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Toward a Public Relations Theory of Integration

Kelly Coolican Gaggin
Syracuse University

Abstract

Health and human service nonprofit organizations provide a multitude of support services to marginalized and underserved populations in the United States and abroad. Public relations and communications professionals are often focused on supporting goals that are directly tied to the organization which are also strongly tied to revenue seeking through increasing awareness of mission and need for financial contribution. This qualitative constructivist grounded theory study explores the extent to which public relations and communications roles can impact the integration of service populations into their communities.

Through interviews with 13 refugee aid organization staff and 11 refugees, primary barriers to integration, including misinformation, powerlessness and unmet social capital needs, are identified, and the role of public relations as the trust builder and is explained.

The major finding in this study theorizes how the maximization of trust through the implementation of strategic public relations and communications activities with external and internal stakeholders reduces barriers to service user community integration. The findings provide a theoretical model illustrating the processes by which public relations and communications can influence the integration of service populations into their communities.

Keywords: Public relations, Integration, Refugees, Grounded Theory, Nonprofit, Communications

TOWARD A PUBLIC RELATIONS THEORY OF INTEGRATION

by

Kelly Coolican Gaggin, APR

B.S., Le Moyne College, 2001
M.S., Syracuse University, 2013

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Take the attitude of a student, never be too big to ask questions,
never know too much to learn something new. – Og Mandino

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Chapter I: Introduction

Influenced by my own experience as a nonprofit public relations practitioner over the last two decades, primarily in the health and human service nonprofit sector, I contend that like practitioners could be doing more to leverage organization communications as a tool for integrating their service populations into the community. This study seeks to explore the extent to which public relations has a role in the integration of populations served by human service organizations and further seeks to construct a public relations theory of integration. This theory will contribute to the practice of public relations and communications in a way that enhances the notion of nonprofit organizations as a contributor to the common good. The idea is that this theory will help communicators to better understand their role beyond the organization and assist them in recognizing their full ability to serve marginalized populations at a deeper level given the limited resources available to them.

As community servants, nonprofit communicators are tasked with bringing messages to publics with the primary goals of raising awareness and funds for the organizations for which they work. These messages are designed to highlight the benefits gained when communities come together in support of populations who, for whatever reason, are in need of support that they cannot provide for themselves. Examples of said populations could include people experiencing homelessness and/or food insecurity, refugees, people with disabilities, those experiencing mental illness and substance abusers, among a host of others.

Public Relations and Integration

In reviewing scholarly works to define the role of public relations in the realm of integration, a gap in the literature has been identified. Available research addresses the following concepts within the study of communications: media effects and political action and advocacy. There is voluminous coverage of both as political participation on the part of immigrant populations is often cited as a sign of full integration, and there is extensive study dedicated to the effects of media on attitudes toward outgroups[1]. The question remains then, how do immigrant-serving nonprofit agencies work with their publics to ensure messages concerning their mission and population are being heard?

Moreover, because of the interpersonal nature of the work performed by immigrant-serving organizations, there is ample interaction with external publics that allows for the recognition of not just the external threats to immigrants but to identify the issues that matter most to the population. Through issues management, the organizations have the opportunity to thwart threats to the populations they serve but also to act on and promote positive responses to issues that improve well-being and aid in policy and program creation.

Cordero-Guzman, Martin, Quiroz-Becerra and Theodore's 2008 "Voting with their feet" explores advocacy and activism within immigrant groups. They found that community-based organizations "were able to draw on preexisting organizational networks and relationships to fashion a forceful, public response" (p. 599) to impending legislation that would have negative effects on their populations. This ability to tap into existing relationships is evidence of efforts to cultivate meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships that result in coalition building between groups. As a unified force, Cordero-Guzman says, the organizations provided "legitimacy, leadership, and resources, and in this sense, they constitute the organizational infrastructure of the demonstrations" (p.613). Moreover, through formation of coalitions that were deemed credible, the organizations were able to apply successful frames and mobilize their populations in a united response (Cordero-Guzman et al., 2008).

[1] This study understands the term "outgroup" within the context of social psychology, wherein people self-categorize their sense of belonging based on shared norms, experiences and traits becoming the "ingroup," and those persons who lack similarity are deemed the outgroup. See Tajfel (1970) and Tajfel & Turner (1979).

This dissertation seeks to apply grounded theory methodology to identify and explore points of convergence between public relations and indicators of integration. The results of this study are intended to contribute to what is currently a scant body of knowledge and provide insight to communications practitioners in nonprofit organizations, allowing them to better understand the extent to which their actions may be used to encourage and achieve integration of immigrant populations in their host nations. To do this, literature from the social sciences and mass communications is explored, and semi-structured, in-depth interviews with organization representatives and service users will be process used for data collection. Although the logic for undertaking a grounded theory approach is to allow the data analysis to guide theory development, the researcher is beginning the study with some ideas as to what the role of public relations might be within the context of integration. One idea is that public relations efforts make it possible for the organization to act as a moderator between refugees and their successful integration. The overarching research question is: t*o what extent does public relations have the capacity to influence identified indicators of integration?* In seeking the answer to this question, the researcher seeks to answer the following three sub questions: 1) What is the perceived role of public relations in the integration of persons representing marginalized populations or those considered to be part of an outgroup? (both by practitioners and service users), 2) Are refugee organizations practicing public relations in a way that is conducive to facilitating integration of their populations?, and 3) How do immigrant-serving nonprofit agencies work with their publics to ensure messages concerning their mission and population are being heard?

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

The following explores primary concepts and definitions within the practice of public relations, media effects and concepts of integration and assimilation. In addition, the literature addresses the three as they directly apply to the population of study: refugees. As this is a work of grounded theory, the researcher reserves the opportunity to revise the literature as warranted by emerging themes during analysis. This literature review represents the foundation upon which the research will be built.

Public Relations

Edward Bernays, often regarded as the "father" of public relations, drew on his work experiences and social science when he defined public relations as "the attempt, by information, persuasion, and adjustment, to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement, or institution" (Bernays, 1955, pp. 3-4). Inherent in this definition is the idea of change. Bernays's public relations was a practice that sought to sway public opinion of an entity in a way that benefited the entity. The definition is reminiscent of the understanding held by many in contemporary times -- that public relations is an act of publicity that is executed when necessary to transition negative opinions of an organization or issue into those that are more positive.

Perhaps the most cited definition of public relations is offered by Grunig and Hunt (1984): "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" (p. 4). The four components of this definition (management, communication, organization and publics) illustrate a departure from earlier scholarship wherein the dominant notions of public relations were rooted in acts of publicity and placed within the practice of journalism. Grunig and Hunt identify public relations as a tool to be implemented by organization to achieve business goals. In this respect, public relations becomes a strategic act that is practiced in the pursuit of organizational goals.

In 1982, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) the leading trade organization for public relations professionals, proclaimed its own definition: “public relations helps an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other” (PRSA, 2018, All about PR, para. 2). Over time, as evidenced by PRSA’s Official Statement on Public Relations (PRSA, 2018, All about PR), the organization would adopt a stronger foundation of management and strategic principles. In 2012, PRSA released a revised definition of public relations to include notions of their official definition of public relations: “Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (PRSA, 2018, All about PR, para. 4) and states “At its core, public relations is about influencing, engaging and building a relationship with key stakeholders across a myriad of platforms in order to shape and frame the public perception of an organization” (PRSA, 2018, All about PR, para. 5). This latest attempt at defining public relations acknowledges the work of Grunig & Hunt and is reflective of early scholarship’s notions of public opinion. The primary difference between the historical and contemporary interpretations is that modern definitions recognize the strategic and managerial function of communications to craft relationships that seek to be of value to both the sender and receiver, and, as such, this study focuses on the contemporary.

Organization-Public Relationships

One possible outcome of this study is that refugee aid organizations (RAOs) that build and maintain effective relationships with key publics may in fact be a moderator between refugees and their successful integration in their new communities. In anticipation of this possibility, it is warranted to include literature that defines and explores organization-public relationships at a basic level.

Nonprofit organizations are often the carriers of messages to the greater community on behalf of the populations they serve -- articulating circumstances, needs and beliefs, and, in effect acting as the arbiter of a population. For this reason, and others, it is possible that the organization is responsible for important publics' understanding of and attitude toward the population. Grunig and Pepper (1992) explain that strategic publics "are the stakeholders that are critical, crucial, essential, important, or vital for an organization" (p. 123). In the context of the organization as an arbiter and moderator, an organization's ability to maintain excellent relationships with strategic or important publics (e.g., media, government officials, donors, employers, community) has the capacity to reflect either positively or negatively on the population of service in that the status of the relationship is likely to affect perceptions of loyalty and trust.

Ledingham and Bruning (1998) defined the ideal organization-public relationship as the "state that exists between an organization and its key publics that provides economic, social, political, and/or cultural benefits to all parties involved, and is characterized by mutual positive regard" (p. 62) and suggest analyzing these relationships in the context of professional, personal and community relationships. Bruning and Ledingham (2000) defined relationship management as "a process of symbolic communication through messages and organizational behaviors to initiate, nurture, and maintain mutually beneficial organization-public relationships" (p.87). Ledingham (2003) identified a linkage between organization-public relationships and outcomes to include satisfaction and enhanced levels of loyalty and trust. In the case of refugee aid organizations, "the degree that the organization and publics trust one another, agree on who has rightful power to influence, experience satisfaction with each other, and commit oneself to one another" (Huang, 2001, p. 65) is a powerful indicator of the effectiveness of the organization–public relationship.

Ledingham and Bruning (1998) proposed that communications can be applied strategically to achieve relationship goals that suggests that RAOs would benefit from approaching communications with key stakeholders where relationship goals are at the forefront. Effective relationships provide opportunities to educate and inform publics, reducing knowledge gaps and improving the likelihood of acceptance and positive attitudes toward refugees through information dissemination and opportunity for contact between groups.

Nonprofits and Nonprofit Public Relations

This study will explore the relationship between public relations and integration of service populations of 501(c)(3) public charities providing resettlement and/or aid services to refugees who qualify for exempt status per the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), as they meet the definition of the term charitable in the accepted legal sense to include:

> Relief of the poor, the distressed, or the underprivileged; advancement of religion; advancement of education or science; erecting or maintaining public buildings, monuments, or works; lessening the burdens of government; lessening neighborhood tensions; eliminating prejudice and discrimination; defending human and civil rights secured by law; and combating community deterioration and juvenile delinquency. (IRS, Exempt Purposes)

As the population of study is within the nonprofit sector, it is necessary to briefly discuss the context in which much literature regarding nonprofit public relations is structured.

Urban Institute (2015) states there were nearly 1.41 million registered nonprofits in the United States in 2013, representing 5.4% of gross domestic product. Of the total number of nonprofit organizations noted, 501(c)(3) public charities accounted for over 950,000 organizations and over three-quarters of the $1.73 trillion of sector revenue. During the decade 2003-2013, the United States saw faster growth in the number of public charities than in the sector overall, 19.5% and 2.8% respectively (Urban Institute, 2015). As is demonstrated by the aforementioned data, the nonprofit sector plays a significant role in revenue generation and employment income in the United States.

The execution of public relations activities in the nonprofit sector has existed for over a century. However, there is limited scholarship that explores the role of public relations within these organizations. Bonk, Tynes, Griggs and Sparks (2008) noted that public relations can help nonprofits "increase name recognition, boost fundraising, recruit membership, and advance changes in public policy" (p. xxi). And, as recently as 2007, Hall argued that "study of the media and nonprofits is still in its infancy" (p. 482). Cutlip (1990) suggests that, of the existing literature, the primary focus was public relations as it applies to fundraising. Two of the most renowned anecdotes regarding fundraising and public relations are that of Harvard College in the 1600s publishing a brochure to help raise funds in England for the school that had just opened in the United States, and the establishment of Boston's Publicity Bureau, which saw the college (by then Harvard University) as its initial client, again for the purposes of building awareness to generate funds. This connection between public relations and fundraising is discussed at length by Kelly (1991, 1998, 2004). Kelly (1998) goes as far as to define fundraising as "the management of relationships between a charitable organization and its donor publics" (p. 8). If this sounds familiar, it should, as it mirrors closely contemporary definitions of public relations noted above. Pressgrove and McKeever (2016) explore loyalty and the organization-public relationship, again, discussed primarily within the context of donor loyalty.

Fundraising is a significant goal of nonprofit organizations and the above mentioned literature surely does its work to identify the existence and importance of public relations as a relationship building tool that is geared toward donor retention. Although these organizations are exempt from taxes per IRS code, it is important to acknowledge that nonprofit is a tax status, as opposed to a business model. Thus, this study accepts that nonprofit organizations are not excluded from the discussion of the role of public relations in organizations in general, to include concepts of reputation and trust. This notion is supported by Grunig (1992).

Social Integration

In its most simplistic form, social integration is a concept applied to the extent of connectedness between individuals and others within their groups or community. The literature explored below seeks to demonstrate conceptual definitions beginning with the seminal contributions by Durkheim in the latter part of the 19th century and proceeds to highlight contributions of Blau, Deutsch and Habermas. Finally, the definitions utilized by humanitarian organizations and those incorporated into scholarly efforts in the field of public relations are presented.

The Scholars

Durkheim's manifestation of social integration takes shape in his 1893 publication *The Division of Labour in Society.* Although "social integration" is not specifically defined until his 1897 publication *Suicide,* Durkheim's work explores the makings of functioning society by examining the division of labor through sociology rather than economics and identifies solidarity as a driving concept in social cohesion and integration. He asserts that the division of labor is ideal to explain the relationship between individuals and the collective and the ways in which social cohesion develops; it is through differentiation that solidarity is born.

What resonates most strongly from this work is Durkheim’s acknowledgement that while an initial level of integration (or mechanical solidarity, as he describes it) occurs in society through shared norms, beliefs and values, a more complex and strengthened concept of integration (organic solidarity) is created through the reliance on interdependence in more complex societies. Durkheim (2014) argues that "social harmony comes essentially from the division of labor. It is characterized by a cooperation which is automatically produced through the pursuit by each individual of his own interests. It suffices that each individual consecrate himself to a special function in order, by the force of events, to make himself solidary with others" (p. 200). He further acknowledges the exchangist representation in the division of labor as a means by which solidarity is achieved but also that these participants are linked by rules and boundaries that apply within the division of labor. This illustrates the interdependence of individuals in society on one another and, therefore, providing opportunity for, if not forcing, social integration. We can interpret “exchangist” to mean the patterns demonstrated in the workplace that is both necessitated by work in the form of tasks and responsibilities, as well as the social exchanges that occur by the very nature of functioning within the labor force. Interactions between persons are exchanges of social cues, knowledge and language, as well as an exchange of values and norms.

Blau, a sociologist whose primary scholarly focus was in social and organizational structure and theory, explored social phenomena to include social integration, acceptance, mobility and rank (Blau 1959, Blau 1960). A year before he would publish his theory of social integration, Blau (1959) explored relationships and differentiated between integration, rank and processes of interaction. Blau (1960) reflects Durkheim's notion that differentiation can be a form of utility in social integration as "some [outgroup members] have abilities that permit them to make important contributions to the achievement of common or individual goals" (p. 555). He argues, much as Durkheim does, that for the success of the group, these abilities stand to enhance the group, and, therefore, the outgroup member is granted entrance. He additionally notes that these efforts to impress may in fact threaten conflict as competition for entrance to the group grows (Blau, 1960).

Blau recognizes that integration occurs when a member of a group accepts interactions of a non-group member. However, he argues "in order to become integrated in a group, an individual must motivate other members freely to associate with him" (Blau, 1959, p. 156). He goes on to specify that demonstration of "attractive qualities" on the part of the outgroup member are required as a means by which to earn acceptance into a particular group. Blau (1960) supports the findings of his previous work and expands upon it to include the necessity of the outgroup member to move beyond the focus of putting his/her best foot forward but also to exhibit approachability as "impressive qualities that make a person attractive simultaneously discourage others from freely approaching and accepting him" (p. 550).

Deutsch's work in nation building, as demonstrated through his work in social and political sciences, also drew from Durkheimian notions and hinged on the idea of social integration as the state where members came together through commonalities and shared interests and conditions through communication. In reflecting on the work of Deutsch, it is worthy to note the socio-political climate that was present throughout his life and work, which was developed during the height of Nazism and WWII in Europe, as well as the development of international organizations, chiefly the United Nations. Conflicts, including genocide and authoritarian rule, continue to strongly affect refugee flows.

Deutsch (1966) contends that relationships are the impetus for social integration and that it is through communication channels between groups that these relationships are constructed. Moreover, he suggests that this communication and its corresponding channels “transfers a patterned relationship between events” (p. 93) inevitably working toward social integration, an essential for nation building. “Membership in a people essentially consists in wide complementarity of social communication. It consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group with outsiders” (p.97). Once social integration has been achieved, Deutsch suggests the movement toward political integration, wherein lies the opportunity for a nation’s political structures to be formed and, we can assume altered, to meet the needs of the society.

Habermas (1981) expands upon Mead’s assertion that socialization is mediated through linguistic interactions as he explores the development and impact of social systems. Habermas purports that communication goes beyond the development of mutual understanding and is a tool for action and socialization, as well. He suggests that acts of communication provide for the transmission of culture, fulfillment of norms (where he contends social integration occurs) and formation of personal identity. Habermas (1981) asserts, much as Lockwood (1964), in the traditions of functionalist theory (see also Durkheim, Mead, and Parsons) that separate from social integration, but related in the construct of society, is systems integration. Social integration is the connectivity between diverse individuals and groups in society - the connections between agents within social units, which aforementioned scholars identify as the social system. Systems integration is impacted by social integration and is the space where entities such as society’s political system and economy create the boundaries within which a society operates and where dominant power exists. The two coexist and rely on one another for the success of society as a whole. He additionally suggests that the interaction between the two is symbiotic to the point that failures to integrate into one may, in turn, result in failures in the other.

It is imperative that the "lifeworld" Habermas refers to is able to reach solidarity or consensus, making it more likely to impact the system-level of society enabling development and/or transformation of structures that support and provide for boundaries meeting the needs of the changing societies. Moreover, Habermas (1981) allows for the notion that conflict within the social-level rather than solidarity can provide a circumstance wherein a subordinate collective can exert influence on dominant systems' actors. This is an important aspect of his work when we consider that migration flows continue at record rates that produce an influx of immigrants in communities worldwide. This influx of immigrants has the capacity to change the social dynamic, and Habermas's point provides the basis for the possibility that alterations to the socio-cultural landscape may and can occur. As immigrants bring diverse cultures, traditions, values and norms to communities with differing representations and begin steps toward social integration, there is opportunity for societies to change and develop mutual understandings and provide for the development of new norms and alterations to the systems that bind society.

As we draw closer to present day, definitions and components of social integration begin to include specific, real world stipulations. The works that follow provide evidence of the varied interpretations of cultural components within social integration, as well as those employed by active organizations, such as the United Nations, employed to communicate meaning and expectation directly to various publics.

Nash, Wong and Trlin (2001) define integration as “a state of belonging and participation in the new country without losing one’s cultural identity” (p. 361). The trio suggest that immigrant, refugee and asylum seekers denote a new field of practice within social work. Their findings reinforce the need for social workers in the community receiving the aforementioned populations to increase their understanding of human rights, immigration and social policies as a means to assist in social integration. Moreover, the authors suggest that these community workers “can facilitate community education through publicity campaigns and integration projects to assist the (re)settlement process for immigrants and refugees,” (p. 359). Key notions of this work include the importance of synthesizing cross-cultural concepts to benefit both the resettled persons and to educate the community. Additionally, the authors’ acknowledgement of the responsibility the social workers have to act as agents of successful integration, especially in the form of external communications, helps one to understand that the population of focus is not necessarily entirely responsible for integration (Nash et al., 2001). This idea that there is a need for multi-way effort in relationship building echoes Deutsch’s view where he suggests the facilitation of communication between groups.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)[2] describes itself as “a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people” (UNHCR, 2017).

