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Essays on the Challenges to Labor Market Entry for Iraqi Refugees and Immigrants in the United States

Abstract

This dissertation consists of three essays that explore the relationship between the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program and the economic integration process of Iraqi refugees and immigrants in the United States. I utilize a mixed-method approach to explore the labor force activity and resettlement experiences of Iraqi refugees and immigrants. In the first paper, I explore the relationship between refugees and resettlement service providers using data obtained from interviews with service providers and multi-site participant observation at two resettlement agencies. The results indicate that ethnicity and gender have a critical influence in shaping the provision and utilization of resettlement services. In the second paper, I analyze the responses from face-to-face interviews I conducted with recently-arrived Iraqi refugees to identify the primary obstacles to socio-economic mobility they encountered during their initial resettlement in the United States. My findings suggest that the intersections of ethnicity, class, and gender interact to influence the labor force experiences of Iraqi refugees by informing job preferences and employability in the local labor market. The roles of ethnic-based social networks and institutional policies, as key components of the mode of reception, shape the refugees' decision-making processes related to housing, education, and employment. In the third paper, I use data from a pooled sample of the 2005-2012 American Community Surveys to examine the determinants of socio-economic status of Iraqis by gender and ethnicity, and to explore their variation in labor market activity by U.S. metropolitan level Iraqi immigrant population composition. The implications from the results are that the type of employment and earnings of Iraqi immigrants and refugees are significantly affected according to the degree of Iraqi residential composition. The empirical results indicate that this effect of Iraqis on socio-economic status varies by ethnicity and gender. These essays contribute to the field of sociology by adding to our understanding of how the involvement of the government and intermediary agents in the refugee resettlement process shapes the refugee's socio-economic trajectory, by contributing to the knowledge base of Iraqi socio-economic status in the U.S. within the field of migration studies, and by identifying the dynamic interactions between nationality, ethnicity, class, and gender in the labor market.

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ESSAYS ON THE CHALLENGES TO LABOR MARKET ENTRY FOR IRAQI REFUGEES AND
IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Alicia Lee

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ABSTRACT

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Alicia Lee

Emilio Parrado

This dissertation consists of three essays that explore the relationship between the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program and the economic integration process of Iraqi refugees and immigrants in the United States. I utilize a mixed-method approach to explore the labor force activity and resettlement experiences of Iraqi refugees and immigrants. In the first paper, I explore the relationship between refugees and resettlement service providers using data obtained from interviews with service providers and multi-site participant observation at two resettlement agencies. The results indicate that ethnicity and gender have a critical influence in shaping the provision and utilization of resettlement services. In the second paper, I analyze the responses from face-to-face interviews I conducted with recently-arrived Iraqi refugees to identify the primary obstacles to socio-economic mobility they encountered during their initial resettlement in the United States. My findings suggest that the intersections of ethnicity, class, and gender interact to influence the labor force experiences of Iraqi refugees by informing job preferences and employability in the local labor market. The roles of ethnic-based social networks and institutional policies, as key components of the mode of reception, shape the refugees' decision-making processes related to housing, education, and employment. In the third paper, I use data from a pooled sample of the 2005-2012 American Community Surveys to examine the determinants of socio-economic status of Iraqis by gender and ethnicity, and to explore their variation in labor market activity by U.S. metropolitan level Iraqi immigrant population composition. The implications from the results are that the type of employment and earnings of Iraqi immigrants and refugees are significantly affected according to the degree of Iraqi residential composition. The empirical results indicate that this effect of Iraqis on socio-economic status varies by ethnicity and gender. These essays contribute to the field of sociology by adding to our understanding of

how the involvement of the government and intermediary agents in the refugee resettlement process shapes the refugee's socio-economic trajectory, by contributing to the knowledge base of Iraqi socio-economic status in the U.S. within the field of migration studies, and by identifying the dynamic interactions between nationality, ethnicity, class, and gender in the labor market.

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INTRODUCTION

Refugees remain the most political and the most under-researched immigrant population in the United States. Due to recent international humanitarian crises, there are renewed efforts within the academic community to conduct research on refugees. Interdisciplinary research on the refugee population has increased over the past ten years. However, refugee research in the social sciences continues to struggle with reconciling quantitative and qualitative methodologies, obtaining access to refugees, and resolving ethical issues in data-collection techniques (Korac 2003). Commonalities observed during the resettlement process have not been developed into a grand theory of integration for refugees that transcends cultural differences. In the field of sociology, there is a demand for the development of mid-level theories to bridge the divide between global processes and local cultural studies (Castles 2003). This dissertation addresses the interaction between state assistance and refugee outcomes in an attempt to contribute to a mid-level research area that has gone relatively-unexamined in the field of sociology.

Since the creation of the Refugee Resettlement Program in 1980, the United States has resettled more than 2.95 million refugees (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2011). These refugee arrivals have become an increasingly visible and controversial immigrant group in the United States due to their relationship to the state, their diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds, and their growing proportion of the population in non-traditional immigrant cities. Although refugees comprise only ten percent of the total immigrant population in the United States, they are a unique subset of immigrants due to the state's involvement and support in their resettlement process (Hein 1993; Poppe 2010). Understanding how the government's involvement in resettlement shapes refugees' socio-economic trajectory adds to the knowledge base of the interdisciplinary field of refugee studies, and can provide insight into what services and support are influential in improving socio-economic outcomes for immigrants. In the following sections, I will outline the framework for the research, identifying the theoretical perspective, research questions, and relevance to the field of sociology.

