequent turnovers stifle relationship and trust development among foreign workers, their local counterparts and the refugees themselves.

3. Disciplinary differences

The previous two sections outlined differences in regard to goals and informational priorities among refugees, the agencies that govern their movements and the program workers that seek to support through program implementation. This section focuses on academic

researchers, whose diversity and breadth of approaches further contributes to the labyrinthine nature of communication.

3.1 Information sharing among academics

Limited communication among researchers is exacerbated by the field of Refugee Studies and Forced Migration Studies' well-documented lack of theoretical unity (Bakewell 2007, Landau 2007, Voutira and Doná 2007). Large-scale studies on refugees' technology use do not necessarily attempt a theoretical grounding. For example, Gillespie et al.'s 2016 paper on refugees' communication technology use while traveling (discussed above) does not situate its information within larger theoretical debates.

Different researchers working to address refugee-related issues from different perspectives is in many ways positive. Another effect, however, is that researchers from diverse groups have different requirements, assumptions, understandings, and expectations for what is known and unknown, what constitutes a novel research topic. PhD students may be supervised by academics without method or subject area knowledge of refugees. Oft-cited texts in one disciplinary approach – such as Malkki's *Purity and Exile* (1995a) which among many anthropologists would be considered a classic study on forced displacement – may not be as widely known to researchers from other backgrounds. Chatty and Marfleet (2015) trace the concept and origins of the various strands of 'Refugee and Policy Studies':

> In spite of this broad interest, or perhaps because of it, key conceptual issues have seldom been addressed, with the result that there is a lack of clarity on matters of fundamental importance. Greater awareness of general theory and greater analytical rigour is required urgently on issues that bear upon forced migration. (p.1)

That such "fundamental" topics continue to be unaddressed speaks to the challenge of doing so. As earlier discussed, the terminology of 'refugee' itself is both emblematic and reflective of the challenges of multidisciplinary research. This also becomes evident of number of different strands of migration research. Researchers tend to situate their research under different headings with their own particular histories, technical and theoretical focuses, including 'forced migration', 'refugee studies', and 'undocumented migration' (DeGenova 2002). Many strains of research and terminology bear the imprints of power relations - as

Hayden writes, "it has remained impossible to define refugees in such a way that legal, ethical, and social scientific meanings of the term could align," (2006, p.472). As described in Section I, criteria used to assess refugees' legal 'worthiness' may not reflect on-the-ground realities. In turn, policy-oriented work may not reflect sociologically or anthropologically useful categorizations, or - as Bakewell (2008) argues - may be the best way to uncovering policy-useful information. While the social and political implications of these labels and the work they support is important to consider, the key emphasis here is a more basic one: a practical challenge exists for knowledge sharing among different actors who may or may not share similar political mind sets.

3.2 Information sharing beyond academia

Academics seeking information about or from refugees are likely to approach program workers to access research populations. As early-career program workers are developing their own contextual knowledge and experience, they may find themselves serving the role of gatekeepers, mediating between refugees and academics and journalists who seek to research them. At the time of this writing, during two years working in program implementation, evaluation, and research in Kurdistan, Northern Iraq, Watne has fielded over a dozen requests from academic researchers and journalists seeking on-the-ground knowledge and refugees to contact. Requesters ranged in knowledge about the context and about forced displacement and they came from a wide variety of disciplines. As a gatekeeper, Watne struggled with the desire to support research on refugees and concerns for the effect of research on research populations with which she worked.

Watne felt a need to maintain her own relationships and credibility, which could be compromised by introducing unprepared or insensitive researchers to colleagues and friends. She also felt a responsibility to protect vulnerable and traumatized populations and limits to her time available. To informally vet potential collaborators, she assessed the context of the introduction (including how well she knew the person who had referred that particular person to her); how well-organized the request was; the stage of research (whether exploratory, design, or implementation); the institutional support the requester was receiving (whether it had been approved by a University Internal Review Board, a news publication, or was being done by a freelancer); the requester's approach to sensitive research topics with vulnerable

populations (such as experiences of trauma and violence); and, finally, the knowledge of the local context of Kurdistan, Iraq, the requester was demonstrating. Gatekeeping was, for Watne, an ad hoc process in which credibility was difficult to measure and based informally on these criteria, as well as general availability and the interest of local contacts to meet researchers.

Discussing ethical standards can help demonstrate knowledgabilty on topics of importance to program workers. Program workers and researchers may have differing priorities, ethical frameworks, and vocabulary. International NGOs utilize ethical frameworks such as Do No Harm (Anderson, 1999) and the Core Humanitarian Standard (Sphere Project, 2011). Academics may follow university-bound ethical guidelines such as those laid out by the Association of Social Anthropologists (2011). These frameworks, however, often share many core values which includes a commitment to minimizing harm. Humanitarian practitioners and researchers most often share the same ultimate goals of helping refugees, though the articulation and implementation of this aim varies.