In preparation for its social summit held throughout the month of June in 2005, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Department for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) provided the following definition of social integration for summit participants: “Social

[2] “UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency,” is the brand representing the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Integration can be seen as a dynamic and principled process where all members participate in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations. Social integration does not mean coerced assimilation or forced integration" (DESA, 2005, para. 1). The same office, in 2017 stated that the goal of social integration is the creation of:

> A more 'stable, safe and just society for all,' in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Such an inclusive society must be based on the principles of embracing – not coercing or forcing – diversity and using participatory processes that involve all stakeholders in the decision-making that affects their lives. (DSPD, 2017, para. 2)

Since 2005, the definition used by DSPD has transformed to include a statement regarding rights and responsibilities and clearly states that refugees should be active participants in the decision-making exercises that may affect them. Still present is the explicit notion that no one should be forced to integrate. The 2005 DSPD definition has been changed to include the word "just," implying that there is an expectation that the systems, as addressed by Habermas and others, will need to morph as necessary to extend the same boundaries and democratic allowances to new members of a society in order to fulfill requirements for social integration.

It is interesting that the United Nations has more than one definition for social integration in terms of refugee population. The DSPD definitions are far more simplistic and stress the group process, fairness and safety. UNHCR, however, provides a far more detailed vision:

> Integration is a dynamic two-way process that places demands on both the refugee and the receiving community. Integrating refugees goes beyond ensuring that they are provided with basic needs and access to services. Integration requires that receiving States and civil society create a welcoming environment which supports refugees to

achieve long-term economic stability and adjust to the new society, including fostering a sense of belonging, and encouraging participation in their new communities. Vigorous integration programmes enable refugees and their families to enjoy equality of rights and opportunities in the social, economic, and cultural life of the country. (UNHCR, 2013, p.8)

Evident in this definition is the assignment of responsibility, as was addressed briefly by Nash et al. (2001), that people in the refugees' new land have an active role in ensuring integration. Described by UNHCR as a two-way process, social integration is a combination of belonging, rights and participation. Interestingly, all United Nations definitions describe social integration as a "process," as opposed to our sociological and philosophical models that discuss social integration as something that is sought through process, as opposed to a process in and of itself.

In 2008 Jeannotte presented *Promoting social integration – A brief examination of concepts and issues* to DESA representatives. The report proposes the inclusion of "cultural citizenship" within social integration. This report was inspired by Jeannotte's co-authored work, Stone, Destrempes, Foote and Jeannotte (2008), which offers cultural citizenship as a primary component of social integration for policy makers in nation states. John Foote and Marilyn Smith of the Department of Canadian Heritage, as cited in Stone et al. (2008), define cultural citizenship as "an emerging concept that examines the formative role of culture in constructing and understanding citizenship practices such as identity formation and the altruistic behaviours that contribute to a collective's ability to 'live together'" (p.17). Jeannotte (2008) includes a cultural dimension in her model of social integration in her recommendation to the UN (see Appendix C).

Jeannotte (2008) suggests that at the basic level, newcomers to a society should experience at the very least recognition and respect for their identity, culture and cultural infrastructure. The current UNHCR definition of social integration is representative of Jeannotte's (2008) enhanced components to meet cultural needs to achieve integration. Here, culture is not simply recognized but celebrated and fostered through policy that encourages multiculturalism and works to achieve the welcoming environment and cohesion.

Social Integration and Public Relations. Taylor and Kent (2006) identify public relations as having a unique ability to strengthen democracy through strategic communication, as well as in a relationship building capacity. Although presented within the context of nation building, their assertion that "communication campaigns can educate and empower, level the playing field, and bring a nation to a state of equilibrium in which all people have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential" (p. 356) is acknowledgement of the power of public relations to act as an effective tool for achieving objectives of social integration, such as political activity. Moreover, the authors reflect on not only the power of public relations at the interpersonal level but also its relevance in establishing and strengthening organization-public relationships.

Having established the applicability of public relations to relationship building at both the individual and organization levels, it is necessary to address that primary channels for message sharing include mass media. Organizations such as refugee aid organizations have the capacity to leverage these channels to carry their messages about refugee populations (or any underserved population for that matter) to the general public and/or the community in which they are striving for the other group to be a part of.

Role of Nonprofit Organizations in Integration

Refugee aid organizations resettle refugee populations into communities and provide post-resettlement services with the purpose of providing a life free from persecution and one where individuals and/or families are self-sufficient economically for the benefit of the whole community. These organizations utilize communications strategies to inform and engage publics, including the media among other stakeholders, as they strive to reach an acceptable level (acceptable as defined by each organization) of social integration goals for refugee populations. To identify the ways in which public relations affects integration of refugee populations, it makes sense to better understand the role and purpose of nonprofit organizations in the integration of immigrant populations. Once the role of the organization is defined, it is possible to apply relevant literature in communications and to deduce additional roles of public relations in the quest for integration. The literature that follows explores the roles and purposes of nonprofit and community-based organizations that exist to serve immigrant populations and, by their nature, seek to integrate immigrants within the host community.

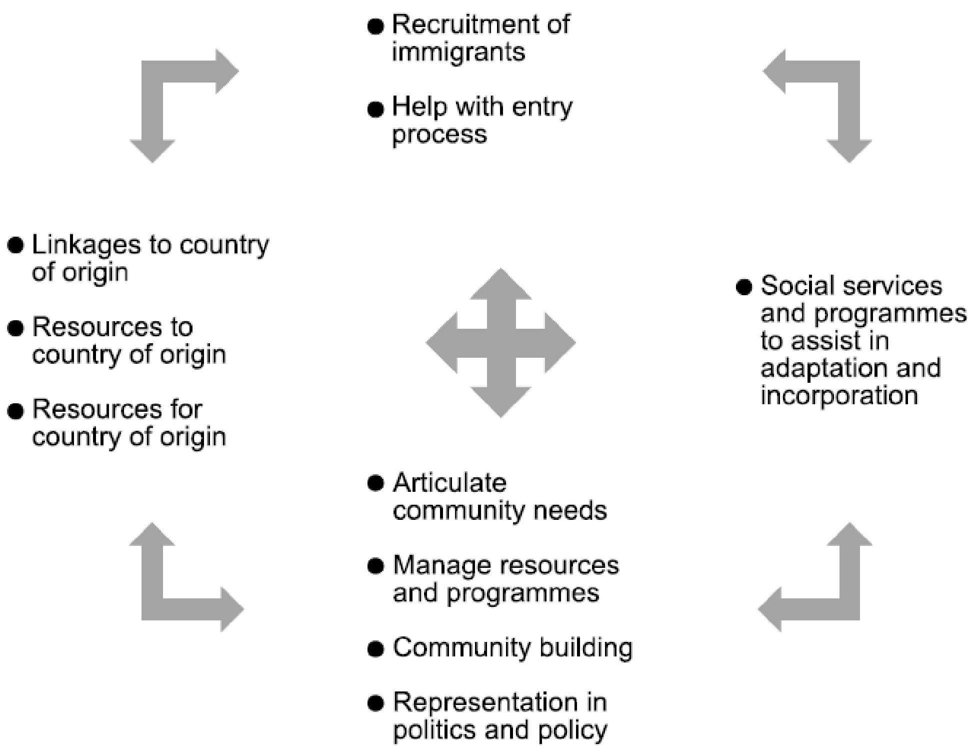
It has been suggested by various scholars that the process of immigrant integration in the 20th century in the United States is deemed to be one best described as laissez-faire. By this, it is understood that immigrants were responsible for their own integration through the ways in which they were able to leverage their relationships or social capital, their resourcefulness and community-based organizations with limited to no government involvement (Bloemraad & de Graauw, 2012; de Graauw & Bloemraad, 2017; Schmidt, 2007). Absent from this is the acknowledgement that public and private organizations have, throughout time, worked together in partnership toward integration goals. For example, the U.S. Department of Education has long provided specialized services and declarations for immigrants and their children to include provisions for K-12 education, as well as services for adult education. Historically, the department has worked with community agencies and school districts to fulfill educational needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). de Graauw and Bloemraad (2017) contend that following WWII, these public-private partnerships strengthened, while acknowledging that much of the federal role consists of policy functions regarding oversight and border security, as well as funding to state and municipal entities for programs and services.

Pertinent to the forthcoming study regarding refugee populations, the authors explain that today, “the web of federal, voluntary sector, state and local partnerships around refugee resettlement continues, with a focus on getting refugees to economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible” (p. 109). The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), an arm of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, “provides new populations with the opportunity to achieve their full potential in the United States” (ORR, About, 2017). ORR partners with agencies and organizations at multiple levels to connect refugees with the resources that are necessary for successful integration.

Cordero-Guzman has published considerable works specific to the roles of community-based organizations in the integration of immigrants. He identifies three types of organizations that form what he refers to as the immigrant social-service delivery system: immigrant groups, associations and clubs; immigrant organizations and service providers (Cordero-Guzman, 2005, p. 893). For the purposes of this research, the focus will be on service providers. Cordero-Guzman (2005) defines these organizations as nonprofit organizations providing “social services to clients from a variety of countries and also provide services to non-immigrant clients (often from racial and ethnic minority groups). These organisations are older, larger, often with multicultural staff, and many have offices in several neighbourhoods” (p. 894).

Community-based organizations serving immigrant populations provide a multitude of services to individuals and families that are central to their success in their new land. Cordero-Guzman (2005) identifies four roles of organizations: assistance with immigration process, adaptation and incorporation of immigrants, representation for the immigrant community and linking immigrant communities to their countries of origin (p. 901-907). These roles and relationships between them are further explained through Cordero-Guzman's model of the four functions as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1
The functions of immigrant groups, organizations and service providers Cordero-Guzman, 2005, p. 902



Inherent in Cordero-Guzman's model is communication. It is through communication with immigrants during processes of immigration, services and programs, as well as communication with external audiences, (eg., the community at-large, government agencies, and mass media) that organizations are able to fulfill their functions. The directions illustrated by the arrows in Cordero-Guzman's model can be interpreted to mean that the functions are intended to work symbiotically and simultaneously, with immigrants accessing services at any time and in any order. Given such, it is relevant that communications plays a constant role in the daily business of immigrant-serving organizations.

Vermeulen, Minkoff and van der Meer (2016) acknowledge that social organizations, such as those described by Cordero-Guzman, are important to life in urban neighborhoods. Further, the more stable and longstanding the organizations are, the more valuable they are. According to Vermeulen et al. (2016), "organizations represent, empower, and mobilize poor residents by providing them with potentially more resources, access to local political systems, and means of incorporation into mainstream society. Activities of these organizations have been shown to revitalize poor neighborhoods, to distribute resources across neighborhoods, and to create social interactions and social solidarity among residents" (p. 39). Vermeulen et al. speaks in general terms about social organizations, however, it is argued that, as community organizations, these same traits apply to the immigrant-serving organizations within communities.

Immigrant Volunteering. In addition to the services provided for immigrants by nonprofit organizations, both immigrant-serving organizations and those organizations serving populations beyond immigrants provide opportunities for immigrants to volunteer. Handy and Greenspan (2009) suggest that immigrants who give back to their communities through volunteering may improve social capital ties, which in in turn contributes to their overall integration. Weng and Lee (2016) add to this notion with their finding that "agencies that are predominantly ethnically different from those they serve may benefit from the cultural capital and understanding that immigrant volunteers have for their own ethnic enclaves" (p. 521). It would behoove organizations in the vicinity of immigrant populations to maximize their opportunities to engage newcomers through volunteering. The relationship is mutually symbiotic in that the organizations (whether immigrant-serving or not) receive the volunteer assistance they need, and immigrants have the opportunity to improve language skills, enhance social capital and learn necessary skills for employment in the host country. A persistent theme presented above is the concept of information sharing. Brown (2015) contends that:

> …for nonprofits that serve immigrants, the sharing of information is particularly important because many undocumented residents and first-generation immigrants speak English as a second or third language and thus have few options to voice their own concerns or learn about their new home. Immigrants rely on civic associations, community groups, and a variety of other nonprofits to ease their transition to the United States and help social integration (p. 684).

These notions of information sharing and the building of relationships between immigrants and the organizations they obtain services from or volunteer for, clearly present a need for public relations and communications in a strategic capacity.

Indicators of Integration

Variables enlisted to act as measures of social integration vary widely. Scholars directly identify them (in the case of Durkheim, for instance) or define the concept clearly enough to deduce possible measures. Humanitarian organizations have developed and tested measures as they seek to achieve quantitative results. While not all empirical studies evaluate social integration using identical variables, there are some commonalities that can be found as early as Durkheim's work in the late 1800s through to present day.

Durkheim's early works establish relational variables that form his measurement of social integration. In 1899's *Suicide,* Durkheim specifically recognizes employment integration, political integration, religious integration and family integration as primary indicators. Within each variable an index exists to account for the extent of an individual's level of involvement and strength of his/her ties within involvement. He suggests that those individuals who exhibit strong ties to multiple elements of society are more socially integrated. Much as in current times, these indicators include various spheres of an individual's daily life that affect his/her relationship with the larger society and combine to reinforce Durkheim's (2014) assertion "the more close-knit the members of a society, the more they maintain various relationships either with one another or with the group collectively" (p. 52). As previously discussed, there is a mutual dependence that binds individuals.

As an example of the most simply stated and direct indicator, Blau (1959) contends that the "frequency with which others originate sociable interaction with an individual is the most direct measure of his integration" (p. 157). To understand this, we must assume that the individual has succeeded in displaying "attractive qualities" and has done so in a proportion that entices interaction rather than deflects it, according to Blau's description of attributes leading to successful integration.

Humanitarian and Migration Specific Indicators of Social Integration

Humanitarian and government organizations representing the interests of migrant peoples have undertaken empirical studies with the purpose of illustrating a level of social integration. Given the widespread nature of migration and the many differences between states and communities, there have been efforts to define a measurement system that can be applied universally. In the mid-2000s, the European Union sought the creation of a common set of integration indicators that would enable consistent and more reliable data regarding migrant integration across the Union. "'Migrants' in the context of the European Union are understood to be non-EU, or third-country, nationals who reside legally in the European Union" (OECD, 2015, p. 300). The resulting Zaragoza Declaration was adopted in 2010 and provided indicators within four policy areas: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship (see Appendix C for Zargoza indicator table). What is clear in reviewing these indicators is the adherence to the idea of generality. This is done as a means to make comparisons between states within the European Union, each of which present variations in migrant activity, tradition and policy. These general indicators evaluate integration through economic, education, political and immigration status variables. Ray (2002) for The Migration Policy Institute (MPI), states that "the degree of social integration and socio-economic mobility of immigrants has typically been examined using an array of indicators from large-scale surveys and censuses" (para. 4). MPI notes the following variables as broad categories from which they create indexes: linguistic interaction, labor market statistics, civil/political activity, education and residential.

The available literature regarding social integration is plentiful, and it is evident from the above examples that participation and advancement (e.g., pursuing additional education) in social systems is the primary, contemporary means by which social integration is measured. This is not to say that studies do not exist that delve into the strength of ties of people in a community, as suggested by Durkheim. However, it appears that humanitarian and government organizations that are very much responsible for establishing policy guidelines place a focus on the process and placement aspects of integration rather than the relationships that bind migrants to their new communities in both their definitions and forms of measurement.

Social integration in the realm of refugees must reach beyond the simplicities of populations simply participating in society. The definitions provided by humanitarian organizations very much reflect the idea of interaction between groups that result in acceptance and with an air of superficiality. To welcome and accept does not imply that there are meaningful connections between the groups that can strengthen a collective with the power to affect social and political change. There is often little choice as to whether refugees participate in the economy with respect to employment. According to Government of Canada (2017), refugees are provided with financial assistance from the government for one year. After that time, refugees are expected to have found a job. This passive participation and acceptance is lacking an indicator of quality and/or commitment. The same lack of quality indicator is present in Blau's suggestion when he indicates frequency of interaction is a good measure. To truly measure, there must be a qualification to frequency, just as the opposite is true. When suggesting quality of relationships as an indicator, there must be a frequency component, as one may have a relationship considered beneficial and strong but may not interact often enough for the outgroup's culture and norms to reach a marked level of awareness and therefore still remain subordinate to that of the dominant ideas in the society.

Integration Operationalized

This study will use the following as a guiding definition of integration: integration occurs when ingroup(s) and outgroup(s) are united through formation of mutually beneficial relationships, wherein new individuals and groups have reached a state of structural and cultural incorporation, as well as empowerment, where they actively seek to form collectives with members of the receiving community to benefit society.

Media Effects

Shoemaker and Reese (2013) suggest that media representatives experience flexibility in the way they choose to present their stories. This leeway in presenting a story creates opportunities for immigrant serving organizations to leverage their media relations practices and organization-public relationships to ensure that their populations are being covered in a positive light. Moon (2017) acknowledges that organizations' goals differ from those of the media and suggests that strategic approaches to media relations will assist in a mutual satisfaction between the groups.

Toledano and McKie (2007) understand the role of mass media to be that of the messenger of the dominant paradigm as they explored social integration efforts in Israel. Their research resulted in the following warning for public relations practitioners and those organizations seeking to utilize media as a carrier of their messaging to encourage social integration: "the emphasis on consensus, unity, and one voice by enlisting the media and promoting 'responsible journalism' might limit open dialogue and put democratic discussion at risk" (p. 395). The use of the phrase "responsible journalist" suggests a question as to whom the journalist is responsible to – the people or the dominant power actors.

One may deduce that Toledano and McKie believe the media to reflect the hegemonic representations of persons and/or concepts. Therefore, it is possible that efforts to activate the media in pursuit of dialogue may fall flat, resulting in the distribution of messaging that reinforces the establishment and agents of power. Public relations practitioners seeking to engage mainstream media in integration-focused campaigns may therefore find themselves in a situation necessitating the development of new messaging and tactics for delivery. It is suggested this could be achieved by leveraging digital and grassroots campaigns, thereby providing opportunity to disrupt the norm and gain momentum to form a collective tasked with advancing accurate or preferential messaging.

To some extent, Habermas (1987) provides explanation for the warning provided by the above mentioned research duo. He suggests that mass media is generalized forms of communication that move beyond restricted contexts, permitting, and, one could argue, encouraging the creation of public spheres. He simultaneously acknowledges that these same communications channels provide a means to strengthen social controls. Habermas (1991) contends that it is in this public sphere that people are able to engage in “critical public debate” (p. 52). However, he asserts that the mass media is linked intimately with power relations and, therefore, rather than promoting this public discussion, it inevitably suppresses it. He does, however, acknowledge that the system is not free from conflict, and it possible for individuals and groups to bring subordinate opinions/initiatives/ideas to the awareness of greater publics and systems, thus posing a challenge for those organizations wishing to engage mass media in their efforts to integrate a population.

Media Framing

The agenda setting function of the news suggests that the topics shared by news media and the importance attributed to them by the news media, in turn, affect the opinions as to which issues are considered most salient to the audience exposed (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). While agenda setting provides the basis for which issues are chosen for coverage, framing explains the ways in which selected topics are presented to media consumers (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). Scholars additionally suggest that agenda setting and framing may be distinguished using the terms accessibility and applicability, respectively (Kim, Scheufele & Shanahan, 2002; Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997; Price & Tewksbury, 1997). Accessibility is the ability of the media consumer to recall or access the content presented by news media and suggests that the more often an individual is exposed to a message over time, the more likely the individual is to view it as important and to have a strong recollection of it (Kim et al., 2002). Having established the existing awareness level of migration issues, it is evident that the audience has sufficient content available from which to form a construct of migration issues globally.