The United States is the world leader in UNHCR refugee resettlement, accepting 53,053 refugees in FY 2012, followed by the two other traditional immigrant countries, Canada and Australia, (resettling 5,079 and 4,755 respectively)¹. The number of Iraqi refugees recognized by the United Nations (UN) has increased dramatically since 2003. However, the United States has only resettled a fraction of the Iraqi refugees; the majority of Iraqis migrated to neighboring host countries such as Jordan and Syria (Fagen 2007). According to the latest data available, the U.S. only accepted approximately half of all refugee applications from Iraq in 2003 (147 of 302 applicants), compared to an 87 percent acceptance rate for Vietnamese applicants (1,772 of 2,032 applicants) (Department of Homeland Security 2003). There are an estimated 1.8 million Iraqi refugees worldwide, and the total Iraqi population of concern is approximately 3.6 million (UNHCR 2011)².

Since 2008, the United States has resettled a record number of Iraqi refugees. In 2011, the United States administration has stated a goal of resettling at least fifty percent of the Iraqi refugees recommended by the UNHCR (UNHCR 2011). This planned increase in refugee arrivals from Iraq will have a significant impact on the resettlement service providers in the U.S., creating a prime opportunity to investigate the dynamic interactions between resettlement policies, services, and refugee integration into the host society. Iraqis have been in the top three largest groups for U.S. resettlement in the past five years, and in 2013, the U.S. admitted 19,488 Iraqis, the highest ever recorded for the country (Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration 2014). This relatively new refugee group to the U.S. provides a unique opportunity to investigate the role of the refugee resettlement program and its effect on the labor force activity of new immigrants.

¹ Only one percent of the approximately 10.5 million refugees worldwide are referred to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for resettlement (UNHCR 2012).

² The total population of concern includes internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, and returned refugees and internally displaced persons.

Renewed interest in Arab societies in Northern Africa and Western Asia (formerly known as the Middle East), is largely due to the “Arab Spring”, civil protests of late 2010 and 2011 that toppled regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Uprisings also occurred in Bahrain, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, and Morocco (UN 2011). These revolutions, combined with the official end to the eight-year U.S. war in Iraq on December 15, 2011, invite the formation of new research questions around Western Asian refugee experiences in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in the integration framework outlined by Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, which identifies the context of reception as an influential factor in the integration process of immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Refugee status in the United States affects the immigrant’s point of entry into the society - the labor force, institutions of higher education, as well as residential location. Barriers to entry into the labor force for refugees have received considerable attention among forced migration scholars, resettlement practitioners, and policymakers.

Researchers began to explore the migrant’s different points of social contact in the host society as influential factors of the socio-economic outcomes of immigrants. A new focus on the point of entry for migrants, spearheaded by research from Edna Bonacich (1973), Herbert Gans (1992), and Mary Waters (2001), lead to a quick revision of integration theory for contemporary immigration. Portes and Rumbaut’s book, *Immigrant America*, joined the advent of research on contemporary immigration, and shifted the emphasis from micro-level interactions to studying the institutional level-structural factors that affect the individual migrant’s socio-economic trajectory (1996).

The authors contend that, “For immigrants, the most relevant contexts of reception are defined by the policies of the receiving government, the conditions of the host labor market, and the characteristics of their own ethnic communities” (Portes and Rumbaut 1996:84). They describe twelve contexts of immigrant incorporation based on a combination of those three

defining factors. Of particular relevance for refugees, Portes and Rumbaut identify three types of government policies that affect the context of reception for immigrants: exclusion, passive acceptance, and active encouragement. According to this typology, refugees would classify as “type 3” beneficiaries of active encouragement by the government during the resettlement process. The typology created by Portes and Rumbaut provides a framework for understanding the impact of government policies on refugee outcomes.

The government policy toward immigrants has moved away from the notion of assimilation- where immigrants embrace a homogenous American culture and completely turn away from their own native cultural practices- and has adopted a more contemporary perspective of immigrant adaptation. This view of adaptation leaves space for a dynamic multi-dimensional interaction between the different aspects of receiving society and the migrant’s culture and beliefs. I base my analysis of integration activity on the assumption that “If the ‘society’ into which migrants are incorporated is itself fragmented and de-centered, then the incorporation process must also be fragmented.” (Freeman 2007:124).

We need a better understanding of how refugees navigate the process of integration into the host society. Resettlement research has been predominated by an approach to integration that is based on assimilation benchmarks, which evaluate the immigrants’ status by how fully they have adapted or assimilated into the presumed mainstream culture. Previous findings include varying results regarding the efficacy of social networks in establishing refugee status and in procuring employment, sufficient earnings, and adequate housing (Allen, 2009). Scholars have researched the socio-economic status of refugees over the past thirty years, and have reported that the factors with the greatest influence on employment and income are English language ability, education, gender, country of origin, and household composition (Allen, 2009; Potocky-Tripodi, 2003; Bach & Carroll-Seguin, 1986; Chiswick, 1991; Portes & Stepick, 1985; Takeda, 2000; Tran, 1991; Cortes, 2004; Waxman, 2001).