Program workers and researchers face different pressures and deadlines, even if they may be relatable. In a conflict context, programmatic deadlines are driven by donor funding cycles interact with conflict developments on the ground that are impossible to predict. Academic calendars, as with programmatic work demands, may also be independent of the on-the-ground situation. For example, during the writing of this paper, deadlines in the journal schedule coincided with major on-the-ground context changes including the Kurdish offensive to retake Mosul from ISIS in spring of 2016 and shifting borders after the Kurdistan Independence Referendum in fall of 2017, causing delays and communication difficulties as programmatic and security concerns took precedence over research and writing. Other seemingly mundane challenges in collaboration include coordination calls across time zones, late night and early morning meetings, and connectivity issues due to unpredictable electricity or internet service in Iraq. Researchers should recognize that while program workers may in principle agree to provide support, they may lack the time to provide in depth contextual knowledge, context orientation or the number of contact introductions on which academics may rely on them. When contact is made and information exchanged, ethical researchers and program workers may strive to react to uncertain on-the-ground situations to the best of their ability.

Tensions between academics and researchers may involve conflicting priorities over knowledge aims. For a program worker, it may be difficult to see value in academic questions that serve to advance a discipline, but do not provide concrete benefits to research subjects. Workers in the role of gatekeeper have concerns that the vulnerable populations with which they work may be re-traumatized by insensitive or unprepared interviewers. Bloch notes that immigration status is a key factor to vulnerability and that people without documents might fear that participation in research will have negative outcomes such as deportations and detention (2007, p.233-234). Varying assumptions about what constitutes preparedness may also lead to tensions. Basic questions may be seen to indicate the researcher lacks background knowledge, while technical questions may be deemed irrelevant. Program workers may witness refugees' interview fatigue - as described above - and feel they must prioritize their own survey implementation over what appear to be more esoteric information gathering exercises. The potential benefits of academic research on humanitarian work and refugees, is that it potentially has more time and space available to reflect upon the long-term outcomes of short-term programming (Brun, 2016), but it is key that the results of these research practices are communicated back to the people in the field, refugees and practitioners alike.

Early career program workers may serve as gatekeepers and possible partners to support academics to reach target research populations among refugees. Program workers and academics face challenges when sharing information including different expressions of ethical responsibilities, different levels of engagement with refugees (i.e. longer term project engagement versus interviews or survey enumeration), and different timelines. Depending on the context of program work and research, program workers may also face challenges due to operating in and near conflict areas or limited services. These challenges may be overcome through increased communication, active listening, and openness about reality of constraints and different views or priorities. Academics bring valuable theoretical background and can help situate insight and data from program work into larger theoretical and policy discussions. Program workers and academics working together can amplify the voices and experiences of refugees and roots research in lived experiences. These benefits of collaboration far outweigh the challenges.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In light of the three above challenges discussed - power differentials, the transitory nature of the field, and disciplinary differences - this paper recommends the following approaches to increase and improve collaboration to find information that can be of common use for refugees, academics, and program workers:

1) First, to address power imbalances, refugees should be directly involved in information generation within the context of research design and program implementation. Such collaboration could include involving refugee, displaced, and host community academics as equal co-authors and not (just) as research participants and creating more spaces for their contributions in international academic spheres. This should help to facilitate both more useful informational focuses, and greater accountability to beneficiary communities at different stages of program design, implementation, and output production.

2) Second, to address the transitory nature, academics and program workers should aim for longer term engagement. A more integrative involvement of refugee academics and program workers in publishing and programmatic processes can provide continuity and grounding in lived realities even as researchers and program workers exit the field. Establishing equitable, long-term relationships with refugees will help foreign researchers to come to a more thorough understanding of local contexts. This ideally would be facilitated by supportive funding structures. In the absence of such guarantees, however, this can take the form of sustained partnerships at an institutional or individual level.

3) Third, to address issues of understanding that come with disciplinary diversity and different information priorities, researchers and program workers should seek concrete ways to collaborate constructively with each other. Academics of different disciplines and program workers should seek to articulate foundational knowledge, methods, and ethical frameworks in comprehensible ways and work together to produce mutually understandable, useful and rigorous published work that can be

widely shared. Outputs should also be made available in forms understandable to the refugee communities involved as research participants and program beneficiaries.

These proposals still carry the challenges of the above-identified issues of power differentials, disciplinary differences, and transitory engagements. However, with awareness and greater collaboration, we believe that more unified and useful projects - supported by and with resulting informational outputs - can be created that are of greater benefit to the displaced people who are supposed to benefit from them.

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