Media Framing and Migration Issues. Audience attitudes toward migration issues may be influenced by the applicability model of framing which suggests that an individual will assign an attitude or opinion to a topic based on his/her own experiences and the media's portrayal of the issue. Atwell Seate and Mastro (2016) found that, in the context of immigration, news framing "cultivates negative intergroup emotions, which can harmfully affect intergroup attitudes and actions" (p. 209). The effect of such framing is further supported by Weiskamp's 2007 paper presentation (as cited in Kim, Carvalho, Davis & Mullins, 2011) suggesting that when media content of immigrants is linked to crime, audience perceptions of immigrants and immigration can become stigmatized.

The media's negative cast toward immigration content delivered to audiences through the framing process influences existence of the public's negative attitude toward immigration and immigrants (Maio, Esses, & Bell, 1994). Mastro and Atwell Seate (2012) suggest that media's portrayal of social identity may reinforce intergroup differences, which have the capacity to negate benefits of intergroup contact. Esses, Jackson and Armstrong (1998) also explored immigrant attitudes using intergroup theories. Findings revealed that even when coverage of immigrants was positive, attitudes toward immigrants could be influenced negatively when the content showed immigrants in a fashion that could be interpreted as threatening by the ingroup audience. Thus, negative effects on the ingroup audience may be cause for less effective integration of the populations.

When news outlets portray immigrants and immigration in a positive fashion, the general public is less concerned. Additionally, the more frequently immigrants are seen in the news, the less problematic viewers found immigration (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009). Sniderman (2000) suggests that perception of immigrants may also vary due to changes in the environment or society, such as rising unemployment numbers and international events that may imply an increase in anticipated immigrants (p. 121). Vliegenhart and Boomgaarden (2009) contend that the media may in fact elicit the changes in attitudes toward immigrants by creating “external shocks by hyping news stories about immigrants and immigration, and by promoting certain interpretations or depictions” (p. 517).

Inclusion of Prior Study

In 2018 the researcher undertook a qualitative study *Ship to shore: Exploring the influence of media relationships on refugee coverage in local news* in preparation for the current dissertation study. The objective of the 2018 study was to explore the relationships between refugee aid organizations and local media through the lens of the media professionals. The research sought to understand how members of the media and their respective organizations define and describe their relationships with RAOs in the Syracuse, New York community. This study will evaluate the quality of said relationships and how relationships between local news media and refugee aid organizations may impact the content produced regarding the organizations and/or refugees in the community. Key findings from this study are likely relevant to the development of theory, as local news is a primary source of information for the Syracuse community. The relationship between RAOs and local news media is relevant to understanding the extent to which RAO communicators aid in the development of transparent and accurate news content regarding their organizations and populations of service.

Research Questions

This research seeks to identify in what ways the tenets of public relations and integration converge with the purpose of informing practitioners of the ways in which their public relations activities may be leveraged to maximize the likelihood of integration of their service populations. The above literature and following research questions provide a context within which one may begin to address the convergence of concepts.

RQ1: What is the role of public relations in the integration of underserved populations?

RQ2: To what extent does the organization's public relations function have the capacity to influence identified indicators of integration.

RQ3: How do organizations practice public relations in a way that is conducive to facilitating the integration of their service populations?

RQ3a: Do practitioners perceive public relations as pertinent to the attainment of the organization's integration-focused goals?

RQ3b: How do organizations use public relations to ready the community for optimum integration?

As noted in the introduction, the researcher has worked nearly 20 years in communications/public relations/marketing roles for nonprofit organizations that seek to improve lives through providing and/or funding of services. The research question and sub inquiries arise from her reflection on her extensive experience and questioning the extent to which her public relations activities may have or could have impacted the service population's ability to transition to acceptance and integrate into the communities they were a part of.

Chapter III: Methodology

This study sought to better understand the role of public relations in the integration of marginalized populations and focused on refugee populations. Having reviewed social science literature in sociology, migration and public relations, there is limited literature pertaining to the function of public relations as a tool for integration. Utilizing grounded theory as a "theory of discovery methodology" (Martin & Turner, 1986, p. 141) to understand and begin to define the relationship, thus resulting in a substantive public relations theory of integration, it is the intent of the researcher to continue this line of theory building in the future using other populations served by nonprofit organizations, such as the people experiencing homeless and those with disabilities who also seek to be integrated into their communities.

Grounded Theory

This qualitative study explored the role of public relations in the process of integration in order to form a baseline public relations theory of integration using grounded theory— an inductive method of theory development wherein researchers are capable of the "discovering of theory from data, systematically obtained from social research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2). Data collection was narrowed to a sample recruited from a single geographic location and included representatives whose job it is to provide services to refugees through their work within refugee aid organizations and a sample of persons who immigrated to the United States with refugee status. The study explored only one facet of nonprofit public relations, and, therefore, the results reflect a substantive theory that may be used for future research into populations served by health and human service nonprofit agencies to construct a formal theory as described above (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggests that grounded theory methodology provides researchers with a qualitative method where the resulting theory is "grounded" in the data that is analyzed as opposed to being created using already existing theory. The authors suggest a strategic framework and process for creating grounded theory that consists of the following characteristics: simultaneous data gathering and analysis for the duration of the research, constant comparison method, theoretical sampling, theoretical coding derived from the data and use of memo-writing throughout the process (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) also suggested that the grounded theory method would benefit from the development of the literature review following data collection and coding. As time moved on, Glaser and Strauss began to differ in their views of the process, primarily where the practice of coding is concerned. While Glaser aligned with the initial 1967 notions that codes should be driven by the data, and not the ideas of the researcher or literature, Strauss's later works reveal a coding process emphasizing the latter, as is evident in Strauss and Corbin (1998), Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Strauss (1987). Glaser (1992) explores these differences in what he refers to as "emerging" and "forcing" approaches to coding. Public relations and integration are inherently related to relationships and interactions between persons and their subsequent interactions within the world around them. Therefore, this study will work within the constructivist paradigm.

Charmaz (2014) contends that constructivist grounded theory allows for the inductive and emergent sentiment, as described by Glaser and Strauss, while disposing of the notions of "objective external reality, a passive, neutral observer, or a detached, narrow empiricism" (p. 13). The constructivist approach acknowledges that social reality is a subjective epistemology, wherein reality is constructed and co-constructed (Charmaz, 2014). In this study, multiple interactions between public relations practitioners are acknowledged, the service users and the environment in which they operate as essential elements in the construction of reality through interactions and provides a model that encourages the extrapolation of meaning born of exchanges between individual realities (Crotty, 2014). The described approach lends itself well to the purposes of this research, which intends to build connections between public relations and integration through interviews with public relations and nonprofit management practitioners and service users and the resulting emergence of themes and patterns.

Participants

Sampling

This study investigates the ways in which the public relations activities within RAOs converge with concepts of integration affecting their service populations. To explore said phenomena, this study employed purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is an appropriate approach for this study, as it allows the researcher to "intentionally focus on the target group to the exclusion of other groups" (Smith, 1998, p. 5). Snowball sampling will be engaged when the researcher deems additional experts are necessary to elucidate concepts and ideas and to solicit the service-user sample described in the *Participants* section of this chapter. Babbie (2016) suggests that snowball sampling is "appropriate when the members of a special population are difficult to locate" (p.188). While personal and professional networks of the researcher provide strong connections to organization-level participants, the researcher has fewer connections within the local refugee population. Therefore, snowball sampling will likely be employed. Cresswell (2016) notes mistrust as a concern when collecting data from marginalized populations (p.139). The researcher's established relationships with what Cresswell refers to as “gatekeepers” and snowball sampling are ways in which the researcher was able to demonstrate credibility and build trust within both the professional and service-user samples.

Grounded theory sampling is guided by the concept of saturation —t he point at which no new themes are emerging, as opposed to focusing on a specific number of participants (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As such, the researcher did not enter this study with a prescribed total number of interviews to be conducted, noting Evans (2013) who cautions against assigning a specific number of interviews, as inherent to grounded theory is the notion that emerging themes and concepts may necessitate additional data collection when trying to reach a point of theoretical saturation.

The advisable number of participants to reach the point of saturation varies throughout the literature. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that it is necessary to code a minimum of 10 separate interviews in an attempt at grounded theory, while Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) suggest that when a study is conducted within a homogeneous group, a sample of 12 participants is acceptable. Hennink, Kaiser and Marconi (2016) address the quantity question by differentiating between *code saturation* and *meaning saturation.* Code saturation occurs when researchers have “heard it all” and, according to the authors, may be reached in as few as nine interviews. Whereas, achieving meaning saturation or the state where researchers “understand it all” may require 16 to 24 interviews. As data analysis was carried out simultaneously to data collection, it was necessary to engage in theoretical sampling to further explore and address ideas, themes and categories that emerged from the data provided by the initial sample. Charmaz (2014) advises the purpose of theoretical sampling is “to obtain data to help you explicate your categories” (p. 198). The author goes on to suggest that this method of sampling is “strategic, specific and systematic" (p. 199), thus enabling continued, deeper development of each category's meaning and structure.

Charmaz (2006, 2014) suggests that the nature of the research question(s) may also be used as a guide in reaching a point of theoretical saturation. As research questions increase in their breadth and complexity, it is likely that a higher number of interviews will be necessary. Acknowledging the broad scope of the overarching research question, the researcher anticipated conducting between 16 and 20 interviews, with the actual number of interviews totaling 24.

Purposive sampling allows for the selection of participants who have experienced the phenomenon being studied and best inform the research question (Cresswell, 2016; Cresswell, 2014; Flick, 2014). This research endeavored to speak with approximately 20 participants representing a combination of RAO employees and members of their service population (resettled refugees). Through purposive, theoretical and snowball sampling, the study concluded with 24 interviews, where 13 participants represented RAO professionals and 11 participants were members of the service population.

RAO Participants. Selection criteria for the purposive sample of RAO professionals included the existence of refugee services, location of organization and their professional role. Organization participants for this study were recruited by the researcher within the geographic location of Syracuse, New York. The researcher identified a homogeneous sample of 13 organization representatives using purposive sampling. It was important that participants selected for this initial inquiry practiced their craft and served populations in the same community. In doing so, the researcher was able to better control for variations in publics and services within the community. Recruiting from one community increased the likelihood that participants were active within the same community publics and had the capacity for similar public relations interactions with publics (e.g., interacting with media outlets and employing similar processes and routines for media relations). Additionally, limiting the sample to one community ensured that the service population participants, in this case refugees, had comparable access to and opportunity for the available resources and a similar integration experience.

Organization representatives were employed by 501(c)3 organizations providing resettlement and/or support services to refugee populations in Syracuse. Although public relations and communications were a primary focus of this study, existence of an employee working in a role specific to the field (e.g., employees with titles such as public relations director or communications manager) was not considered necessary, as all roles within an organization have the capacity to perform tasks and take ownership of responsibilities that are related to functions of the field. Initial sample participants represented the following roles within the organization: top executive (e.g., executive director, president, CEO); primary staff responsible for execution and/or oversight of the public relations/communications activities for the organization; fundraising and development; volunteer coordination; and programming. The initial organizations selected for inclusion in this study were Catholic Charities of Onondaga County (CCOC), InterFaith Works Center for New Americans (IFW), Hopeprint, New American Women's Empowerment (NAWE) and Refugee and Immigrant Self-Empowerment (RISE). Purposive sampling secured a non-probabilistic sample of 13 participants for this study.

Throughout the course of this research, analysis of emerging themes warranted the addition of participants who were selected based on the need to explore concepts and ideas more thoroughly for the purposes of theory development (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1978). In this case, additional participants were selected based on the apparent needs of the research and recruited either through the researcher's existing relationships or by current participants through snowball sampling and were recruited through unsolicited recommendations for additional participants based on their more in-depth understanding of the study's purpose. Both of these resulted in recruitment of additional participants within organizations and in new organizations not originally identified by the researcher.

Participant recruitment was done in person, by telephone and by email using the researcher's existing professional and personal networks. This was not only the most expedient means of connecting with ideal participants, but it also ensured that a foundation of trust and credibility existed between the researcher and participant, leading to a more comprehensive and reliable interview. Recruitment of recommended participants was done by the researcher using contact information provided by the participant recommender. In two cases, the researcher received no response and asked the participant to contact the prospective participant with a personal note vouching for the researcher and the study. In both cases, this was a successful effort. In the case of recruiting service users and theoretical sampling, the researcher used professional and personal networks and asked participants for introductions to potential participants.

Service-user Participants. Eleven participants were recruited from past and/or present users of one or more of the selected organizations' services. These persons were recruited through snowball sampling, leveraging the relationships of organization interviewees and the researcher's personal and professional contacts. Criteria for service user participants included that persons must have held refugee status as granted by the United States, must have used services provided by refugee aid organizations in Syracuse and must currently reside in Syracuse. Current immigration status was not a considered criterion. Persons who have transitioned from refugee status to green card holders or United States citizens were welcomed as participants. As this was an immigrant population, it was possible that some participants may not have possessed the English language skills necessary to participate in an in-depth interview. Employing a translator in the participant's native language was important to ensure that the questions and conversation are interpreted accurately, resulting in reliable and useable data (Cresswell, 2016). Understanding the possibility of this, the researcher established relationships with translation providers at NAWE and CCOC. Although the researcher did not incorporate English language ability into the criterion, all service-user participants demonstrated English fluency deemed acceptable to participate in the interview in a meaningful way that did not risk misinterpretation, and, therefore, translation services were not engaged.

Recruitment

Research Site. Syracuse, New York, is a medium-sized city located in the geographic center of New York state. According to the Refugee Processing Center (2019), Syracuse was the destination for 11,702 refugees between 2002 and 2018. The persons arriving in Syracuse hail from 48 countries around the world. Other cities in New York State settling a high number of refugees include Buffalo, Rochester and Utica. Syracuse is home to two federally recognized resettlement organizations, Catholic Charities of Onondaga County and InterFaith Works Center for New Americans. A 2013 report by the Onondaga Citizens League (OCL) proposes "low cost of living, job opportunities and resettlement agencies' strong working relationships with the Syracuse City School District" as reasons for the continued resettlement of refugees in the city (p. 4). The area has a 40-year history of resettling refugees and a long history as a destination for immigrants.

Loos (1897) reported that, at that time, 30,000 Syracuse residents were immigrants, representing 22% of the city's population (p.28). Of the 30,000 immigrants, the top countries of origin were Germany, Ireland and Italy. The city's northside neighborhood has long been host to a myriad of nationalities, and this continues today, as it is home to most of the cities resettled population (Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today, 2019).

U.S. Census Bureau data for the period of 2013-2017 shows an estimated total population of 144,405 for the city of Syracuse, wherein 12.5% of the city's population was foreign born and 18.3% of the population 5 years of age or older spoke a language other than English in the home. The median household income in the city was $34,716 with a per capita income of $21,187, and 32.6% of city residents were living below the poverty level as of 2017 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019).

Researcher's Relationship to Participants

The researcher in this study has professionally practiced public relations, communications and marketing for nearly 20 years in both corporate and agency settings, much of that experience occurring within the nonprofit sector, and 12 years of her practice was in Syracuse. The researcher was employed as director of communications and marketing from October 2010 to April 2013 by a funding organization in Syracuse that provided financial and/or program support to Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, InterFaith Works and RISE. It is through this organization and various nonprofit board memberships and affiliations that the researcher established and maintains relationships within the nonprofit community. This involvement has also provided the opportunity to learn about the community dynamics and nonprofit industry in Syracuse. Though the researcher continues to be active in the community and maintain relationships, it has been three years since any formal business relationship has existed between the researcher and the organizations. The absence of a business relationship provided distance from the mission and inner workings of the organizations, increasing the researcher's ability to be objective, which made it easier for the researcher to suspend expertise and preconceived notions to encourage objectivity to the greatest extent possible (Glaser & Strauss 1967). While the notion of suspension as noted in the aforementioned may be advisable, it is also advisable that the researcher have knowledge of the study subjects and contexts to assist conversation and questioning, as well as relate ideas during analysis (Evans, 2013).

Protection of human subjects

Syracuse University Institutional Review Board approved this study as "exempt" in March 2019 following receipt of the application including the informed consent document and interview tool included in appendices section of dissertation.

All participants were 18 years of age or older and were required to give informed consent. Participants were encouraged to select their preferred location for an interview. All RAO participants selected their offices for interviews. Of the service-user participants, eight interviews took place in the participant's residence, and three participated via telephone.

RAO participants and service-user participants were offered anonymity and asked to consent to audio recording. All RAO participants consented to the use of their names and the names of their organizations, and all consented to audio recording. All service-user participants consented to the use of their names and to audio-recording. The researcher made the decision to implement a code for all service-user participants regardless of their consent to being identified by name. The codes are identified by the prefix "SU" (service-user) and a number 1 through 11. Additionally, the researcher made the decision to code all RAO participants names using the prefix "RAO" followed by a number1 through 13. These identifier codes will be used in all publicly presented works, including this dissertation. The researcher believes that the decision to code participant names is the most risk averse means of identifying service-user participants, as it ensures that any data that may be interpreted as critical or to hold negative sentiment toward any organizations and entities involved in providing services will not impact the participant's receipt of services, and as a means of risk mitigation for RAO participants as well. Identifier codes and selected demographic data can be found in Appendix B.

Participants were made aware that this dissertation will be published and available in the public domain. Additionally, it was declared that findings may be published and/or presented across multiple platforms, including, but not limited to, scholarly journals, print media, broadcast media, academic and professional forums. The researcher explained her intention to provide copies of the dissertation to each participating organization with a summary document. RAO5 suggested hosting a session for all participants involved and any interested parties where the researcher would present findings in a digestible format, focusing on business application of the results. RAO5 was the first interview conducted, and the researcher made all subsequent participants aware of the possibility of the research being made public at a localized forum where members of the nonprofit and greater community may be present.

All recordings and transcriptions were stored on the researcher's password protected computer and backed up on a password protected external hard drive. All data and assigned participant identifier code list used encrypted and password protected files. All recorded content was removed from the audio recorder and transferred to the computer immediately following each interview. The researcher transcribed each digitally recorded interview personally and did not engage an outside transcription service. As stated in the informed consent by participants, all data will be stored for a duration not to exceed 10 years, at which time it will be destroyed.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews with key executives, employees and service users of refugee aid organizations in Syracuse, New York. Interviewing was selected as the primary method for data collection, as the nature of interviews allows for the sharing of one's stories, enabling the researcher to identify patterns and areas of interest to emerge (Charmaz, 2014) and to "unfold the meaning" (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 3) intrinsic to participants realities and experiences. Interviews conducted ranged between 47 minutes and 79 minutes for an average interview length of 59 minutes. conducted between May 2019 and August 2020. Interviews with RAO staff members were conducted in-person and within the walls of the participants' organizations. The setting of the place of business and face-to-face nature of the interview provided significant opportunities to observe participants in their natural work environments and streamlined access to communications collateral materials and the ability for the researcher to be introduced to additional staff who would in turn become participants. In March of 2020, the United States was severely affected by the global coronavirus pandemic, which resulted in obstacles to achieving 100% in-person interviewing. The researcher made the decision to cease in-person interviews on March 31, 2020. This decision was made as a precautionary measure regarding the health of participants, their families and the researcher. A total of three interviews took place after March 31, 2020, and were conducted by telephone. A discussion of study limitations due to COVID-19 is included in the final chapter of this document.