In this dissertation, I argue that the structure of the resettlement services provided by the U.S. government's Refugee Resettlement Program creates a different point of contact for particular migrants than the co-ethnic social network that their compatriots might experience who arrived in the U.S. by other means. Refugees receive structured, comprehensive resettlement assistance from the government immediately upon arrival to the United States. Thus, a refugee's introduction to the host society differs significantly from the reception experienced by all other non-refugee immigrants, even those from the same country of origin. By nature of their non-government aided arrival to the U.S., co-ethnics fleeing countries of unrest utilize different resources during their migration to the U.S., and access different social networks during their resettlement in the U.S. from those of the official refugees. Even among government-resettled refugees, the mode of incorporation differs in interactions between the institutional and individual levels. Institutional level policies such as location of resettlement and the type of social service agency responsible for aiding in the refugee's social integration, in addition to individual level factors such as ethnicity/nationality, gender, and class all interact to shape the refugee's pathway to social integration³. If the integration experience differs by reception, access to resources, and relationship to the government, what are the implications for economic and social outcomes? In this dissertation, I explore the determinants and variation of refugees' economic outcomes by gender and ethnicity, paying particular attention to the role of service providers in shaping their integration process.

³ In particular, resettlement agencies vary in the strength of their relationship with local employers, and the range and sophistication of the resettlement services (e.g. ESL classes, cultural orientation, professional development, health & nutrition, political advocacy, and ethnic community networks). The location of resettlement also influences the type and ease of initial employment opportunities based on the local labor market.

Dissertation Chapter Summaries

My dissertation research is a study of immigrant integration. The majority of sociological research on this topic has relied on the experiences of immigrants from traditional sending countries to create a framework for understanding the process of integration and socio-economic mobility. I explore the integration experiences of refugees and asylees, from non-traditional source countries, who have a unique relationship with the state that leads to a different mode of incorporation compared to economic migrants. My research examines one aspect of incorporation, economic, among a particular group of refugees and asylees to explore their experiences navigating the multi-faceted resettlement process. I analyze the obstacles to employment and labor-force activity of Iraqi refugees and immigrants in the United States. I use a mixed-method research design that combines a quantitative analysis of U.S. Census survey data with ethnographic data collected through participant-observation and in-depth interviews with refugees and service providers.

This dissertation is a compilation of three articles on the labor force activity and resettlement experiences of Iraqi refugees in the United States. In the introduction, I outline the framework for the research, identifying the theoretical perspective, research questions, and relevance to the field of sociology.

In the first article, I provide a historical overview of the Refugee Resettlement Program in the United States to provide context for the integration process experienced by the Iraqi refugees. I conduct an analysis of the refugees' access and utilization of resettlement agency services, and the policies and procedures that influence residential location, enrollment in higher education, and labor force activity. I use data collected from face-to-face interviews with service providers from three resettlement agencies, and multi-site observational data of resettlement agency policies, practices, and service provider-client interaction. The results indicate that ethnicity and gender have a critical influence in shaping the provision and utilization of resettlement services.

In the second article, I analyze qualitative data regarding resettlement experiences of Iraqi refugees. I examine class, ethnic, and gender differences in resettlement experiences, perceptions of the U.S., educational aspirations, and occupational preferences. I identify the major challenges to employment and professional development for Iraqi refugees using data gathered from my face-to-face interviews with recently resettled Iraqi refugees on the West Coast of the United States. My findings suggest that the intersections of ethnicity, class, and gender interact to influence the labor force experiences of Iraqi refugees by informing job preferences and employability in the local labor market. The roles of ethnic-based social networks and institutional policies, as key components of the mode of reception, shape the refugees' decision-making processes related to housing, education, and employment.

In the third article, I document a profile of Iraqi refugees in the United States. Using pooled data sets from the 2005-12 American Community Surveys, I use Ordinary Least Squares and logistic regression to analyze the determinants of socio-economic status of Iraqis by gender and ethnicity. I examine the effect of ethnicity, gender, and residing in metropolitan areas with large Iraqi communities on the immigrants' employment rate and earnings. The implications from the results are that the type of employment and earnings of Iraqi immigrants and refugees are significantly affected according to the degree of Iraqi residential composition. The empirical results indicate that this effect of Iraqis on socio-economic status varies by ethnicity and gender.

CHAPTER 1

Refugees and Volags: Exploring the Relationship between Refugee Labor Force Activity and U.S. Refugee Resettlement Services

Abstract

Since the creation of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program over thirty years ago, limited institutional-level research has been conducted on the role of the resettlement program in the immigrant incorporation process for refugees and asylees. In this article, I conduct an institutional-level analysis of the refugee resettlement process of Iraqis, examining the access and utilization of resettlement agency services by refugees, and the policies and procedures that influence their labor force activity. I analyze data collected from participant observation at multiple resettlement agencies and key informant interviews from resettlement service providers in order to identify the policies and procedures that shape economic activity of refugees. My research contributes to the literature on immigrant incorporation. My findings illuminate the influence of ethnicity, gender, and class in shaping employment activity and institutional practices related to the immigrant incorporation process. The findings have implications for the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program effectiveness in assisting refugees to obtain long-term financial independence in skill-matched employment.

Introduction

Since the creation of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program over thirty years ago, few changes have been made regarding the program goals and implementation of services. The objective has remained on immediate economic self-sufficiency, while the preferred resettlement strategy has vacillated from refugee dispersal to creating refugee enclaves by emphasizing placement in pre-existing communities. Refugees who arrive in the United States under the auspices of the resettlement network receive a blitz of assistance that is expected to launch them on a path with socio-economic trajectory into the working class. Analyzing the role of the resettlement agencies in the immigrant incorporation process will illuminate how the institutional structures of the program interact with individual and community level factors to shape the socio-economic trajectory of the refugees.

Since 2007, which marks the beginning of U.S. efforts to increase processing of Iraqi refugee claims, more than 100,000 Iraqis have been admitted into the U.S. through the resettlement program. Approximately ten percent of Iraqis entered with Special Immigrant Visas granted to those who aided the U.S. military or nonprofit organization in Iraq (Office of Refugee

Resettlement 2013). Due to Iraq's unique history as both a country with ethnic-based sectarian violence and as a target for U.S military intervention, where many Iraqis aided the U.S. and international organizations, it is important to examine the intersections of ethnicity, gender, and class during the resettlement process to understand how it might have a unique effect on the Iraqi refugee group experience.

In this article, I conduct an analysis of the refugee resettlement process, examining how refugees access and utilize resettlement agency services, and the role of the service provider in directing first job placements. I argue that these factors shape the socio-economic trajectory of refugees. I include in this analysis the policies and procedures that influence residential location, job preferences, and professional development. The results of this study of Iraqi refugee experience will help us understand how government intervention shapes the reception of refugees and influences their social and economic integration into the host society.

Refugee Resettlement Overview

Refugee resettlement is a complex process that involves the coordination of governments, international organizations, and nonprofit organizations. The U.S. Government, the United Nations, and international organizations work together to identify, investigate, and approve individual refugee applications around the world. In order to receive the status of refugee, the individual must flee their native country for fear of persecution that meets one of the UN recognized protected groups⁴. Unless specifically permitted by the U.S., refugees must petition the U.S. while they are both outside of their country of origin and outside of the United States. They are required to petition while they are residing in a third country, termed the country of temporary asylum. The asylum countries usually border their country of origin. The asylum grant

⁴ The U.N. states that refugees are individuals who fled their country of origin for fear of persecution based on the following affiliations: ethnic, religious, political or membership with a particular social group.

is not the end of the resettlement event but only marks the beginning of the immigrant's official resettlement period in the host country. After the immigrant obtains an asylum grant from the State Department, he or she is now legally defined as a refugee, and is eligible to receive resettlement services from a nonprofit organization contracted by the State Department.

The process of receiving refugee status by the United States can take place one of two ways, in the United States, or abroad. Individuals who arrive to the U.S. prior to gaining refugee status are legally defined as asylees. Asylees can petition for refugee status after arrival and receive many of the same benefits accorded to refugees. Individuals who petition the U.S. while they are still outside of the country are referred to as refugees. In the following section, I detail an overview of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program to provide context for my analysis of the interaction between institutional policies and the refugee's individual decision-making process.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has established the definition of internationally displaced people that is used by the global community. The international laws regarding the status of the refugee originate from the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol, which 143 states have signed. The United States used the definition for approximately thirty years until a revision became necessary due to the continued creation of different refugee groups around the world. While the global number of refugees has remained relatively steady over the past ten years, the definitions of refugees and other displaced persons has changed in recognition of the complexity of the nature of forced migration.

The 1951 U.N. Convention only provided refugee status to individuals who were experiencing the necessary conditions at that moment in time. It did not make any provisions for the status of future displaced persons. The United States drafted The Refugee Act of 1980 to provide a legal guideline (largely based on the U.N. definition) for determining refugee status as well as to create provisions for regular admissions for future refugee groups. The Immigration and Nationality Act definition is as follows:

(A) any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, or

(B) in such circumstances as the President after appropriate consultation (as defined in section 207(e) of this Act) may specify, any person who is within the country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, within the country in which such person is habitually residing, and who is persecuted or who has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

INA 101 (42) act of June 27, 1952, ch. 477, codified, as amended, at 8 U.S.C. §§ 1101 *et seq.* The Refugee Act is P.L. 96-212, March 17, 1980.

Resettlement

Resettlement in a third country is one of the three durable solutions articulated by the UNHCR to their plight (UNHCR 2005). It is often used as a last resort after voluntary repatriation and local integration are no longer an option. The U.S. resettlement program operates on a priority system determined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Three priority levels exist for evaluating which refugee group to resettle first. Priority 1 is given to individual cases that are referred by the UNHCR, a U.S. Embassy, or a non-governmental organization. Priority 2 is reserved for groups of special concern identified by the Department of State, in consultation with DHS/BCIS, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UNHCR, and other experts. Priority 3 is assigned to immediate family members (spouses, unmarried children, and parents) of persons residing permanently in the U.S (UNHCR 2009).