All interviews were audio recorded to ensure accuracy and subsequently transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Transcripts were then uploaded into a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), NVivo 12 Pro, for analysis and coding. To ensure the timely discovery and refinement of emergent themes, as is representative of the methodology described above, transcripts were analyzed throughout the data gathering process with the intent of reaching a point of saturation. The simultaneous gathering and analyzing of data allowed the researcher to test and refine the categories and, in successive interviews, to ensure that a point of saturation is reached or that properties have been fully explored and no additional properties are able to be uncovered (Charmaz, 2014; Flick, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002).

Benefits of interviews include the opportunity for the researcher to have control over the process, in-depth inquiry and access to historical information, the opportunity for follow-up questions based on needs for clarification and/or expanding upon thoughts and ideas (Babbie, 2016; Brennan, 2016; Cresswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviewing allows the researcher to ask the same questions of the participants while doing so in a flexible nature, such as changing the order of questions as they are asked, and to ask participants to expand upon thoughts and ideas as needed for clarification or the research goals (Babbie, 2016; Brennan, 2016; Cresswell, 2016; Cresswell, 2014; Charmaz, 2014).

Disadvantages or limitations to in-depth interviewing include introduction of bias, arranging interviews based on varied schedules and varied levels of access to sample, personal relationships between researcher and some participants leading to participants seeking to provide answers they believe the researcher “wants” to hear. Additionally, the researcher’s ability to restrain from sharing personal opinions or thoughts may be challenged and some participants may believe that, due to the researcher’s professional communications career, she has a stronger understanding of the ways in which the organization uses public relations and may fail to disclose pertinent information, instead assuming the researcher was already aware. Among other possible drawbacks of using interviews are lack of effective recall, varied quality in gathered responses, as not all participants as well-versed in specific aspects of their roles as others, not all participants being verbal communicators; and interviews restricting the lens through which the questions are answered to only the participant (Cresswell, 2014; Yin, 2009).

The researcher interviewed multiple participants within each RAO for the purposes of gaining more in depth understanding of the organization structure, as well as to evaluate roles and routines of communications within each organization. The sample is described in detail below. See Appendix A for the interview questionnaire and Appendix B for a thorough list of participant codes and relevant personal details.

Memos

Analytic memo writing is a foundational aspect in the researcher's execution of grounded theory methodology (Glazer and Strauss, 1967; Glaser 1978; Lempert 2013; Charmaz 2014). Through the creation of analytic memos derived from the data, the researcher is able to discover emerging patterns and foster the development of categories or themes drawn from the coding process (Charmaz, 2014; Lempert, 2013; Glaser, 1978). Moreover, through the consistent act of memo writing the researcher ensures continued and engagement with the data resulting in the advancement and interpretation of abstract ideas (Charmaz, 2014; Lempert, 2013). Charmaz (2014) contends that in addition to the aforementioned, analytic memo writing allows the researcher to "fine-tune subsequent data gathering and engage in critical reflexivity" (p. 163).

Memos played a central role in the execution of this study. Above and beyond the benefits to category development and abstraction of ideas in general, memo writing created a natural distance between the researcher's professional experience and the participant's experiences, creating opportunities for enhanced theoretical sensitivity that was not as strongly muddied by past experiences. Memo writing was engaged throughout the research process: following interviews, throughout coding and data analysis and during the process of writing findings and implications. Memos were used as described by the literature noted above — to build connections, develop categories and abstractions of the data. Incorporating memos from the beginning of the interview process provided ample opportunity to augment the interview questions and process, as thoughts and concepts were discovered and, at times, provided a means by which to disregard emerging thoughts as not as relevant as initially presumed. Memos also impacted the sampling experience by allowing the researcher to strategically communicate with participants when inquiring about and discussing recommended participants.

Memo writing was done within the NVivo software, as well as through a journaling process. The researcher always carried a notebook for the purposes of jotting and exploring thoughts, ideas and connections when not actively engaged with the data. Additionally, the researcher utilized the “voice memos” application on a mobile phone to record same. These handwritten and audio narratives and notes were subsequently transcribed into the NVivo system for the purposes of containing all memos in one location for consistency in coding and inclusion in theory development.

The constructivist approach to grounded theory includes the avoidance of “inadvertently importing taken-for-granted values and beliefs” into the work (Charmaz, 2014, p. 240). Memo writing provided a means by which to clear the mind of the researcher from ideas and analysis that were not generally rooted in the data and to make note of thoughts that were clearly driven by experience rather than born of the data. As in this case, memos were stored in NVivo to be used as reference and as reminders to avoid moving forward with experience-derived and lines of thought resulting from the researcher’s presupposition and enhancing reflexivity.

Through freewriting narrative memo writing, a tool suggested by Charmaz (2014), the researcher was able to identify connections between focused codes and create a structure for conceptual categories. Furthermore, the process enabled the researcher to discover differences between and within categories and aided in the identification of opportunities for additional analysis and ideas that may have been overlooked or excluded (Charmaz, 2014).

Coding

The researcher entered the coding process with some preconceptions based on experience and knowledge of public relations and within the context of nonprofit communications. These ideas were saved for reference in a memo format. Additionally, as the researcher transcribed each interview, she used memo writing to identify concepts, thoughts and ideas that in the moment were perceived to be of value. The overall coding process followed Charmaz's (2014) suggested two-phase approach – initial followed by focused coding (p. 113). Saldana (2016) presents six methods pertaining to grounded theory: in vivo, process, initial, focused, axial and theoretical coding (p. 55), which align well with the process for generating grounded theory as described by Strauss & Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2014). The following discusses the coding process the researcher undertook for this study. See Chapter IV for samples of the active coding process.

Initial Coding. Open or initial coding is the researcher's first step in developing meaning from raw data. This phase of coding is "provisional, comparative and grounded in the data" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 117). Analyzing data in sections provides the researcher the opportunity to deconstruct the data as discrete actions or events by applying meaning to smaller groupings of text, including words, lines and, in some cases, segments. This process is undertaken for the duration of data collection and is provisional in that sections may be recoded multiple times as the consistent comparative approach implies.

The researcher began with line-by-line coding, examining each individual interview transcript and seeking to apply meaning to each line as an independent piece of data. In some cases, words or segments were selected as the unit of analysis. Line-by-line coding transcripts helps to ensure that all meaning is extracted from the data, aids in the identification of missing information and, when performed following each participant interview, aids in obtaining additional insights and extrapolation on ideas in subsequent interviews on the quest for saturation (Holton, 2013; Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1968). In some cases, *in vivo* coding was applied. In vivo coding is derived directly from the language used by the participant during the interview to represent and maintain participant perspective and meaning (Saldaña, 2013; Charmaz, 2014). An example of in vivo coding in this study is the use of *"outside the refrigerator"* as a code for any data that implied refugee populations need services beyond the basic needs of food clothing and shelter. Simultaneously, the researcher paid close attention to participants' use of gerunds as examples of action and meaning to provide additional direction regarding specific topics and define processes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 2014).

Over the course of six months, transcripts were open coded multiple times as the researcher became more familiar and practiced with the process specific to grounded theory and became more connected to the data. Moreover, the constant comparative nature of the methodology made it necessary to review previous coding schema and to reevaluate meaning. Although initial coding is the first attempt at deriving meaning from the dataset, the practice was applied throughout the overall coding process as reviewing focused and theoretical codes to derive meaning proved valuable to the act of developing and defining themes.

Focused coding. Following the initial coding process, the researcher applied focused coding consisting of examination of first-phase codes to identify the most "significant or frequent" codes with the purpose of organizing the data, as well as the development of new codes (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113). In doing so, the researcher began the more formal process of concept development, increased abstraction and began to define the lens through which the study would approach public relations and integration. A benefit of focused coding is that the most relevant data remains a primary focus, while codes that provide less substantial information become secondary to the main study (Charmaz, 2014). Memo writing played a significant role in the focused coding process as the researcher continued to identify and evaluate emerging concepts and their hierarchical placement. Focused coding also led to the recoding of initial codes as the data became relevant in newly discovered ways and/or subject to reinterpretation by the researcher.

Theoretical Coding. The final coding phase in a grounded theory study is theoretical coding, which assists the researcher in conceptualizing the data/codes and hypothesizes the interrelationships (Holton, 2013; Saldaña, 2013; Charmaz, 2014). Theoretical coding advances the data even further from the descriptive nature of initial and focused coding, striving to develop the framework from which the theory will be developed. As in prior coding applications, memo writing was engaged to create narratives that assist in conceptualizing the ways in which themes relate to one another and to the context of the study. Furthermore, the theoretical sorting of memos "provides theoretical completeness and generates more memos…furthering and condensing the theory" (Holton, 2013, p. 284).

Trustworthiness

In the practice of qualitative research, *trustworthiness* is understood as the parallel measurement of reliability and validity used in quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Morrow, 2005; Bowen, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Four factors may be considered in establishing the trustworthiness of findings from qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This study sought to incorporate multiple means of establishing the terms with the goal of creating increased trustworthiness in this constructivist grounded theory-based research.

Credibility

Continued engagement and triangulation are two methods the researcher used to establish credibility. Triangulation was implemented through the review of secondary sources, including communications/marketing collateral, published news stories, websites and e-communications, as a means to confirm the RAOs' interview data pertaining to how and what they communicate internally and externally. This content was procured using CISION public relations and earned media software, subscribing to RAO electronic communications and by asking RAO participants for copies of unpublished communications. The researcher also implemented participant checks from the beginning to ensure that the recording of the data (transcripts) was accurate. The researcher continued to engage participants throughout the process of discovering emerging thematic concepts.

Transferability

Morrow (2005) recognizes transferability as a concept akin to external validity that can be strengthened through description of the research methodology and process, researcher involvement and the interpretation of results. To demonstrate transferability of this study, the researcher created an audit trail.

Audit Trail

"Audit trails have obvious utility in enhancing the transparency and rigor of the research process" (Bowen, 2009, p. 308). To more clearly establish the research process for the researcher and enhance confidence in the study, an audit trail was created in spring of 2019 and was revised for the duration of the study. The final audit trail is found in Table 1.

Table 1
Audit trail for public relations theory of integration study

Component	Description
Institutional Review Board (IRB)	Syracuse University Institutional Review Board approved study as exempt in March 2019; informed consent document included in appendices section of dissertation; Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) completed.
Literature review	A review of the literature was conducted prior to data collection and informed by the research questions and the researcher's knowledge of both public relations, integration, the site selected and the service population; the literature review was modified following thematic analysis to include relevant literature that emerged during analysis.
Interview protocol and instrument development	Semi-structured interview protocol was designed, and the instrument developed in February 2019, and approved as part of the exempt submission to Syracuse University IRB in March 2019
Participant selection	Criteria for participant selection was created in February 2019, approved via Syracuse University IRB in March 2019, and a list of possible participants was created by March 2019. Participant planning left room for snowball sampling based on participant recommendations.
Data collection and storage	Audio data was recorded and downloaded to a password protected PC. Said audio data was uploaded to NVivo 12 software for transcription. The software was hosted on a password protected PC and all data is backed up to an external hard drive with password protection.
Raw data	Raw data includes audio recordings of participant interviews, research memos and fieldnotes; print, broadcast and electronic communications from participating RAO organizations.
Partially processed data	Coded interview transcripts, annotated collateral materials, memos, and field notes.
Coding scheme	Line-by-line coding of 24 interview transcripts was followed by focused coding and theoretical coding resulting in the identification of the conceptual/theoretical framework as noted below.
Conceptual/ Theoretical framework	Analysis of the data resulted in the finding of three categories connecting communications functions with service-users' ability to socially integrate: 1) unmet social capital needs 2) powerlessness 3) misinformation; the overarching theme and responsibility of public relations in the process of integration according to the data is trust building
Trustworthiness techniques	Triangulation of sources including interviews, organization collateral, and media coverage pertaining to the geographic location of the study; maintaining contact with participants for follow up communication and clarification.
Research report	Dissertation submitted for review in March 2021 and submitted for defense in April 2021

Adapted from Bowen (2009).

Dependability and Confirmability

A study meeting the criteria for dependability is one that has been evaluated for its stability over time (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Evidence of dependability in qualitative research can be demonstrated through the external review of an audit trail and is likened to the concept of reliability in quantitative research (Morrow, 2005). The confirmability dimension of trustworthiness is achieved when an external reviewer confirms the cohesive relationship between the data and the resulting report. (Morrow, 2005). The audit trail provides the necessary details of the research for the reviewer. This study was reviewed by the researcher's dissertation adviser to ensure acceptable levels of dependability and reliability.

Chapter Summary

Beginning in 2019 and concluding in 2021, a constructivist approach to grounded theory was utilized to answer the overarching question: What is the role of public relations in the integration of underserved populations? The purpose being to establish a foundation for the future construction of a public relations theory of integration within the context of health and human service non-profit organizations and their service users. Following IRB approval, the researcher engaged in purposive sampling leveraging her professional and personal networks, as well as snowball sampling, to identify participants from refuge aid organization and refugee populations in Syracuse, New York. Interviews were scheduled and conducted between June 2019 and August 2020 using a semi-structured interview instrument and a protocol guided by data collection and constant comparative method. The interviews were conducted in person and by telephone, were recorded using an audio recording device and uploaded to NVivo 12 software, where they were transcribed by the researcher. Field notes were made in a notebook at the time of each interview and uploaded and attached to each participant. The researcher also followed each interview with a typewritten summary of the experience with the participant wherein initial ideas and takeaways were noted for use in analysis in order to record participant and researcher reactions and maintain real-time descriptions rich in detail.

Data analysis was a continuous process throughout collection. This analysis included the development of memos and coding of data using the aforementioned software. As is suggested by the grounded theory literature noted in this section, additional participant recruitment based on theoretical sampling was performed. The final analysis of data and additional review of the literature to confirm theory and conclusions was performed in December 2020 and January 2021.

Chapter IV: Results

The purpose of this study was to take the initial steps to explain the role that public relations has and/or should have in the integration of underserved populations serviced by health and human service nonprofit organizations. As there is a dearth of literature regarding this topic, the researcher chose to undertake this study with a specific focus on the integration of refugee populations in their resettled communities. This research employed semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data that were analyzed using a constant comparative method; emergent patterns discovered over the course of the data collection encouraged additional theoretical sampling for further data collection and incorporation of data from a prior study *Ship to shore: Exploring the influence of media relationships on refugee coverage in local news* (as suggested in the Literature Review). Lack of proactive media relations was identified early in the study and warranted contributions from said study that present findings from local news media regarding their relationships with RAOs, as well as their perceived level of understanding regarding migration, immigration and refugee issues when providing news coverage.

Research Questions

This study sought to explore the extent to which public relations has a role in the integration of populations served by human service organizations and, further, to construct the foundation for a formal public relations theory of integration. The connection between integration and public relations has not been extensively explicated in the public relations literature, and, in the case of health and human service nonprofit service users, the development of this theory has the capacity to aid organizations in overcoming the stigma and discrimination faced by their service populations, thus, enhancing users' opportunity to feel integrated into their greater communities and to proactively engage with community members. The development of this theory will aid communicators in the health and human service nonprofit sector in development of communications strategy that achieves not only business goals of the organization but provides more value to those they serve through enhanced community support and acceptance of marginalized and othered populations.

Three research questions were used to guide the inquiry:

RQ1: What is the role of public relations in the integration of underserved populations?

RQ2: To what extent does the organization's public relations function have the capacity to influence identified indicators of integration.

RQ3: How do organizations practice public relations in a way that is conducive to facilitating the integration of their service populations?

RQ3a: Do practitioners perceive public relations as pertinent to the attainment of the organization's integration-focused goals?

RQ3b: How do organizations use public relations to ready the community for optimum integration?

The research questions drove the development of semi-structured interview protocols that guided the data collection. At times, interviews explored personal anecdotes and sharing of ideas that were beyond the scope of this research or deemed irrelevant to the study but were delved into as an act of relationship and trust building between the researcher and the participant. Interview data proved fruitful and expansive; not all data are included in the findings. Rather, findings in this qualitative grounded theory study are organized by themes and higher-level categories that emerged during data analysis. These themes were then reviewed for relevance to the research questions to assist in theory development. RAO professional participants are identified by name as permission was obtained. Participants from the refugee sample were assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. To support the findings of this study, both the participants' words from the original transcripts and comparison and discussion of existing relevant literature have been included. The findings reviewed in this chapter are substantive, however, they should be considered emerging theory, as this study sought to provide initial framework and foundation from which a formal public relations theory of integration within the health and human service nonprofit space will be developed. Additional commentary regarding the intended future of theory building is discussed in "Limitations" and "Opportunities for future research" in Chapter V.

Data Analysis and Findings

Thirteen professional communicators and executive leaders of health and human service nonprofit organizations providing services to refugees, and 11 persons who identify as resettled refugees in Upstate New York participated in this study. Thirteen health and human service nonprofit organization representatives were interviewed, including four executive directors, one director of development, one communications executive, three persons whose work function is that of the communications manager, two program directors and a program officer. To ensure a homogenous sample of organization representatives, participants were sought in part based on the services offered by their organizations and the makeup of the organizational chart to include primary responsibilities. Moreover, the researcher included both the top organization executive, as well as the top communicator from each organization. Program representatives were included as the primary communicator between the organization and the service populations. In doing so, it was possible to analyze the perceived role of public relations and communications at multiple levels within the organization and to identify ways in which the functions of public relations vary within one organization.

Eleven persons self-identifying as resettled refugees were interviewed, including eight males and three females. To ensure anonymity, all refugee-participants are identified by a personal identifier "SU #" where "SU" stands for "Service User." Participant identifiers and selected demographic data for each of the refugee participant are identified in Appendix B. Key concepts in this study included communications, public relations and integration. The participants in this study provided a dynamic and varied understanding and perception of these key terms. While similarity in understanding occurred, these similarities were found within groups of participants – RAO professionals and refugee participants. Within the RAO participants, there were unique perspectives shared through the lens of the services provided, as well as the roles and personalities of each participants. Refugee participant perception of key concepts were similar, yet differences appeared that can be attributed to personal experience, age and sex. In advance of sharing results based on coding, it is necessary to establish an understanding of the participant's ideas of what the integration of refugees and the components thereof are.

RQ 3, 3a, and 3b pertain to RAO participants. It is through their responses that we understand the perspective of the organization regarding public relations and integration. RAO participants provided a myriad of responses to "What is your definition of integration?"

> I think integration happens when we find meaningful and intentional spaces…I think, and that's the only time I've ever seen it work -- ever, is when people come together and there's some kind of higher-than-them-like purpose or goal and they're working to say "Oh I have this to bring to the table" And, they're like bringing their own strengths, and then they find each other's commonalities, and then they start to hold each other's babies and start to become friends. And then when you really have achieved it is when then that space is no longer the only space they're collecting. Now they're friends outside of it. Then you're starting to get some momentum towards like… we, us, together, um, which I guess is how I would define integration. My whole-self showed up, and now it's we with my whole self. (RAO 7)

> I think I would define it [integration] as when they feel at home and safe rather than those markers [basic needs]. That's a personal one, I have no idea what the organization thinks. (RAO 2)

When asked for the definition of integration, the executive director of a federally designated resettlement agency responded:

> I think the other side of that is that the in an integrated model is the natural state, and, by that I mean, I think that's important that the "natural state" is one where the individual has the knowledge capacity and success in getting their needs met. And, uh, whether those are educational needs, health care needs, employment needs, that a fully integrated person is one who has the knowledge, capacity and success in meeting those types of needs. (RAO 5)

A follow up question to the same participant inquired whether there are specific indicators the organization has that determine when its role in resettlement is complete:

> I think it's probably not as, uh, clearly, you know, delineated or defined. Ninety days to accomplish the resettlement activity, um… so I think that resettlement experts will say the person has, you know, their successful place to live, their kids are enrolled in school, they have access to health care, and they have access to income that you're, the big part of resettlement work is done. And I think those are the kinds of things that the auditors come in and look at our work, and they are focused on those four areas, if not more.
> I would say that's the simple view of it. (RAO 5)

One may deduce from these statements that integration into a new community is not necessarily a goal of resettlement. At least not in the capacity that this study understands the term integration. What is left out of this executive-level view of integration and the resettlement process is the establishing of mutually beneficial relationships in a manner that strives to build social capital and provide opportunities. The resettlement process interpretation of integration is one that focuses on immediate access to basic needs and self-sufficiency.