Iraqi refugees are admitted into the U.S. under two visa categories, “refugee” or “SIV” (Special Immigrant Visa). One of the primary distinctions between Iraqi refugees and SIVs is that SIVs obtain legal permanent residency upon admission to the U.S. while refugees have to wait to apply for residency after living in the U.S. for one year. Iraqis can receive SIV status while still working and living in Iraq, while refugees must apply for refugee status while outside of their country of origin. Once in the United States, SIVs are eligible to enroll in the Refugee Resettlement Program to receive the same resettlement services and assistance as refugees, but

only if they submit a program enrollment request within ten days of admission into the United States.

According to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS 2009) SIVs may be available to those who meet the following criteria, "Iraqi nationals who supported the U.S. armed forces or Chief of Mission authority as translators or interpreters, or Iraqi nationals who were or are employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government in Iraq on or after March 20, 2003, for a period of at least one year." The 2010 Department of Defense Appropriations Act expanded the SIVs public benefit eligibility to become comparable with refugee benefits:

"Iraqis Associated with the United States Under various Priority 2 designations, including those set forth in the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, employees of the U.S. government, a U.S. government-funded contractor or grantee, and U.S. media and NGOs working in Iraq, and certain family members of such employees, as well as beneficiaries of approved I-130 (immigrant visa) petitions, are eligible for refugee processing in Iraq." Pg 11.
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/148671.pdf>

The unique relationship between Iraqi refugees and the United States lies largely with the source of many refugees' persecution rooted in their decision to assist the U.S. military operation in Iraq. The "Special Immigrant" visas were conferred on Iraqis who worked on U.S. military bases, or worked as employees of U.S. or international nonprofit or humanitarian organizations.

While the legal distinction of a refugee from an asylee is based on the immigrants' location during the time of their status requests, the distinction between a political and an economic migrant is based on much more convoluted criteria. It is not feasible to separate out economic factors from political motivations. It is difficult to isolate the exact cause, especially because political instability and economic crisis often beget each other. The decision to emigrate is often a complex product of several factors. Dividing immigrants into mutually exclusive dichotomous categories is not a valid measure to evaluate an immigrant's "true" motivations and subsequently the credibility of their asylum claims. It is argued that instead of looking at immigrants as either economic migrants or political refugees it is more accurate to view them as a

combination of both, or alternatively, to view it less as categories and more as a continuum (Freedman 2007).

In addition to establishing motivation, the number of individuals who arrive in the U.S. due to a fear of persecution in their country of origin is undercounted. As many immigrants can leverage their social or human capital to gain entry into the United States through other means. They can arrive in the U.S. under family reunification visas, employment, education, or visitor visas, instead of under refugee status, making it difficult to identify all political migrants who arrived in the U.S. for fear of persecution in their native country.

U.S. Refugee Admissions Program

The United States did not have an official refugee policy until the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980. Prior to the passage of this legislation, the U.S. primarily used ad-hoc policies to address refugee arrival flows. The surge in arrivals from European refugees during World War II was managed by the execution of The Displaced Persons Act of 1948. Following the 1948 act, several policies were enacted to support additional European flows. However, it was the overwhelming number of Vietnamese and Indochinese refugees entering the country during the late 1970s that called attention to the fact that the U.S. had no infrastructure in place to address the needs of this particular immigrant group. The group was resettled using funds from a Refugee Task Force (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2014). In response to this lack of preparation and dearth of resources available to provide adequate support to the refugees, the U.S. moved away from the use of ad-hoc group specific legislation and enacted the Refugee Act of 1980 to provide comprehensive policies, protection, and a standing budget for future refugee arrivals.

The Refugee Act established annual refugee admission ceilings, which were to be determined by the President after consultation with Congress; it also created the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), which administers the Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP), a public-private partnership appointed to provide the initial reception and settlement services to recently-arrived refugees. Although the annual ceilings have been revised each year since 1980

to take into account the shifting international crises, the ceiling levels from 1980 to 1983 are the highest ever recorded, reflecting the magnitude of instability created during the U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia (see Figure 1a and 1b).

The refugee admission program was born out of foreign policy interests and evolved due to the development of an international humanitarian regime. Prior to the Refugee Act of 1980, refugees were narrowly defined as individuals fleeing Communist countries. The term “refugee” was originally created to serve as a political tool to demoralize and create dissension within countries that were at war with the United States. War refugees were seen as political collateral, tools, to obtain an advantage over the enemy and create the perception of being morally superior to their enemies (Keely 2001). The United States did not intend to resettle refugees for purely humanitarian reasons. However, now that the majority of contemporary refugees are humanitarian refugees from non-Communist countries, the response by the administration has changed and the reception policy has shifted. The Refugee Act attempted to remove explicit foreign policy and ideological preferences from its refugee definition and admissions policy. The definition articulated in the Refugee Act emphasizes humanitarian concerns over ideology, but the application of the asylum policy has arguably been inconsistent and flawed (Zucker and Zucker, 1991).

The State Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) were at odds regarding refugee admissions throughout the 1980s due to the competing interests of the two agencies. The State Department assigned admission ceilings to countries that furthered the foreign policy and ideology of the United States. The INS often broke with the State Department’s interests and implemented the admission policy based on domestic pressure and budget concerns, as increased admissions raised resettlement costs and large flows of ethnic groups created xenophobic backlash among certain constituents (Zucker and Zucker 1991). The conflicting interests within the refugee program have been described in the following way, “ ... Congress, despite its intentions, created a monster when it provided for the granting of asylum:

the asylum apparatus has the body of a border control officer and the mind of a foreign policy bureaucrat.” (Zucker and Zucker pg. 239:1991).

Refugees from communist regimes were the groups the U.S. desired to resettle under the third durable solution, “permanent resettlement in a third country”. The resettlement program was not designed with the goal of repatriation or asylum. It was thought that communism would remain the organizing social structure in the refugee’s country of origin; consequently, repatriation would not be possible or desired. The international refugee regime was constructed in such a way by the developed countries so that the responsibility of asylum, in the transient sense, fell on neighboring developing countries, while the developed countries focused their efforts on providing permanent resettlement.

Refugee Resettlement Program Review

As stated previously, the RRP is designed to function as a public-private partnership. Federal, state, and private organizations all participate in the resettlement of refugees. The RRP operates in three federal agencies: the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) in the Department of State (DOS), and the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The refugee program currently consists of four separate resettlement approaches: the State-administered programs, the Alternative Programs (Public/Private Partnerships, the Wilson/Fish program, and the Match Grant program), the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program, and Discretionary Grant Programs. The State-administered refugee resettlement program serves as the primary channel for federal resettlement assistance; refugees receive support in the form of cash and medical assistance. The program also includes social services to refugees and care of unaccompanied refugee children (ORR 2007). This article focuses on the Alternative Programs that involve partnering with nonprofit organizations in Matching Grant and State administered Programs.

The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program currently collaborates with nine nonprofit organizations (that have about 350 affiliates) to provide initial reception and replacement services to refugees. The nonprofit organizations are known as volags and they receive funding from the ORR to administer services to the refugee community (See Figure 2 for the resettlement process diagram). Recently-arrived refugees initially receive services through a grant program called Reception and Placement cooperative agreements (R&P) made with the U.S. Department of State and volags. These organizations provide comprehensive social services for the newcomers for the first 30 to 90 days. In FY 2014, the State Department allotted from \$900 to \$1,875 to each refugee during this initial period to cover most expenses. After R&P, the refugees will then begin to receive cash and health benefits through one of several ORR programs, Refugee Social Services (RSS), Matching Grant (MG), Targeted Assistance Program (TAP), or Targeted Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The type of assistance the refugees receive depends on the eligibility requirements, but they can expect to receive 180 days of case management, cash assistance, and at least 30 days of housing subsidies.

The following three additional immigrant groups are eligible to receive the ORR program benefits: Amerasians from Vietnam, certain Cubans and Haitians, and victims of human trafficking. Only refugee families with children under the age of 18 are eligible to receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. Elderly refugees and those who have a disability are eligible for assistance from the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. These same refugees are eligible for Medicaid program assistance for low-income people (Annual Report to Congress 2007). Refugees who meet the income eligibility standards but not the household composition requirements for TANF are eligible to receive benefits from the Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA) (e.g., single adults). Program eligibility is limited to the initial eight months in the United States.

The U.S. Refugee Processing Center (RPC), located in Arlington, Virginia, is responsible for assigning refugee groups to particular states and volags. Currently, RPC holds quarterly tele-

conferences with the national volag affiliates to discuss resettlement placements for incoming refugee arrivals. The volags are selected based on criteria that include agency capacity and prior performance, recommendations from federal, state, and local officials. The cities selected as sites for refugee resettlement are chosen due to their history of low welfare utilization and a favorable earned income potential relative to the cost of living (ORR 2005). RPC also considers the availability of social services and established social support groups within the prospective resettlement areas in the decision-making process.

Volags are responsible for receiving the refugees in the designated host city and providing them with the necessary social and economic services to assist their transition into American society. For the first 120 days these agencies provide the refugees with comprehensive support (i.e., money for food, clothing, and housing), while the agencies initiate English language and employment programs geared toward preparing the refugees as quickly as possible for entry into the workforce. The ORR also provides eight months of cash and health insurance for refugees through separate programs. Volags are able to receive ORR funds for discretionary services aimed to assist refugees for up to five years from the time of their arrival.

The performance indicators monitored by ORR reporting includes client caseload, employment, time to employment, average wage at employment, job retention after 90 days, entered employment with health benefits (full-time job with health benefits available), termination or reduction in assistance due to earnings (exceeded minimum income requirement). The ORR, using three factors, (1) employment status, (2) English proficiency, and (3) independence of welfare services, evaluates successful integration into the American society. The government measures employment status by the employment-to-population ratio (EPR), labor-force participation rate, and unemployment rate. English proficiency and independence of welfare services are determined through refugees' self-reports on the ORR annual survey. The ORR, operating under the State Department, conducts an annual survey of a random sample of all U.S.

refugees who have resided in this country for less than five years. Analysis of the data collected by this survey is limited to regional comparisons of refugee groups.