Representatives from the Syracuse City School District, where most resettled families' children attend school, responded in an interesting way given the importance of such indicators of integration, such as language acquisition and education. The following is a conversation between the researcher and RAO 1, a communications administrator:

> **Researcher:** Understanding that education and language are fundamental components to the integration and that the district provides multiple services and programs to the refugee population, does the district provide any official statement regarding its role in integrating new Americans?
>
> **RAO 1:** No, I don't think so.
>
> **Researcher:** You're telling me that as the top communications professional for a district that serves multiple immigrant children and families, you have never stumbled upon a district stance, statement or even a casual mention that connects integration to the goals of the district?
>
> **RAO 1:** In the context of my role, I have not. Seems strange now that you mention it. I mean, my team is responsible for any collateral that is put out there about our programs like Bob's School – have you spoken to RAO 9? She might have more information on that… but no, I haven't seen anything formal.

This conversation led to the researcher interviewing RAO 9, whose primary role is managing a district-run program that provides adult education programs for those 21 and up. These programs include English language learning, transitional support services, casual literacy assistance (e.g., reading mail and other forms, on a case-by-case basis) and pre- and post-employment services. The services provided correlate directly to common indicators of integration discussed above, including employment, education, language acquisition and opportunities to build social capital. However, when asked for a definition of integration, and/or the participant's response clearly demonstrated that although the programs lend themselves to meeting concepts of social integration, "integration" is not top of mind when interacting in the space:

> What is integration? I mean, and I think a lot of like we take it for granted, a lot of times that we're working towards integration – you just don't think about it every day like you're doing things every day to help people get on that path but you don't consciously think about it. (RAO 9)

The primary refugee programs representative from one of the federally designated resettlement agencies provided the following when asked for a definition of integration:

> We had one group of refugees that had never been up and down stairs before. They lived in a refugee camp, so when they came they were really unfamiliar with the most basic things. And yet those kids are, you know, going to college and graduating from college and, like, they've fully become American in a way. You know they're happy, like they'll come in and they're all excited ‘cause their kids are doing well. So, I think that's the basis of it, they've succeeded they're happy here. You know I think in the beginning you miss home so much that eventually I feel like this becomes their home. (RAO 10)

The data demonstrate an inconsistent definition of what qualifies a refugee service user as "integrated." Varying from the quantifiable fulfillment of basic needs to the less tangible descriptions of when a place "becomes home" or the resettled individual has become their "whole self." Although RAO participants mention a number of indicators of integration, it is clear that there is a disconnect between the organizations seeking to assist refugees in resettling in a community and the refugees themselves. For example:

> Helping other people try to find a job, tryna get their life together, uh, me basically helping so many other countries' refugees as well, to find where they are, just like I found myself over here, basically… Understanding the new culture and understanding what I am, where I stand with people and everything like that. (SU 1)

SU 6, was a homemaker who came to Syracuse with her husband and two elementary aged daughters from Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1993. In the past, she worked in housekeeping in the healthcare field to earn money for her family. Her husband (who was not interviewed) was the primary breadwinner and held what would be considered a highly skilled factory job at a furniture manufacturer. When asked whether she felt integrated, she responded "Yes, within the Bosnian community here, I feel at home but not in Syracuse." This statement is an interesting view of integration in that the participant feels integrated and a part of her ethnic community, but not to the greater community. She continued to explain that while she was home taking care of her children, she spent the majority of her days immersed in Bosnian culture with other resettled refugees from Bosnia. Although she has strong comprehension of English language, she is not a fluent speaker and nearly 30 years later requires the assistance of translators to manage important interactions outside the home, such as doctor's appointments. In assessing her story, it is clear that her basic needs were met upon resettlement (and continue to be), yet her lack of English language skills has impeded her ability to make significant connections and build relationships outside of her ethnic community. It is not a leap in logic to suggest that these factors have also impacted her ability to provide for herself following divorce.

Two refugee participants are active in local government and agreed that to many in the community they appear to be integrated, and they consider themselves as such. One of the two is also an ethnic community leader and, as such, has had multiple opportunities to meet community members and community decision makers:

> …I got in the communities to get access to the committee. Like going to the neighborhood meetings, and going to the TNT [Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today] meetings, serving the advisory council for the chief of police, um, so, there are many areas that I got, um, opportunity to come to, whether at the camera or outside the camera, right? So, I've met so many peoples, and so many peoples have met me. This way we build the bridge of knowing each other, right, so that's how I got to the, more integration part. (SU 2)

He continued:

> It's one of the challenging stuff because, um, we came from very, very different culture. It depends on generation, as well, you know? The more younger generation that goes to the high school and college year, they have more, um, high chance of getting to the integration point very fast. Those people who didn't get chance to go to the college here, uh, have less opportunity for the integration, and the seniors, they're always missing home. Um, they have issues with the language. They have issues with the culture. They have issues with the confidence in the new country, so there are many factors that they are behind us in all ways. (SU 2)

The other participant (SU 3) active in local government acknowledge the sentiment of SU 2 and stated with regard to his own integration experience, "It would have been nearly impossible for me to integrate if I had not been lucky enough to meet good people, and if I hadn't been motivated to continue building connections. It is all about the network." Moreover, SU 2's thoughts regarding integration lend themselves well to SU 6's struggles to integrate into the greater community specifically "issues with the language…culture…confidence."

In three cases, RAO participants also identified as refugees who had been resettled in Syracuse, New York. These participants shared views like those of refugee participants, wherein it was clear that the basic needs aspects of resettlement were not the key indicators of whether they felt integrated into their new communities. This is not to say that the participants did not recognize the importance of fulfillment of these needs or the relevance of indicators, such as voting as a measure of active citizenship and integration. These participants reiterated the importance of relationships and notions of building social capital as a key factor. An executive director identifying as a refugee shared the following explanation of what constitutes integration:

> Really it is a tough, uh… situation. Integration means a lot to me in different forms. A new American person fully is integrated when he or she knows about the education system beyond high school, the health care facility, um… knows different government, different kind of government agencies, right? Understands the banking system of America, right? So, what are the dos and the don't and all those kind of stuff right…those kind of people who have the confidence together kind of put themselves into different facets of community activities -- so it's more about the number of exposure that you have to the American life. That is how what determines how much you are integrated into American society, too. But there's people who came with English but still that are closed, and they don't know those beyond their house or the Simka Tree. (RAO 6)

> I came to Syracuse as a child. I went to school where I learned English and American culture, which helped me. I saw that people who know lots of people do the best. I think that is integration, when you meet people and are comfortable meeting new people who can help you. That's why I do what I do with my organization, I want to help women have a chance to feel a part of the community. (RAO 10)

> Well integration is pretty much being part of that community. Even though you're not from the same kin. Know what I mean? So, a lot of refugees are African, so for them to integrate into the American system, they have to speak the language, They have to understand the law, and they have to understand the culture, as well. It doesn't mean they have to abandon their own culture, just that they need to be a part of that culture [American culture] to understand how people behave…So with the integration like the goal of a lot of organizations that I notice and the one we created, as well, is that we do want to bridge the gap between the refugee community and the American community so the new American and the old American, as we call them, um, in order to integrate them,

> we need to be able to have equal opportunities spread all around. So, you can't just pick one area to represent and then other area to abandon like the southside is abandoned the westside is abandoned, but that's a different story. But to integrate and be a part of the community and live in harmony with the community — that's what it means to me. (RAO 11)

As is illustrated in the data provided above, refugee participants place a high value on the importance of building relationships and making connections in their new community as a key component of integration. When comparing insights of the refugee participants and the non-refugee RAO participants, there is a disconnect. In reviewing the data from the RAO participants who do not identify as having been refugees, it is questionable as to how deeply the organizations and/or employees are considering the integration of their populations. Integration was discussed early in the interview with all individuals to gauge a baseline prior to engaging the participants in questions that would lead them to answers they felt were "right" regarding communications. The data shared below demonstrates that there is a disconnect between the service population's expectations of the organizations, and the organization's belief in its role and the role of communications in integrating populations.

Practice of Public Relations

RAO participants did not make a direct connection between their practice of public relations and the integration of their service population without being asked probing questions by the researcher (RQ3ab). With regard to the purpose of communications within the organization RAO 3 described as follows, "It's important that the agency has visibility in the community and that's one of the things we have strategically and thoughtfully gone about in trying to enhance that effort. I think that you know communications and telling people about what we're about," demonstrating a clearly asymmetrical understanding of the practice of public relations where the goals are primarily focused on awareness of the entity and its role in the community. Other participants had similar views:

> Well, it's mostly to communicate our mission and our programs to people who want to be involved with us in some way. It's to have people learn about ways where there might be points of connection, points of intersection for them as far as their service. They may want to come and volunteer with us. They may want to join our faith partners group. They may want to make donations to us or help get us connected to funding sources they know about. (RAO 8)

> Our communications department, their most significant job is to be able to accurately promote the work of Catholic Charities, across all of our programs in a way that resonates with our staff, our board and with folks who want to support us uhhhh across the community. (RAO 5)

Following probes, participants acknowledged that, in some respect, public relations is inherent to meeting integration goals. Remember here that the concept of goals for integration was foreign to them. No participant responses clearly confirmed a connection between public relations and integration as defined in Chapter II. That said, the participants did express that programs exist for what would be considered integration-focused purposes (e.g., English language and career skills programs). It is apparent that integration is not at the forefront of strategic planning when it comes to the planning and implementation of public relations initiatives.

Public relations in this research was strongly characterized by participants as the media relations function. Media relations is a consistent aspect of public relations that is mentioned within the context of readying the community for the integration of refugees. Participants identify the act of relationship building with stakeholder groups who can provide much needed services to the refugee population as a large component of the integration process. An example of this is the focus on recruiting employers who are willing to accept refugee labor, as well as interpersonal communications with stakeholders in local and state government. There are, however, exceptions to this as were voiced by one participant who noted that social media and in person events are very much the organizations' means of building connections with both their service users and the community:

> It's [services and integration] all so connected. And relationship is how you get there. So last week at the gala that's why for me this year we actually like raised real money, but historically we have not raised real money in terms of like for how much work goes into this, and people are like should we even do this, and I'm like yes! I don't care if we didn't raise a single dime from it. It is once a year when it speaks everyone's language…Our new Americans love to come to it, and the dean of Maxwell came to it and the deputy mayor, and they're all in the same room, all appreciating something together. Rubbing shoulders with each other and understanding each other in a new way, and like that is invaluable, has repeatedly demonstrated itself to be invaluable. That's more than money can buy. The end (RAO 7).

While this participant understood the value of interpersonal communication between the refugee population and an array of community members, said participant was not entirely clear that these efforts do, in fact, fall under the practice of public relations. Participants described traditional means of public relations tactics -- media relations, events, relationship building, as well as other forms, such as social media, print collateral (internal and external) and others. Yet there was no data to support a clear understanding that each of these methods could, in fact, be leveraged as a tool for the larger purpose of integrating the population.

Maximizing Trust

The ongoing process of comparing new and existing data to existing literature using the constant comparative method throughout the data analysis allowed for the emergence of patterns and explanation of processes related to the phenomena under exploration (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The initial coding process was undertaken using an open, line-by-line approach. An example of the open coding process is illustrated in Table 4.1. Initial codes were grouped into concepts through selective coding (Table 4.2), and these codes were then examined and expressed via themes and categories, a sample of which is provided in Table 4.3. As categories and themes developed through focused coding, they were compared against the original data to confirm grounding in the evidence. Further data collection was informed by the emerging themes and categories through revision to the semi-structured interview line of questioning, and theoretical sampling was employed as patterns from collected data emerged and required explication (Charmaz, 2006).

Table 2
Example of initial open coding

Initial Open Code	Interview data
Knowledge of systems	"But integration means when I know the banking system the health care system the education system that I can fully decide what kind of college with my son uh what kind of college they are able to go to and even before they start college I know ahead of time that I have to start saving now."
Relationship building	"…integration is being um someone's whole self, including their culture their story their whole self being celebrated and appreciated in such a way that then those two people coming together can share in those spaces and find their commonalities and the spaces where they can learn from each other."
Relevance of media coverage	"…it's, like I said I think we're kind of lucky here because in Syracuse we don't see a lot of really negative press about the community about the refugee community."
Information deficit	"Not provided, because we didn't have any internet, no phone, right? So, weren't able to research or anything, to study about the states and the culture, and any of the things. Everything I learned, I learned here."

The core category in a grounded theory study is the primary central theme that emerges from the analysis of the data collected (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Moreover, Charmaz 2006 suggests that theoretical sampling and the data collection process continues until the emerging concepts are fully saturated and emergence of said concepts is identified. Through the process of constant comparison of codes, the literature and raw data, three explicit categories emerged: powerlessness, unmet social capital needs and misinformation. Additionally, the researcher made strong use of memos written throughout the data collection and data analysis process, comparing and adding to the body of thought and development of concepts. It was also helpful for the researcher to adapt the analytical generalization approach, used in case study research, to connect emerging concepts of this grounded theory study to existing literature (Yin, 2010).

Table 3
Connecting emerging concepts

Stage of Theory Development	Data Deductions	
Development of Concepts	Refugees feel powerless and at the mercy of others.	Powerlessness reduces self-efficacy of the refugees.
	Misinformation leads to confusion among refugees and community. Social capital is the most important need refugees must be fulfilled to experience integration	Misinformation affects the refugees in that their expectations are not met, making them feel unsatisfied, and loss of trust in the system. Misinformation on the part of the media and community makes it difficult to develop understanding and build mutually beneficial relationships between all stakeholders that inevitably result in the ability for refugees to build social capital which is identified as their primary need
Generation of Theory	Public relations practitioners in health and human service organizations have the role of acting as the trust builders as trust underlies the components of integration noted in the emerging themes	Relationship building – trust is inherently a part of it – seek PR and trust building literature and excellence theory
Drawing of Specific Implications	It is necessary to build trust among stakeholders to Refugees – trust improves experience, can motivate seeking of opportunities Community: Messages that build trust on behalf of the refugee population to provide understanding and counteract misinformation which can enhance stigma and stereotyping which limits the capacity for social capital building – the strongest need of refugee populations to integrate Media: PR can aid in eliminating confusion and provide accurate information to the media – building trust between organizations at the local level and the media which ensures accurate information is shared with the community to enhance trust between the refugee population and the communities in which they seek to integrate Through establishment of trust, the ability to build social capital is made easier and the relationships can be established which will aid the refugee populations in being integrated.	

Contribution to Rich Insight	Trust building is where the focus of PR practitioners should be in this industry. Building trust between the organization and stakeholders so as to be a credible source of information regarding the populations they serve. Building trust among service populations so as to procure strong relationships that can be leveraged in communications through telling of stories and as spokespersons – spokespersons for the public as well as for future service recipients. We want to see the success stories in an authentic way. Truly integrated through their own empowered actions (Such as Chol and Jai running for office, Habiba starting a business etc.)	RAO/nonprofit PR practitioners do not view their role as one of supporting integration of their populations of service, rather they are focused on awareness of the brand and service population for the purposes of generating revenue to support services. Actions of the departments fall flat in the concept of trust building exercises such as proactive media relations and communicating clearly with refugee populations about the truths of resettlement.

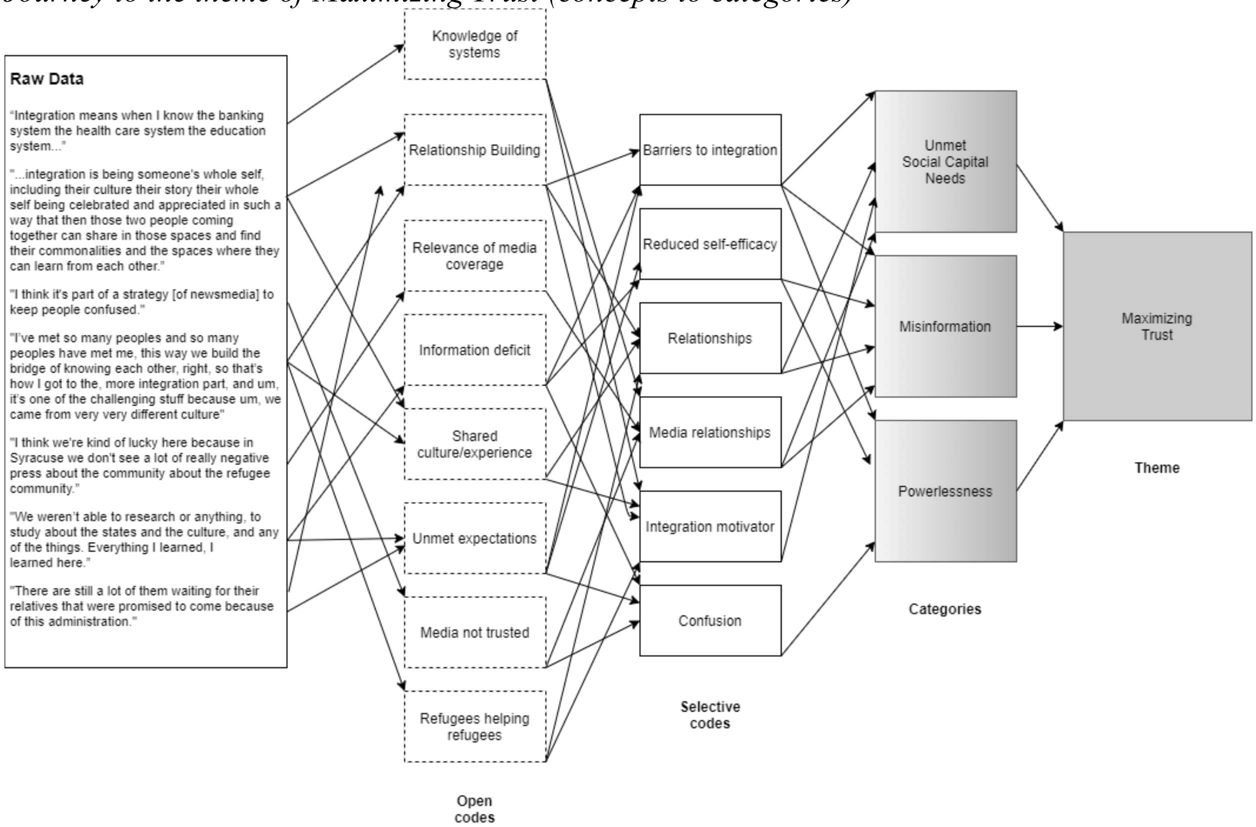
Note: Process adopted from Yin (2010)

Theoretical coding leads to the primary central theme of public relations' role being one of trust-building among stakeholders within the resettlement community. It is this that answers the questions, "What is the role of public relations in the integration of underserved populations?" (RQ1), and "To what extent does the organization's public relations function have the capacity to influence identified indicators of integration?" (RQ2). The aforementioned were informed by the data received through inquiry centered around the questions, "How do organizations practice public relations in a way that is conducive to facilitating the integration of their service populations?" (RQ3); "Do practitioners perceive public relations as pertinent to the attainment of the organization's integration-focused goals?" (RQ 3a); and "How do organizations use public relations to ready the community for optimum integration?" (RQ 3b).