The ORR also holds an annual consultation with all of the volags, invited refugees, and various stakeholders in the resettlement community to evaluate the resettlement program, discuss changes to program policies, elicit the opinions of different stakeholders on identifying the primary areas for improvement, and relate success stories. The Annual Consultation of 2011 produced a number of recommendations to alleviate hardships due to recertification obstacles, quality of transportation, LGBT refugee training, and health disparities among others.

Fiscal Year 2011 was the last annual report to Congress submitted by ORR. The FY 2010 report was released early in 2013, which is over two years after the January 31, 2011 deadline. The annual report included the major survey findings related to refugee employment and income. The survey results indicate that 51.2 percent of refugees 16 years old and older were employed at the time of the survey in 2010, compared to the national average of 58.3 percent. The refugee unemployment rate was 22 percent compared to the national average of 9 percent. The majority of refugee households reported that they were self-sufficient (67.8 percent). Approximately 26.4 received any kind of cash assistance, 12 percent received housing assistance, and 12 percent received cash assistance from the Supplemental Security Income program while 49 percent received medical assistance (ORR 2010). Refugees from the Middle East had the highest unemployment rate (48 percent), the lowest proportion looking for work (55 percent), and the highest proportion of households receiving SNAP assistance (82 percent for Middle Eastern refugees compared to 63 percent sample average).

The RRP is a complex system that operates on the local, national, and international stage, and relies on the coordination of a host of government and non-profit organizations to administer resettlement services. The priorities and execution of the program are subject to political influences and sensitive to changes in the economic climate. The effect of these policies and the provision of services to refugees is the central area of interest for my research. The next

section will provide a discussion of how the field of sociology has explored the intersection of institutional factors and individual decision-making during the process of immigrant integration.

Literature Review

In the field of refugee resettlement, the intersections of nationality, gender, class, and ethnicity create a dynamic migration process that simultaneously influences institutional, community, and individual level actions. In order to examine these multiple layers of interaction, I review two separate bodies of literature, gendered migration and the welfare state. Each field contributes to our understanding of an aspect of the resettlement process.

Gendered Migration

The major research findings in the study of gendered migration indicate that the migration process presents different challenges for women than it does for men. The opportunity structures, access to networks, cultural expectations of behavior, labor demand, familial responsibility, human capital, and state migration policies are all shaped by gender in both sending and receiving countries. Similarly, refugee flows are also gendered because of both international definitions of persecution and cultural influences that create different migration and travel patterns for women compared to men. Male-dominated temporary worker flows in the West Asia region and a U.N. refugee definition that currently excludes gender-based persecution are such examples of gendered migration.

There has been a significant amount of research conducted on the role of the national immigration policies concerning labor programs (e.g., Bracero Program), and on entry policies toward undocumented migrants. Immigration policies have a strong influence on the type shape and flow of migration. The government bases admission policies on preferences driven by a combination of labor demand, family values, and humanitarian or foreign policy goals. Refugees are a particularly unique political construct, a result of international geopolitical power plays, and political unrest at home, they lie at the intersection of political manipulation and humanitarianism. The types of migrants accepted under these policies and the political climate of both the host and

sending countries determine who is able to migrate, or “flee” in this case, and to which country, and when (Piper 2006).

Gender is pervasive in law, public discourse, and government programs associated with immigrants and refugees (Mahler and Pessar 2006). Gendered norms regarding the protection of domestic issues from government regulation disproportionately affects immigrant women, as they are more likely to be victims of family violence than are men. Conflict over issues of sovereignty and international human rights have a profound impact on women’s migration. Issues of spousal abuse, cultural traditions of female circumcision, religious mandates of social inequality and restrictive movement, dress, and access to education have all garnered international attention and criticism, primarily in societies of East Africa and the Middle East (Bhabha 1996; Pessar and Mahler 2006). The criteria for refugee status do not include persecution based on gender; as a result, all the aforementioned abuses have been contested internationally as grounds for refugee status. (Cohen 2007; Kahn and Whittington 1996).

The U.S. has proportionally more female migrants than any other country, indicating the growth of female-intensive industries in the U.S., particularly garment factories and health care, over the past two decades (Freedman 2007). Unfortunately, studies indicate that women migrants receive lower returns on human capital than do their male counterparts. Men are better able to transfer into highly skilled jobs than are women due to the gender segregated labor market. The areas of concentration for male migrants have a greater demand for labor through formal employment and migration than do the female industries (Freedman 2007). Previous research identifies human capital characteristics as having a strong influence on employment rate among women (Read and Cohen 2007; Cohen and Bianchi 1999; Kahn and Whittington 1996).

Mamgain and Collins (2003) identify English-speaking proficiency and U.S. work experience as the primary determinants of higher wages and employment for refugees in Portland, Maine. Drawing from qualitative data from local Volags in Portland, the authors contend that the most successful employment strategies include establishing social connections with

members of the city's dominant racial group. Co-ethnic contacts are useful in obtaining entry-level employment, but for refugees searching for higher-paying positions, it is networking with whites, the dominant racial group, that is most effective. The scholars found that local work experience was the strongest predictor of higher wages for male refugees, suggesting that it is better to be underemployed than unemployed.