Figure 2 provides a simplified depiction of the journey to the theme of "maximizing trust." The figure uses excerpts of raw data collected to illustrate the coding process that led to the determination of the overarching theme of the research.

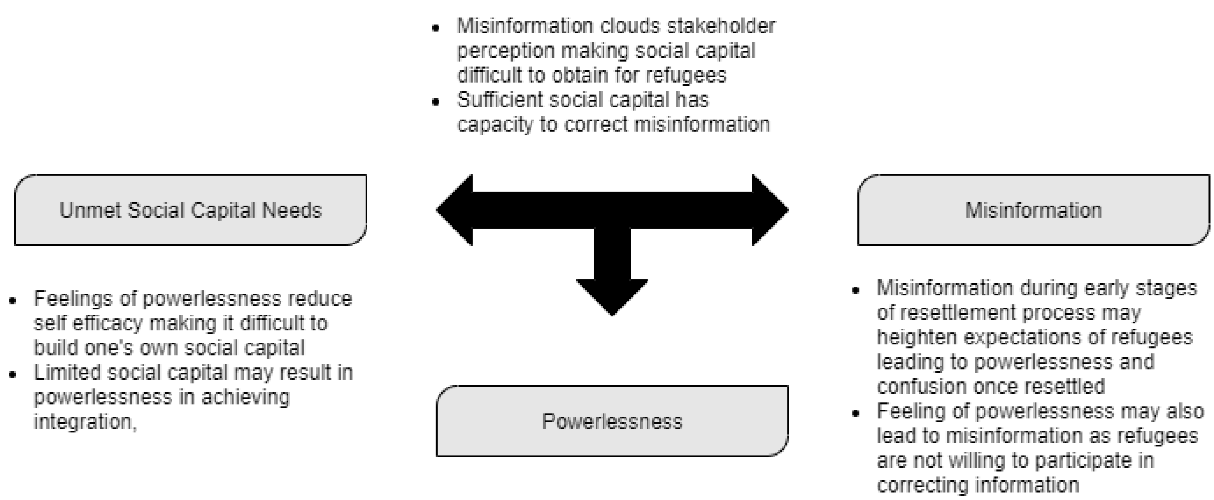
Figure 2

Journey to the theme of Maximizing Trust (concepts to categories)



The core category of *maximizing trust* explains the primary role of public relations/communications practitioners in the quest for integration of refugees into their resettlement community. The categories driving this theme include social capital, powerlessness and misinformation. The interrelationship between these three categories is illustrated in Figure 3. This category emerged through interview responses from both organization and refugee participants and the consistent review of literature within the profession of public relations, migration and integration. Furthermore, the theme of maximizing trust is seen in both pre-resettlement condition and the active and post-resettlement experience. As communication is an inherent part of the refugee resettlement process, it is important that these communications seek to maximize the trust of persons involved in refugee migratory experiences, and that they are imperative to the population's ability to achieve determinants of integration as extrapolated in Chapter 1 by communications professionals preparing community stakeholders through clear, truthful information and the implementation of mutually beneficial relationship building. The following sections discuss the categories of powerlessness, misinformation and unmet social capital needs in detail and in this order. Execution of this research has designated an order to these categories as defined by when in the refugee resettlement experience they appear to first make themselves known.

Figure 3
Interrelationship between categories



Category 1: Powerlessness

Owen 2020 suggests that "refugees often describe their experience as one of confusion, dispossession and disempowerment" (p. 59). Reasons for this feeling of *powerlessness* include the inability to make decisions for oneself due to circumstance, lack of membership (Owen, 2020) and refugee camp experiences where refugees experience a relatively passive existence

(Bjertrup et al., 2017). The results of this study confirm the state of confusion and powerlessness, including the inability to make decisions based on circumstance, limited access to outside information due to lack of communication channels in camp sinvolving the absence of telephones and internet services, lack of membership and relationships, and consistent living in the "unknown" due to lack of communication. One of the most evasive forms of powerlessness resulting from a violation of the refugees' expectations upon arrival in the United States. Where do these expectations begin? Who is responsible for setting the expectations refugees have of their future life in the United States?

According to the refugee participants in this study, these expectations are set by international bodies working on behalf of the population, specifically the United Nations. All refugee participants recalled the interview process throughout their resettlement experience. The number of interviews pre-resettlement varied by participant with anywhere from 10 to "so many I could not give you a number." What was clear from the participants is that the interviews were incredibly detailed and often repeated the same line of questioning, which, according to participants, led them, at the time, to put trust and "faith" in the organizations.

> "The interviews were very detailed. I was frustrated but happy because they were helping me. I needed help. And they were going to help me." (SU4)

> "I did not mind the interviews. There were so many. But it meant I would have my life back, so I was happy to do it! I trusted them to help me." (SU3)

In addition to interviews that sought to clarify their qualifications for refugee status, these interviews also sought to garner tastes and preferences, family relationship, education and occupation information.

> We were asked a lot about our education and our careers. I think in every interview I had to explain that I went to college and that I am a physician… Having answered that so

> many times, I thought they were helping me get a job in my profession. I was wrong. (SU1)

The overwhelming belief on the part of participants in this study was that the line of questioning focused on education and occupation intended to assist the participants in job placement in a field equivalent to their career pre-resettlement. Furthermore, participants noted being told by interviewers and agency representatives not to worry about treatment in the United States, as there is no discrimination.

> We were told that every job in the U.S. is equal, no matter what, whether you're a professor or a sandwich artist, it's the same level. No, no discrimination in the job sites, and every job is equal, whether you do housekeeping or you are a professor, right? So that's, that's we were taught in the orientation. (SU2)

When asked directly, "Did any communications between you and international agencies lead you to believe you would NOT find a job in your field?" all participants said, "no," and confirmed that they expected to arrive in their new cities and be assisted in procuring a job equal to their current career. This was not the case.

Refugees expressed that the interview process led them to believe that upon arrival in the United States, their lives would be much the same as in their country of origin. This expectation was not met by any of the participants in this study.

> I had a beautiful home in [LOCATION]. I was well-connected and lived in a good neighborhood. I was thankful to have a home when I arrived in Syracuse, but I was angry because it made us look poor and dirty. I was embarrassed. I would not send pictures to my friends. (SU8)

A macro-level view of this aspect of the refugee experience demonstrates that following the confusion and powerlessness of being released from the protections of one's own country and becoming what is tantamount to a ward of the international community, the international aid workers provided an opportunity for relationship building and the setting of positive expectations. The interviews and communication with international aid workers provided comfort and built an expectation among the participants that moving forward they would be able to return to a sense of normalcy and begin to rebuild their lives.

Powerlessness is magnified upon arrival in the United States when the expectations set abroad are not met, often beginning with a confused arrival in a major metropolitan airport. All participants interviewed for this study arrived through airports in New York, New York. Participants recalled that there was a long wait before a representative from an RAO met them, and, in some cases, no representative met them – causing them to manage connecting flights on their own.

"[Arriving in] the United States was not like I was told" (SU10).

> My family was tired. We'd been travelling for at least three days. We had little money and barely spoke English. I think we smelled because we didn't have time to bathe before leaving the camp. People stared. I was nervous and didn't know what to do. (SU2).

This study suggests that a secondary reason for the feeling of powerlessness among refugees is the breakdown of trust that begins when the expectations set through interactions between refugees and international aid workers assigned to assist refugees through the resettlement process are not met. This violation of expectations results in a reduced ability to trust aid workers in the resettlement community.

Expectancy violation theory (EVT) is a progression from Burgoon's nonverbal expectation violations theory (Burgoon, 1993). The theory argues that, based on multiple criteria during interpersonal communication, an expectation is set by the receiver. When this expectancy is violated in a negative way, it affects the relationship and communication in a negative way; whereas a positive violation of the expectation does the opposite (Burgoon, 1993). Hale and Burgoon (1988) explained a two-stage process on the part of the receiver, wherein, first the recipient of the communication makes an effort to interpret the violation, which then leads to an evaluation of the violation. This study suggests that, upon embarking on the final resettlement (travel to new land), refugee populations expect their lives in the United States to be a positive change where they are safe and have everything they need to start over. This assumption is derived based on the data provided by participants that although they may have felt powerless and confused, there was hope in arriving in the United States based on the expectations of the experiences as set through interpersonal communications with international refugee aid organizations during the resettlement process. This positive expectancy is then violated upon hearing information and experiencing situations that are counter to the expectation that was set by persons representing the international organizations facilitating the resettlement experience. This negative violation of expectations exacerbates feelings of powerlessness and distrust of the persons designated to complete their resettlement (RAO representatives).

After arriving in the United States, not only are the expectations blown up and erode trust in the system, but refugees again find themselves dealing with a power dynamic where they are reliant on others (aid workers, for example) whom they've already learned not to trust based on pre-resettlement experiences. In some cases, this dynamic is ingrained, as there has been an erosion of trust between the refugee and government organizations. Based on prior experiences with government entities that led to their current situation and the confusion caused by the often-quick process and limited information provided, RAO representatives find themselves face-to face with families who are scared and in fear of additional government intervention:

> People are often confused upon arrival and nervous about who we are. So we have to say 'No, we work for Catholic Charities. We work for a private agency. We are not working for the government.' They still don't necessarily understand, and some continue to be apprehensive. (RAO 10)

It is interesting to hear that, in some cases, resettled refugees may consider their new community no better than a refugee camp, wherein similar anxieties and feelings of powerlessness continue:

> Some continue to feel anxiety that they were having in the camps because they come here, and they're thrown into a specific area, and they're left there, and they feel like they're in refugee camp 'cause that's what was done over there. You get invited to a country. You put in a camp, and that's where you all stay. It's like a concentrated area, and that's where you all stay. (RAO 11)

It is not surprising that feelings of powerlessness continue post-camp and into the resettled community, as individuals continue to lack the social and economic resources necessary to achieve their goals and are coping with the negative violation of expectations regarding the resettlement experience. Mirowsky and Ross (2003) suggest that this powerlessness is a result of their knowledge that they are without the tools to achieve that which they seek—especially social resources that are discussed within the context of social capital.

Category 2: Misinformation

This study illustrates the consistency of misinformation throughout the refugee resettlement process. This misinformation is demonstrated in multiple aspects and among multiple stakeholders, including the refugees themselves, RAOs, news media and residents of the resettlement community.

Refugee Stakeholders

It is the early stages of the resettlement process where the initial receipt of *misinformation* is exposed. As noted above, multiple interviews and information sessions conducted by resettlement agencies are opportunities for refugees to learn about expectations of the resettling nation, as well as what they may expect as they move toward constructing a new life in a new community. As was iterated time and time again by refugee participants slated to resettle in the United States, the expectations for work in a similar if not identical industry and credential were set as something that was interpreted as a given. The culture of the United States was pitched as one where all are equal and celebrated, regardless of their occupation, race, income or other identifying factors, and that tools to ensure a successful resettlement would be provided to them upon arrival. Participant responses demonstrated that these expectations were not met, and this misinformation contributes to a depletion of trust in organizations and authorities involved in the situation.

Upon arrival in the United States, refugees are faced with the reality that native residents of the communities of resettlement have not necessarily been provided with accurate information regarding the peoples and cultures who will become a part of the community fabric. One participant recounted a quote from a fellow refugee discussing how people from Africa learn "The only way we learn, us Africans, the only way we learn is by farming." She was surprised to learn that sweeping assumptions of the education of people from Africa were being made by the school district and applied to teaching students. Juba was shocked as she has never farmed in her life; this was not her experience. Misinformation is alive and well throughout the refugee system, and one of the concerns with this is that those few members of the refugee community who choose to share their experiences are seemingly recognized by the existing community as the accurate picture of life pre-resettlement.

The category of misinformation applies to multiple stakeholders in the refugee resettlement process, all having a role in the eventual social integration of the refugee population.

Refugee Aid Organizations

Communication breakdowns affecting refugee aid organizations (RAOs) have long lasting effects on their ability to 1) ready the community for the arrival and integration of refugee populations to the community and 2) build trust with newly arrived refugees to provide the aid and assistance they need in a way that maximizes the opportunity for eventual integration. In fact, misinformation has caused confusion as human resource departments are not receiving accurate information for use in developing and executing policy-guided employment services. This has resulted in delays and disruptions in refugees' ability to find and/or maintain employment.

> We've had two companies in the last two months call us. Companies we've worked with for years say things like, "Oh well, this person's not a citizen, and they aren't legal to work in the United States. Our corporate office is telling us." And it's like, well, yes, they are able to work. They have a stamp on their immigration document that says employment authorized. So, we've had to re-provide that paperwork to two companies to prove that people can work. (RAO 9)

It is clear that RAOs exhibit fear and lack of trust where news media is concerned:

> "I think most things that the local media covers, are in reaction to something that's happened. Generally, I would say negative… the nature of what we do is really reactionary most of the time." (RAO 1)

Another participant went more deeply into the concept of the fear of consequences:

> I worry that words will get twisted or that, um, that they'll be unintended consequences, so, um, so I think we rely more on our own social media platforms and owned content to get this done. We use friendly reporters right, or we direct the story to the media when we feel it's appropriate, and then after that we kinda hold our breath that we're not getting called about something. (RAO 5)

This distrust of the media has led agencies to restrict their proactive use of the news media, This is unfortunate, as they are considered the experts on refugee and migration issues within communities, and, therefore, the experts are not controlling the narrative being received by the community through mass media communications, which leads to additional opportunity for the sharing of misinformation. Additionally, when organizations refrain from speaking to the media in this fashion, it may leave the audience questioning their trust in the organizations. As the spokespeople for the refugee population, it has the capacity to diminish trust in these “foreign” members of the community.

The media relations function of public relations provides a conduit for sending messages to community members. These messages are meant to educate and inform the general public regarding migration issues, which in turn, can be leveraged by the organizations to promote deeper understanding of the populations and the challenges they face. This is a task that would fall under the role of execution of strategic public relations. Accounting for the perceived lack of relationship building opportunities provided for refugees, public relations practitioners can broaden outreach plans and craft the narrative of the stories told through mass media, as well as social media channels. As noted above, there is a significant lack of proactive media relations implemented by refugee aid organizations. This is troubling, as news media is clear that they struggle to accurately tell the stories of refugee and migration issues without the input of their RAO partners.

News Media

In 2018, the researcher sought to explore the influence of media relationships on refugee coverage in local news and interviewed local members of the media in preparation for this study. The study also focused on the two federally recognized refugee resettlement agencies and their interactions with the media. The research found that both organizations identified are considered content experts by local news media, however, their media relations practices are ineffective. The lack of proactive media relations on the part of refugee aid organizations is a challenge to news media that are attempting to cover refugee-related news. In some cases media interaction is non-existent. “Someone told me to go to [RAO] because they don’t answer their phones,” said a reporter for Advance Media in Syracuse. An assignment desk editor felt that the RAOs in question would be an ideal source except:

> I think they [RAOs] are dropping the ball. To get any kind of information, we are having to contact professors…I'd much rather hear from someone who deals with people directly on a daily basis and knows their state of mind and knows not only the law but how the law is impacting people locally. (Television assignment desk editor)

The relationship between RAOs in general and local news media is a key factor in minimizing and mitigating the propensity for misinformation regarding refugee and migration issues. Participants in the 2017 study identified the complexities and confusion from a policy angle and noted that even when the news media aired stories that contained misinformation, there was no effort on the part of RAOs to clarify the information, leading to the community consuming local news to be receiving and communicating incorrect information. The ineffective relationship also affects the ways in which the on-air talent report the news including their level of confidence with the content and the language, specifically terminology that is used. A television journalist shared that, "When I anchor, I am always nervous that the language in my script [relative to migration] might be wrong. It's my reputation. If the service providers would be more open, we might be more confident in our coverage."

RAOs note that fear and lack of trust in the media are two justifications as to why they are not proactively communicating with local news media. Members of the media also identify fear as an obstacle though through the lens of frequent policy changes and heightened sensitivity toward migration issues during the Trump presidency "…We were trying to figure out how Trump's policies were going to impact them, and they weren't doing any interviews, and none of them have done any interviews. We're told they are in meetings all day – I think they're scared," offered a television journalist. Another member of the media considered that the organizations were not speaking to avoid involvement in policy discussions and to maintain a sense of neutrality.

The existence of sporadic or non-existent relationships between RAOs and their news media partners results in the transition of inaccuracies and misinformation of migrant and refugee issues to the community. The news media's role in the community is to inform the public, and, while it is clear that they want to be doing more, that the dearth of media relations precludes the local outlets from providing important information regarding the local resettled refugee populations that is imperative to the process of readying the community for the presence and arrival of refugees in the community. This sentiment is conveyed especially well by a television journalist:

> Everyone could be doing more. It's always the case. But if they [RAOs] aren't going to work with me, I can't get a package together, which means I'm not doing my job. And, when I am not doing my job, I can't help them be better at doing their job. (Television journalist)

The media representatives were unanimous in their opinion that they should be looking to help RAOs and the populations they serve by communicating with the audience, but they are restricted based on the lack of relationship between media and the organizations themselves.

Resettlement Community

Unfortunately, the organizations are falling short when it comes to proactively communicating their message and goals in the community. This is cause for confusion among stakeholders including the news media, who see their role as one of informers of the public, and the public in general, which is likely to have a negative effect on the ability for refugee populations to integrate in an efficient and effective fashion. Conflicting and inaccurate statements from the news media have the capacity to create confusion among the general public in the community -- and even fear. The concept of fear was especially prevalent during the

Trump administration when the screening process for refugee resettlement was not being explained properly, and the rhetoric from the administration left some with the implication that migrants bring illness, laziness and violence, among other negative social attributes, to communities. At a 2018 immigration discussion, former President Trump was quoted as saying, “We have people coming into the country or trying to come in — and we’re stopping a lot of them — but we’re taking people out of the country. You wouldn’t believe how bad these people are. These aren’t people. These are animals” (Lee, 2020). In January 2018, a member of the Trump administration contributed the following to an article appearing in The Washington Post: "…Like other nations that have merit-based immigration, President Trump is fighting for permanent solutions that make our country stronger by welcoming those who can contribute to our society, grow our economy and assimilate into our great nation" (Dawsey, 2018), implying that current immigration policy was not contributing positively to the United States.

Misinformed statements such as these, and other news shared through the media without appropriate due diligence, contribute to an environment that is not conducive to a positive resettlement and/or integration experience, leaving community members confused and even in fear of the immigrants in the community. And, certainly, making it more difficult for refugees to establish footing and build beneficial relationships in their new community. Refugee participants are also aware of the confusion caused by the media that leads to misinformation and the resulting distrust in both the media and ~~distrust~~ in the refugee population by the greater community:

> What you hear on the TV, these people are not vetted. These people are terrorist. That’s bullshit. (SU 4)
>
> People think my husband is a killer because we are from Sudan, and all they hear is about murder. No one is telling people we were the ones being murdered. (SU 5)

> I think the media is to blame for why people dislike refugees and don't want them here, especially Muslims. Nothing they say is accurate. I came from Afghanistan. I speak English, and I have a white-collar job. My family was threatened, and we had to leave. People can blame Trump, but long before him, the media has always made immigration confusing. Some people think I am an illegal alien. Then I have to explain what a refugee is, and why someone like me who is [undisclosed occupation] is a refugee. (SU 9)

> I can say the national media, uh, I think they need to come to the local level to collect uh, true story. I watch all the time, uh, I know they want to be very fact, but many times I don't hear the real story people talking by themselves. I mean, there's much coverage about the local story about refugees and immigrants in this community, um, they cover when there's something, big events going on, front line, um, but they don't do lot of those research and story about very local issues. (SU 2)

The same participant acknowledged the hesitancy on the part of nonprofits to practice proactive media relations:

> I know nonprofit. They don't want to engage with any media. I, when I working with RAO, I always had to get permission from the executive director and go out and speak as a private guy. Not as employee for RAO. (SU 2)

Category 3: Unmet Social Capital Needs

Unmet social capital needs are a primary barrier to integration of refugee populations. Refugee participants are resoundingly clear when stating that social capital is the most important aspect to achieving integration, and they unanimously agree, that though these are needed services, that is not the focus of the 90-day resettlement period. More than one participant stated that the basic needs services provided within the 90-day resettlement period are not as needed as assistance in meeting people who could be beneficial to their advancement within the community. A refugee participant summed this up well when they stated that it would be ideal if RAOs would think "outside of the refrigerator" referring to the needs of the recently resettled exceeding the necessities of food, clothing and shelter, and noting the relevance of making important community connections. "Creating a path for your own life outside the life of the life that you think 'oh yeah, now I have food in my refrigerator,' thinking outside of the refrigerator.

And saying that - outside basic needs. Those are some of the things I wish I had." (RAO 6)

Another participant shared the following:

> … you could be directed to the office that would help you get a home and food stamps, state benefits, that you could do that on your own even without an organization, but what was lacking in that 90 days and beyond was education and communication about how to meet people, how to advance, especially, um, circling back to all those interviews you went through with what you do and how you do it. You were a teacher. Would it have been beneficial to, say, have someone from the resettlement agency introduce you to someone who works at HR in the school district, and, if you had that connection and at least you could take the state teaching test, you could become a teacher? They [RAOs] don't care about I was a teacher. Um, they could connect me with someone from the school district where I can pursue my expertise and my career as a teacher, right? They don't do that. And there's not services like that. (SU 2)

In many cases of resettlement (including in the geographic location of this study), refugees are resettled in areas where there is a level of existing social capital established through personal ties and past migration of the same or similar cultures (Massey, Goldring & Durand, 1994; Massey, 1999). The existence of these networks provides newly arrived persons with a cultural similarity upon which to establish kinship connections and a support system during the adjustment period. These micro-communities exist throughout the city where this study was conducted and in many cases are sophisticated in structure. The Bhutanese community provides an example of the strategy of these communities:

> The Bhutanese community was organized from the day that they came because they sent a person [Name withheld] here who was the leader of the camps in Nepal. They sent him here first. He was supposed to be the first person here. so, basically, he could organize it for everybody. He started working for us almost right away as a case manager, and he really formed a community association right away, and as new people came in there was already this tight-knit community there to help them. So, if they're entering a supportive community, that's where people have already integrated and are successful in the community, then they tend to just follow that trend. (RAO 10)

These micro-communities provide support to their members that include cultural education, negotiation with external agencies, interpretation and, in some cases, a connection to the social capital building opportunities that many need and crave. A female participant identified herself as the community secretary for the South Sudanese population. She explained that this role is not formal in the sense that it is recognized by the greater community, but that within her micro-community it is known that she will “get things done” and “knows the right people.” She is viewed as a resource and has acted as a liaison and interpreter between newly arrived members of her micro-community and RAOs, the school district and civic agencies. She is often the community member representing the micro-community in discussions with elected officials, and the South Sudanese community trusts her to interact on their behalf. The participant’s role as the liaison to elected officials has enabled members of her micro-community to meet and engage with decision-makers and to break down obstacles that impede trust in government, as well as help to clarify misinformation through planned opportunities for information exchange. During a city election in 2018, several South Sudanese community members were hesitant about the candidates, as they did not know them, and many refugees come to their new lands with fear of government generated from experiences of persecution in their homelands. In this instance, the community secretary arranged the following event:

> We invited all of the candidates to come and all of the community members to come, and all of the community members could decide who they want to vote for. So they spoke to them individually, and they, you know, told them their goals or whatever they’re going to do, and the community got to decide who they want to vote for so that level of connection and that level of talking face-to-face with the person you are voting for give them enough comfort and also trust in the system that you know this is working. We can speak to these people and included the police sheriff which we have contact with, as well. (RAO 11)

It is social ties, such as these, where refugees are establishing footholds in the community, and per the participants in this study, while they expected to incur social connections through RAOs, it is these and other such opportunities made possible through established members of their ethnic micro community, that is their sole mechanism for building social connections.

Social Capital Perception and Action by RAOs

Interpretations of the necessity and importance of social capital from the perspective of RAO employees is varied. In some cases, especially regarding those involved directly in programming development and execution, the acknowledgement of social capital as a need to succeed and accomplish integration is evident in responses including:

> I think it's important for some people, but, again, for some people they couldn't care less. (RAO 9)

> We all know networking is important. It's all who we know like we have these sayings but then for some reason when we go to do work with low to moderate income, injustice, inequity, we never talk about network -- like there's a few books out there now about social capital and how important it is and overcoming poverty and inequity, but at this level we aren't implementing. (RAO 7)

In responses from the upper echelon of organization leadership, we see that the focus of the role of the organization is to provide the baseline basic needs to resettle. In fact, as is demonstrated below, there is a view that the onus of needs beyond the basics is put upon the refugee themselves.

> My job is to help you get some of the basics taken care of because this is a new country for you, and we want to get you off on a good start the best start -- but I am not responsible for figuring out how you're going to run an organization one day. That's totally on you, and that is part of your desire a tenacity and that is your willingness to work hard and work through obstacles. (RAO 5)

RAOs conceived and led by persons who came to the area through refugee resettlement programs understand the importance of relationships and networks in the context of social capital. A resettled refugee himself, the executive director for RISE understands the necessity of social capital in obtaining work in the United States:

> Creating networks of people that you know, creating, making sure you sustain your own connections that you create and not burning the bridge and all this kind of stuff because it will help you because it's about. Because in America it's about how much connection you have with people, sometimes to get a job. (SU 7)

He continued to relay that prior to his arrival in the United States, he was a pharmacy technician and had excellent English language skills demonstrated through the rounds of interviews during the resettlement process. It was due to these interviews that he had expectations of arriving in his new community and having access to work in his previous field. This was not the case:

> Had they given enough information about me to the people who were helping me, they could have taken me to the pharmacy because I did pharmacy tech, and all this kind of stuff. Right? They could have connected me to all that world start my life easily but no….(SU 7)

Those arriving in the United States, however, presumed that the interview content had made its way to the RAO representatives in the United States and that it would be used especially for the purposes of job procurement, or at the very least, as noted above, to make appropriate connections within the community. According to participants, the information collected in interviews was not necessarily passed through the system and either remained unknown or ignored as once arriving in Syracuse, the RAOs asked these same questions that had already been answered multiple times before.

Summary of Results

A qualitative, constructivist grounded theory study was designed and conducted to answer five research questions:

1. What is the role of public relations in the integration of underserved populations? (RQ1)
2. To what extent does the organization's public relations function have the capacity to influence identified indicators of integration? (RQ2)
3. How do organizations practice public relations in a way that is conducive to facilitating the integration of their service populations? (RQ3)

a. Do practitioners perceive public relations as pertinent to the attainment of the organization's integration-focused goals? (RQ3a)

b. How do organizations use public relations to ready the community for optimum integration? (RQ3b)

Thirteen health and human service nonprofit professionals working in refugee aid organizations and 11 participants self-identifying as refugees participated in this qualitative study that explains the ways in which the strategy and execution of public relations has a role in the integration of refugees in their resettlement community. Additionally, findings from an earlier study of news media's understanding of refugee issues and RAO relationships were included to highlight aspects of the relationship between public relations and mass communications and to evaluate the statements of the RAO professionals' perception of said relationship. Through use of the constant comparative method and grounded theory coding practices, as explained above, three core categories emerged: unmet social capital needs, misinformation and powerlessness. These three categories were analyzed using raw data, existing literature in the field of public relations and communications, and it was determined that the primary theme of this study is maximizing trust building. This study argues that the public relations function of RAOs has great capacity to influence identified indicators of integration. However, at present, neither practitioners nor executives identify integration as a communications goal, although, at its most basic levels, the public relations function seeks to build mutually beneficial relationships and has the power to leverage the accurate sharing of information through mass media channels. Once the organization formally adopts integration of populations as a goal, it is through the maximization of trust building with external audiences and the service user audience that the public relations arm can positively affect the integration of their service populations.

Chapter V: Discussion

The health and human service nonprofit space represented $2.04 trillion in revenues in 2016 in the United States (Statista Research Department, 2021). The organizations are structured with the intent to provide services to those in need in the community in the hopes of improving an individual's well-being with the intent of benefiting society. This study was inspired by the firsthand experiences of the researcher who has worked in the field of nonprofit communications and public relations for over 20 years. It is from this experience and investment in health and human service nonprofit organizations that the researcher witnessed that the users of health and human service nonprofits are underserved by their communities, frequently facing marginalization and stigmatization. Building on this assumption, the researcher sought to identify the role of the health and human service nonprofit communications professionals in the integration of said populations.

This chapter includes a discussion of the findings within the context of relevant literature regarding migration, public relations, mass communications, social capital, misinformation, concepts of power and trust building. Moreover, this chapter provides a brief discussion of the implications of this study as it relates to improved integration of refugee populations and seeks to provide foundational guidance for public relations practitioners in RAOs who endeavor to align their practice with overarching goals for integration.

Although substantive, the implications of this initial step toward a public relations theory of integration have the capacity to positively inform public relations practitioners and executive leaders in nonprofits whose service users are in need of integration into the larger community. Finally, the chapter concludes with discussion of the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research and the intention of future research by the investigator. This chapter contains discussion and suggests future research to aid in answering the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the role of public relations in the integration of underserved populations?

RQ2: To what extent does the organization's public relations function have the capacity to influence identified indicators of integration.

RQ3: How do organizations practice public relations in a way that is conducive to facilitating the integration of their service populations?

RQ3a: Do practitioners perceive public relations as pertinent to the attainment of the organization's integration-focused goals?

RQ3b: How do organizations use public relations to ready the community for optimum integration?

Summary and Implications of Findings

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory study was to identify the role of public relations in the integration of underserved populations served by health and human service nonprofit organizations in order to construct a public relations theory of integration. This study focused specifically on the integration of refugee populations served by nonprofit refugee aid organizations (RAOs) with the intent to construct a substantive theory. This study also illustrates that three key obstacles experienced by service users en route to integration are unmet social capital needs, feelings of powerlessness and misinformation. Figure 3 explains the relationship between the three obstacles – a common thread to ameliorating these obstacles and clearing the path to integration is the maximization of trust.

RAO participants see public relations as a tool focused on education and storytelling with the purpose of increasing awareness of services, service populations and of the organization itself, where the common business goal is revenue in the form of donated funds to provide services. The data gathered in this study does not demonstrate that the refugee aid organizations have established a specific goal of integration for their service populations. Two organizations are led by persons identifying as refugees who consider themselves to have integrated into their communities. Both organizations commit a considerable amount of time to not only providing basic integration-based services, such as English language learning, civics/government courses and basic needs services/assistance, but also to fostering relationships between service users and the wider community. As was discussed in the results, multiple participants credit the relationships they had the opportunity to build as the most important variable in allowing them to integrate or feel integrated. It is evident in comparing the responses from the RAO participants to the refugee participants that there is a significant disconnect regarding what the greatest need is when integration is what is being sought.

Although resettled refugees do acknowledge the value of the services provided by RAOs, refugee participants overwhelmingly expressed that the organizations are not meeting their needs in a multitude of ways that impact the traditional measures of integration. As noted above, the culmination of the results of the analysis of both RAO participants and refugee participants, demonstrate three categories affecting the integration of the population: unmet social capital needs, powerlessness and misinformation. Wherein maximizing trust is a tool for mitigating these obstacles, it is apparent that public relations' role in the integration of service user populations is that of the trust builder. The following explores the relationship between the identified categories and overarching theme of trust building.

Maximizing trust is an emerging theory of how public relations and communications practitioners in health and human service organizations can leverage their roles to mitigate misinformation about their service populations and circumstances surrounding them, transition service user populations from feelings of powerlessness to one of being empowered and to create a community environment that is ideal for the building of social capital. The emerging theory identifies the necessary two-way communication model between the public relations and communications staff and both internal and external audiences.

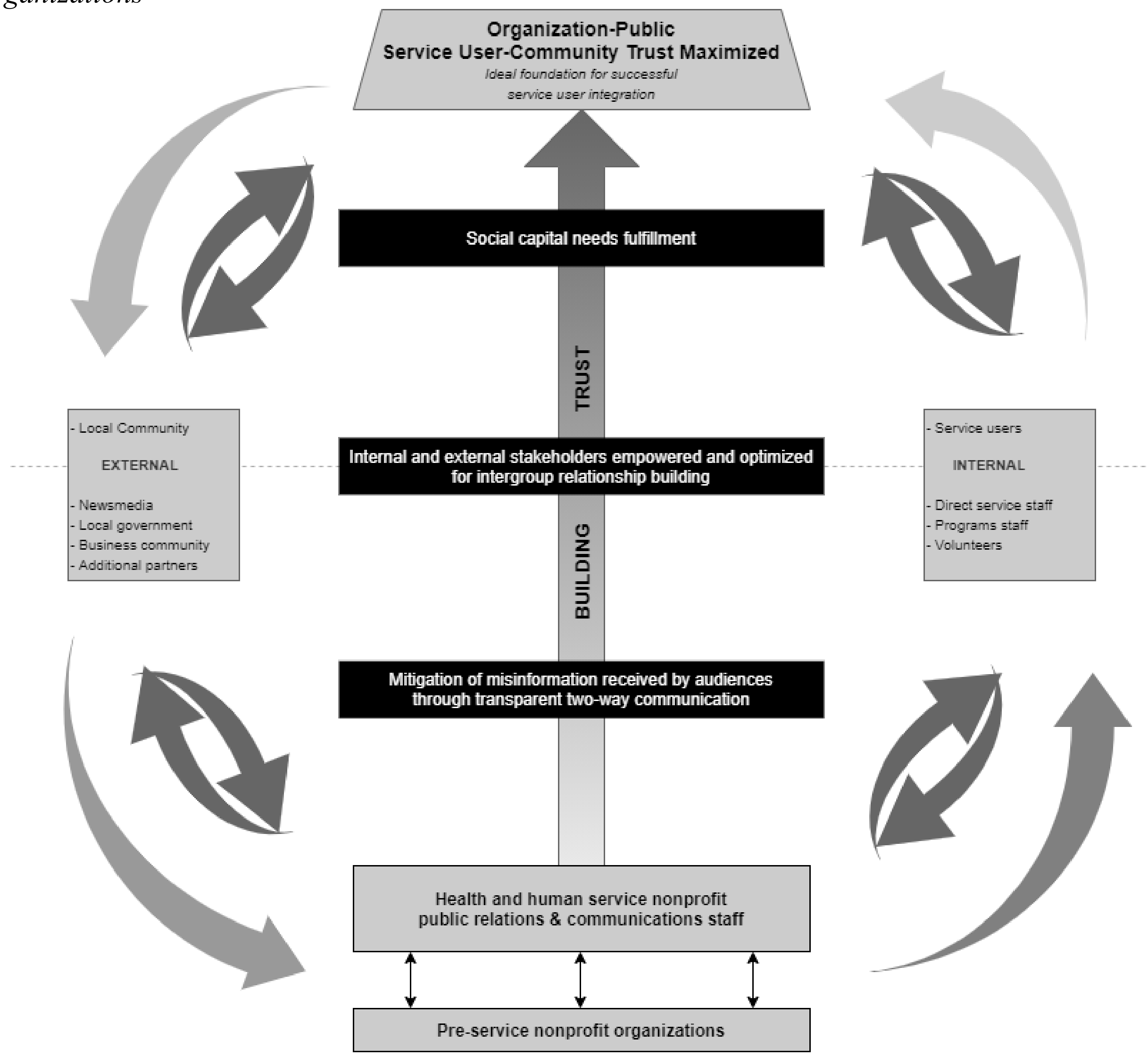
Model overview

Figure 4 illustrates the process and cycle of the emerging model of integration-focused public relations. It is relevant to note that the model and theory is constructed under the auspices that health and human service nonprofit organizations have identified the integration of their service populations as an organizational goal. As was previously mentioned, while multiple components of the indicators of integration exist within corporate goals, integrating the population in the context of the service user population's understanding of when they feel (or how they define) integration is not necessarily the goal of the organization. The scope of this study does not address the disconnects between the service user stakeholders and the executives and/or board of directors of the organization. However, it is noted that this mismatch of definitions, and perhaps expectations between the parties, could be explored in future research.

The central pillar of this model is the process of trust building, which emanates from the strategies and tactics prescribed by the public relations and communications staff of the health and human profit organizations. This study is intended to represent a multitude of health and human service nonprofit organizations, and, therefore, the model does not specify the job titles or organizational roles of the persons acting in a public relations and communications capacity. This is because organizational structures vary, and it would be a disservice to the industry to identify by title. For purposes of the model, "public relations and communications staff" is defined as any organization employee whose role contributes to defining the strategy and tactics used by the organization in a public relations role.

Figure 4

Conceptual model of Integration-focused Public Relations in health and human service nonprofit organizations



Maximizing trust

Acting as the trust builder is inherent to the role of the public relations professional. This act of trust building in public relations is primarily discussed through the lens of the organization-public relationship to construct and manage positive reputation and to enhance the capabilities of fostering mutually beneficial relationships.

Hon and Grunig (1999) establish indicators of effective organization-public relationships, among these indicators are the exchange and communal relationships, where exchange represents providing benefits to one another based on expectation or prior exchange and communal exchange occurs when "both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other—even when they get nothing in return (p. 20-21). This study suggests that in the case of health and human service nonprofit organizations, the stakeholder perceptions of trustworthiness and positive reputation are transferable to the stakeholders' perceptions of the population of service users. In effect, the public relations practitioner's ability to maintain effective relationships directly impacts the ability of their service populations to follow a minimally obstructed path to integration within their communities. In the case of the resettled refugee population, if the refugee aid organizations are managing public relations in a way that demonstrates effective relationships, then the positive stakeholder reception will transfer to the refugee populations, and, as such, the refugees will have opportunities to build mutually beneficial relationships that enable them to meet their desired outcomes and a feeling of being integrated.

There are multiple stakeholders for which health and human service nonprofit public relations professionals must establish relationships with: donors and funding sources, news media, government agencies and representatives, other service providers and nonprofits, local businesses, neighborhoods and the general public. This study suggests that service users themselves are also a primary stakeholder group. The reason for this is established within the feelings of powerlessness expressed by the refugee population as a result of prior experiences with aid organizations and the violation of their expectations.

RQ2 of this study sought to determine to what extent public relations has the capacity to influence identified indicators of integration, and the answer is, to a great extent, through the maximization of trust with community stakeholders. Although none of the RAO professional participants immediately considered the impact of public relations on the identified indicators of integration, during the interviews, RAO participants became aware that many of the communications functions they executed were in fact public relations activities.

This new perspective and the semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to ask more specific questions regarding the function of public relations in integration-focused goals. The need for relationship and social capital building opportunities was a theme among refugee participants. This notion on the part of refugees makes a clear case that public relations activities have great capacity to influence the success refugees will have in fulfilling the indicators of integration. Coleman (1988) suggests that trust breeds social capital in that it aids in the achievement of desired outcomes wherein a trustworthy environment is established, and refugee stakeholders contend that social capital is a significant obstacle to their ability to integrate into their communities. It would behoove public relations practitioners to focus on their roles as primary trust builders, not only for the organization but with the integration of populations as a strategic outcome.

Inherent to this trust building action is the practice of two-way symmetrical communication, which is illustrated in the model by the double arrows. As is shown in the model, part of nonprofit organizations' ability to effectively communicate on behalf of their service users and the organization is that there must be two-way symmetrical communication between any entities interacting with service users prior to their engagement with the nonprofit. In the case of this study, "pre-service nonprofit organizations" would include NGOs, such as the

United Nations, that are key in facilitating the resettlement experience. The participant responses shared in results identified that there is clearly a disconnect between the NGO and the RAO that contributes to misinformation shared in the community and is a barrier to the organization-service user relationship.

The model separates external stakeholders (left) from internal stakeholders (right) and illustrates important delineations within each stakeholder group using a dotted line forming quadrants. The lower left quadrant identifies news media, local government, the business community and additional organization partners as external stakeholders of the organization. The placement represents the notion that public relations and communications strategies and tactics are first implemented here among these audiences, who then take on the majority of two way-symmetrical communication with the community. As an example, the following section will discuss the strategy of media relations and the path to building relationships that are conducive to meeting integration-focused goals.

Considering that the community-at-large uses mass media sources to obtain information about migrant, refugee and immigration issues and news, it is imperative that practitioners reevaluate their relationships with these organizations. Already viewed by news media as the content experts, strengthening relationships through trust building and seeking the benefits of what Grunig and Hon (1999) refer to as a communal relationship can build trust with the community through the accurate coverage of refugee content globally, nationally and, importantly, locally. In doing so, there is the ability to mitigate and/or eliminate the flow of misinformation among the public and establish a presence for their service user population within the community. In turn, this enhances refugees' abilities to make valuable connections in the community that aid in minimizing feelings of powerlessness and increasing access to social capital.

Fukuyama (1995) defines trust as an “expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of the members of that community” (p. 26). The news media, in conjunction with public relations activities, has the capacity to inform the community and other stakeholders, such as businesses, so that the organization is a bridge of trust between stakeholders and the service user. The idea of the organization acting as a bridge provides the opportunity for service users to be exposed to relationship building opportunities that are critical to successfully reaching outcomes, including integration. The researcher uses the word “opportunity” intentionally in this statement, as it is up to each individual to make the most of each introduction or encounter. By this, we reiterate concepts of trust and look to Putnam (2000) wherein it is argued that trust is born of exchanges that are cooperative learned behaviors – in essence, the organization would fulfill the much needed role of door opener for their populations of service. Much of the knowledge resettlement communities obtain about migration comes from news media, and, as this study established, the news media is not necessarily providing accurate information. This is especially true when comparing national news to local news, where issues may differ. Moreover, it has been established that news media in resettlement areas are admittedly confused regarding migration issues. Simultaneously, RAOs admit to lacking trust in what is one of their most important tools to communicate with and ready the public for their new residents. Through proactive media relations with a goal to form meaningful relationships with news media, public relations practitioners can provide positive, accurate and timely accounts of how migration issues and the local refugee population affect the community as a whole, and, as a result, multiple barriers to integration can be reduced if not eliminated.

Proactive media relations is a key tactic for organizations, which, as this study notes, are already established as experts on issues of migration, to ready the public and adopt a role as the key trusted information source for the public. At present, organizations note fear and distrust as reasons for passive interaction with the media, when, in fact, speaking out would assist organizations' ability to meet their revenue goals through transparent communication of their actions and goals and allow them to be advocates on behalf of the refugee population – leveraging the organizations' positive reputations to build the reputation of the refugee population. Moreover, strong media relationships have the capacity to reduce negative sentiment toward immigrants by sharing positive interactions and contributions to the community, allowing the public to better understand the needs of refugee populations and their role as community members. As suggested by Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2009), the higher the quantity of positive stories about immigrants, the less problematic the public views the population. Mitigating misinformation in the community and positive depictions of the refugee population increases the confidence and feelings of empowerment among populations, as evidenced by participant responses, which make refugees more likely to capitalize on opportunities for building social capital through forming their own mutually beneficial relationships.

As external audiences are benefitting from public relations and communications outcomes, internal audiences are, as well. The lower right quadrant represents the two-way symmetrical communication between practitioners and those staff members having direct contact with service populations through transparent messaging and targeted channel usage. Persons in direct service or programming roles are able to clearly communicate information about the organization, its purpose and activities with service users. As is the case with external audiences, these exchanges aid in the mitigation of misinformation, creating an informed audience of service users. As demonstrated by the literature included in this study, accurate information that meets the expectations of the service user audience aids in reducing feelings of powerlessness, which in turn helps to build confidence and a sense of power and belonging among the group that makes interactions outside their ethnic communities more likely, and the service users begin to grown their social capital.

The top half of the model illustrates the coming together of the greater community and the service population, which, in the context of this study, is refugees. Together these groups have become accurately informed of matters occurring in the environment, and one another, which has built trust leading to empowerment to seek out opportunities to connect and build important relationships. Here we reach the pinnacle of the model, wherein we see that the organization-public relationships (lower left) and the service user-community relationships (top half) are at a point of trust maximization, and an ideal foundation for integration of service user populations exists. Finally, the model includes arrows beginning in the upper right quadrant. These arrows represent the service users experience becoming optimized to the extent that they are integrated(ing) and have become a holistic part of the cycle wherein they are participating in each aspect of the model, including becoming a part of the public relations and communications process. These arrows begin in white and transition through shades of gray, denoting the depth of the relationship with the organization, wherein, as noted previously, the service users are giving back to the organization and are aiding in the process of maximizing trust.

Limitations

There is much discussion as to the strengths and weaknesses of undertaking qualitative research. For all its strengths, such as the ability to dive more deeply into the exploration of phenomena and smaller sample sizes, those associated with qualitative methods may equally be identified as weaknesses. Additional weaknesses often associated with qualitative methods are lack of ability to identify causality based on the data collected, lack of generalizability and inability to replicate the research (Cresswell, 2014, Charmaz, 2014).

Although in-depth interviews provide excellent opportunities to delve deeper into ideas through probing and follow-up questions, reliability concerns arise in that the researcher may not be consistent in probing participant responses. The researcher has limited the scope of this project to include one population of service (refugees) and purposively selected participants representing a single county in upstate New York. In doing so, the researcher sought to isolate the practice of public relations of RAOs and to control environmental factors and community differences that may impact results. These same choices that seek to isolate a phenomenon for the purposes of developing a foundation for theory building also contribute to weaknesses of the study, as the geographic limitation and small sample size may result in data quality variations and reduce the ability to generalize data collected. Future research intends to investigate the phenomena across communities domestically and internationally.

As previously disclosed, the researcher has existing professional and personal relationships with members of the sample. These relationships may challenge the validity of the study due to bias occurring because of said relationships. Moreover, while it is of benefit for the researcher to be well-versed in her field, it is possible that the researcher's career in nonprofit public relations, much of it practiced within the geographic area of study, has contributed to validity concerns.

NVivo 12 Pro, while a time-saving software that allows for direct upload of audio files for transcription and offers multiple means of coding and visualization, is, just as any software used in qualitative research, a tool to aid in analysis. While the software assists the researcher in data analysis by acting as a data management system, it cannot complete the analysis on its own. The onus is on the researcher to understand the fundamental aspects of coding and analyzing qualitative data. While automatic coding and the query function may elicit more efficient results than traditional manual coding, these functions have their weaknesses. For example, it is possible when coding using query functionality that specific terms/phrases with identical meaning will not be captured and therefore the onus is on the researcher to be aware of these cases.

COVID-19

In March of 2020, the United States was severely affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in obstacles to achieving 100% in-person interviewing. These obstacles included the recommendations for safe social interactions announced by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including social distancing and the wearing of masks. Social distancing is described by the CDC as the practice of maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet between persons who are not from one's household (CDC, 2020). The CDC also recommends the wearing of masks simultaneous to social distancing (CDC, 2020). With these guidelines in mind, the researcher made the decision to cease in-person interviews on March 31, 2020. This decision was made as a precautionary measure regarding the health of participants, their families and the researcher. A total of three interviews occurred after March 31, 2020 and were conducted by telephone. This method of interviewing limited the researcher's ability to benefit from nuances gained through observation of the environment, in which the participant was interviewed, and cues demonstrated through body language, which may have proved valuable in describing the data being collected.

Limited Female Participation

The researcher was unable to interview a substantial number of female refugee participants due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of the researcher's connections to the refugee population resulted in male heads of households. One post-March 31 participant stated the following when asked about additional female participants, "It will be difficult for you to connect with moms and grandmas because of the pandemic. Most women I know have become even more isolated and are worried about their families…they are the caretakers" (SU3). Said participant's prediction proved true as five female participant prospects declined the opportunity citing time concerns and need to care for the family.

Recommendations for Future Research

The intent of this study was to establish a foundation from which a formal theory of integration-focused public relations may be developed. The plan for future study includes increasing the number of participants in the sample and expanding the research to include multiple groups of health and human service nonprofit service users, including, but not limited to, persons with disabilities, persons experiencing homelessness and persons experiencing food insecurity, as a means of testing the theory across the board in the realm of health and human service nonprofit organizations.

Although the researcher has an intended agenda for development of a public relations theory of integration as it applies to nonprofit service users, the findings of this study have the capacity to be expanded into more in depth studies regarding concepts of migration and the ways in which communication practices may affect the experiences of those persons in motion (e.g., migrants, refugees, asylees, immigrants). Of special interest to the researcher is the opportunity to view the building of social capital in refugee populations though the lens of domestic gastrodiplomacy. Moreover, the findings provide great potential for partnering with scholars from multiple disciplines to deeply explore the impact and/or contributions of communications on the refugee experience both pre- and post-resettlement across cultures and geographic location.

Within the field of public relations and communications, future studies could involve exploration of the collaborative benefits between communicators and departments within health and human service nonprofits, such as volunteer services and program development. As mentioned above, this study has alerted the researcher to an absence of goal-setting on the part of RAOs where integration of service users is concerned. Organizations do not appear to view integration as an organizational goal, or perhaps it is the organization's working definition of integration that is causing a disconnect. Regardless, now that this has been identified, it would be a point worthy of further exploration, as a casual interpretation of this could lead one to believe that the organization is not functioning in the best interest of its service users.

Conclusion

Public relations professionals in the health and human service nonprofit space have great capacity to influence indicators of integration based on the inherent role of public relations as the mutually beneficial relationships. To do so, practitioners must recognize the integration of their populations of service as a goal of the organization and seek to maximize trust with stakeholders to reduce obstacles and provide opportunities. First and foremost, RAOs must begin to see outside the walls of the organization and see their roles as relationship builders can do more good for the population they serve than to be focused on organization awareness for the purpose of resource allocation. An integration-centric model of public relations encourages health and human service public relations practitioners to see their roles as the primary trust builders, not only for the purposes of creating organization-public trust and relationships, but to see themselves as the bridge for the development of trust between service users and stakeholders within the community. It puts a focus on leveraging already available resources and currently implemented tactics as tools for trust building, which is ideal for nonprofit organizations, as they already consider themselves strapped for financial, human and time resources.

The media relations function of public relations provides a conduit for sending messages to community members. These messages are meant to educate and inform the general public regarding migration issues, which, in turn, can be leveraged by the organizations to promote a deeper understanding of the populations and the challenges they face. This is a task that would fall under the role of execution of strategic public relations. Accounting for the perceived lack of relationship building opportunities provided for refugees, public relations practitioners can broaden outreach plans to not only mitigate misinformation but to craft the narrative of the stories told about their service populations through mass media, as well as social media channels.

An integration-centric public relations strategy is one that provides opportunity for populations of service to gain/regain their feelings of power and open access to the pathways that provide necessary network and social capital building. Seeing the integration of service populations is not only of benefit to service users. By embracing their role as the maximizers of trust with stakeholders, the public relations practitioners continue to foster excellent organization-public relationships within the community.

Appendix A

Interview Questions: Organization Participants

1. Your organization has a marketing/communications/PR department. What do you believe the purpose of this department is?
    a. **<u>Listen for:</u>** mention of thoughts related to integration or the service population in general OR is the response primarily focused on the organization itself in the context of reputation/brand/fundraising

2. Who or which departments do you consider as having a role in your marcom/PR department? Tell me more about how [Name role/department] participates in your communications
    a. **<u>Listen for:</u>** programming, development, volunteer services; if not specifically mentioned then suggest

3. What are the goals or objectives that are set for this department?
    a. Clarifying statement if participant seems confused: *such as increase donations or greater community awareness*

4. Who are your target audiences for communications?
    a. **<u>Listen for:</u>** *donors, employees, government, news media, service users*
    b. For each stakeholder group:
        i. What makes them a target audience? What is your reasoning for reaching out to [Name Stakeholder]?
        ii. What types of communications do you provide to [Name Stakeholder]
        iii. What do you hope to gain from [Name Stakeholder] through this outreach/communication? (what are your anticipated benefits)
    c. **IF service users not identified:** Do you see the persons using your services as an audience? In what way OR Why not?
        i. In what ways do you communicate with your service users?

5. What impact do you believe PR has on your organization?
    a. Clarifying statement if participant seems confused: *an example could be cultivating donors, translating to bringing in revenue*

6. How do you define the concept of "integration?" Does this differ from the organization's definition?
    a. **Follow up:** If addressed in response nudge for additional content about language, education, work, literacy
    b. **Address social capital:** making friends and contacts

7. In your own words, what do you believe organization's role in the integration of your service population is?

8. How does the organization fulfill this role?

   a. **<u>Listen for</u>** *communications functions in response. If not mentioned acknowledge and prompt*

9. To what extent do your public relations efforts have a role in meeting your integration goals? How?/Please explain.
   a. Revisit follow-ups from Q5
   b. Revisit initial questions looking through the lens of PR as a tool for integration especially. if the participant has not made the connection.

Interview Questions: Service User (Refugee) Participants

1. In what year did you come to Syracuse? Did you travel to the US with refugee status or did you arrive in the US and apply for asylum here?

2. What prompted your travel to the United States?

3. When you heard that you would be coming to the United States what were your thoughts about that? How about Syracuse? (Good time to lighten the atmosphere with a comment about winter weather)

4. What information were you/your family provided to prepare for the journey?
   a. Did they explain the services available to you?
   b. Provide you with organizations that might be able to offer resources beyond initial resettlement?

5. What does the word "integration" mean to you? What is YOUR definition?

6. Do you consider yourself integrated into the community here in Syracuse? Why/Why not?

7. Tell me about your experiences with the organizations and what programs or resources you have used in Syracuse.

8. How did these organizations assist you in [use examples from Q5 response] to help guide you toward integrating?
   a. If response suggests the organizations did NOT assist:
      i. Why do you think that way? What was missing from the service?
      ii. How do you think that organization could do a stronger job of meeting your integration needs?

Appendix B

Research Participants

Org. Identifier	Organization	Refugee Status	Role
RAO 1	Syracuse City School District		Communications/Public Relations
RAO 2	Catholic Charities of Onondaga County		Communications/Public Relations
RAO 3	InterFaith Works		Fundraising
RAO 4	InterFaith Works		Programming
RAO 5	Catholic Charities of Onondaga County		Executive non-communications
RAO 6	RISE	Yes	Executive non-communications
RAO 7	Hopeprint		Executive non-communications
RAO 8	InterFaith Works		Executive non-communications
RAO 9	Syracuse City School District		Programming
RAO 10	Catholic Charities of Onondaga County		Programming
RAO 11	New American Women's Empowerment	Yes	Communications/Public Relations
RAO 12	InterFaith Works		Programming
RAO 13	New American Women's Empowerment	Yes	Executive non-communications

Identifier	Country of Origin	Sex	Employment	Religious Affiliation
SU1	Iraq	Male	College student	Islam
SU2	Bhutan	Male	Local politics, business owner	Hindu
SU3	South Sudan	Male	Local Politics	Catholicism
SU4	Cambodia	Male	Higher Education	Islam
SU5	South Sudan	Female	Mid-level manager	Catholicism
SU6	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Female	Housekeeping	Islam
SU7	Somalia	Male	Executive manager	Islam
SU8	Afghanistan	Female	Homemaker	Islam
SU9	Afghanistan	Male	Refused to disclose	Islam
SU10	Somalia	Male	Factory work	NA
SU11	Somalia	Male	Factory work	Islam

Appendix C

Indicators of migrant integration as defined by the Zaragoza Declaration of 2010

Policy Area	Indicators
Employment	Core Indicators: - Employment rate - Unemployment rate - Activity rate
Education	Core Indicators: - Highest educational attainment (share of population with tertiary, - Secondary and primary or less than primary education) - Share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science - Share of 30–34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment - Share of early leavers from education and training
Social Inclusion	Core indicators: - median net income – the median net income of the immigrant population as a proportion of the median net income of the total population - At risk of poverty rate – share of population with net disposable income of less than 60 per cent of national median - The share of population perceiving their health status as good or poor - Ratio of property owners to non-property owners among immigrants and the total population
Active Citizenship	Core indicators: - The share of immigrants that have acquired citizenship - The share of immigrants holding permanent or long-term residence permits - The share of immigrants among elected representatives

Source: Declaration of Zaragoza 2010. Eurostat (2011): *Indicators of Immigrant Integration.*

[2] There is currently no unified view among Member States on indicators in the area of active citizenship. Member States differ in relation to the different views, goals and regulatory frameworks of integration policies in the respective Member States. The area of active citizenship is, however, an important area of development, considering that the participation of immigrants in the democratic process as active citizens supports their integration and enhances their sense of belonging.

Cultural dimension of social integration in Jeannotte (2008)
"Elements of a Model of Social Integration"

Dimension	Level of need	Formal investment	Substantive outcome
Cultural	**Basic:** recognition and respect for identity and culture, basic cultural infrastructure	Employment equity policies, anti-racism policies, language rights, libraries, community centres, broadcasting facilities	Diverse labourforce, linguistic diversity, access to information
	Enhanced: creativity, acceptance and celebration of cultural diversity	Multiculturalism and interculturalism policies, museums, galleries, theatres, recreation facilities, investment in artists and creative industries / districts	Diversity of cultural content supply, high level of intercultural exchange, high level of cultural participation (both active and passive), high number of "creatives" in population, vibrant community cultural life

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Vita

Kelly C. Gaggin, Ph.D., APR, is an assistant teaching professor in public relations at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. She teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in the public relations department including the public diplomacy and global communications joint degree program, offered in partnership with the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

Gaggin has two decades of experience in corporate and agency environments encompassing a multitude of industries including: education, health care, technology, defense, nonprofit, tourism/hospitality and financial services/banking.

Her professional background and personal interest in world cultures motivate a research agenda rooted in exploring public relations and strategic communications as drivers of cross-cultural understanding and relationship-building with special attention to nonprofit organizations and the populations they serve.

A past president of the Central New York Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), Gaggin remains active as the current Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) chapter liaison and professional adviser for both Syracuse University and SUNY College at Oswego and is chair-elect for the PRSA Northeast District board of directors. She is a member of AEJMC and has earned the Accreditation in Public Relations (APR) credential.

In 2012, Gaggin was recognized with 40 Under Forty distinction for her career accomplishments and commitment to her community. She continues to serve her community through support of outreach initiatives and board memberships as well as lectures and programs sharing her expertise with community organizations.

Gaggin earned a Ph.D. in mass communications from Newhouse in 2021, and earned an M.S. in communications management in 2015. She completed her undergraduate study in business administration, marketing and economics at Le Moyne College in Syracuse.