Research continues to support the role of educational attainment as one of the primary determinants of labor force participation for immigrants (Read and Cohen 2007). The relationship between education and labor market outcomes varies by ethnic group. Latinas show a positive relationship while some Asian groups do not show a significant influence of education on labor-force participation. As a result, migration scholars have called for a revised theory for immigrant labor-market outcomes that incorporates the heterogeneity of the immigrant population (Read and Cohen 2007; Espiritu 2001; Gold 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003; Min 1997; Dallalfar 1994). The field of migration studies needs more research that analyzes the relationship between gender and labor force participation during the process of immigrant incorporation among refugees, who have greater access to formal support services upon initial resettlement than non-refugee migrants do.

Welfare State

The study of the gendered welfare state began in the early 1980s amid the wave of feminist research. The central question guiding this area of research asks how gender shapes and in turn is shaped by the welfare state. The leading theorists in the field explain how assumptions about gender inform the policies and practices of welfare regimes and are institutionalized in the overarching structure of the state organization. Thus, the social programs available to citizens will either reaffirm or modify the existing gender relations on the micro and meso-levels (Sainsbury 1994). In this new field of inquiry, scholars have engaged in constructive debates regarding the conceptual framework for studying the interaction of the gendered welfare states on micro and meso-level social dynamics.

Orloff (1996) defines the welfare state as a state that takes responsibility for mediating social and market forces to maintain a certain degree of equality. The welfare state of western societies is commonly identified as the department and programs within the government that are designed to provide social and economic assistance to its citizens. Common examples of welfare assistance are financial assistance to the poor, unemployed, retired, and disabled. However, contemporary researchers have added daycare services, housing, education, and medical aid to the list of programs provided by the welfare state (Orloff 1996).

Defining the welfare state as gendered is to acknowledge the variation in treatment and experience by gender in state interactions as well as to identify the role of the state in influencing differentiated access to its resources (Sainsbury 1994). Welfare regimes are traditionally analyzed through the power resource theory, which identified three areas where welfare policies were most influential; states, markets, and families (Esping-Andersen 1990; Orloff 2009). Voluntary organizations are a recent addition to the triumvirate expounded by Esping-Andersen, in an attempt by scholars to bring the third sector, which has a long history of supporting families, into the conversation of social welfare (Orloff 2003). Early research on welfare regimes utilized typologies to compare policy outcomes across nations. The primary feminist critique of this approach is that the typologies are constructed from a class perspective, neglecting issues of gender and race in the formulation. Thus, the typologies are not consistent within each category with respect to policies that are family-focused, as opposed to those that are centered on the wage laborer (Korpi 2000; Orloff 2009).

The literature on the gendered welfare regime has focused on three major policy areas, the labor market, financial support, and reproduction. Welfare policies have been criticized for basing the level of service provision allotted to families on the division of labor found in nuclear families. These policies assume men are the primary economic providers in the household and that women's primary responsibility is to provide the unpaid domestic, or care, work (Orloff 1996). The consequence of this assumption is that it leads to another assumption, that the man resides

in a single-income household, and thus receives a “family wage”, from his employer that is intended to support his entire family. It is argued that the differentiated claim basis for welfare social provision by gender perpetuates gender inequality. Men are more likely to receive social support based on employment claims (such as unemployment benefits), while women are more likely to receive service based on her role in her family, as either the wife or the mother (e.g., TANF). The masculine program serves as a safety net against labor market failures while the latter serves as support for family-based problems (Orloff 1996).

More research is now being conducted that explores the ability of individuals to influence the gendered interaction between welfare policy and micro-level social processes. Although the state has been largely analyzed on its single level, Haney (1996), among others, has explored how the state influences social life on multiple levels. They have studied how gender interacts with different social structures and processes from Capitol Hill, where legislation on social policies is produced, to the effect of policies on gender relations in the household.

Cultural barriers have been identified as one of the primary explanations for low social service utilization among low –income and immigrant groups (Allard et al 2003). The proportion of immigrants that utilize welfare benefits is approximately 15 percent (Census 2011). Studies on the local level execution of welfare state policies identify the interaction of race in the gendered welfare system. Historical research by Quadagno (1994) shows how local welfare service agencies can provide an ideal venue to observe the micro-level interaction of state, gender, and race that takes place when she documents how blacks are discriminated against by agency employees. Other research has reported that blacks were not provided equal access to mother-friendly welfare state policies such as mothers’ pensions or maternal health programs, lending support to the call for more research that disaggregates women in their analysis (Orloff 1996).

Haney’s (2006) study of women in the correctional system, adds another layer to this theory, through his identification that the state welfare regime being executed largely by women staff at the local level can create tension caused by conflicting interests. The type of interaction of

patriarchal pressure from the macro-state level is at times shaped by those responsible for its implementation at the ground level, which works to produce different outcomes. Haney asserts that the state is better understood as fragmented with multiple levels of interaction, which allows for varying outcomes. Agency is also brought into this micro-level view of the gendered welfare state. At this level, individual acts of resistance by women employees and welfare clients can subvert patriarchal goals of gender inequality.

Analysis of the service providers who engage with clients on behalf of the government, are defined as street-level bureaucrats in a seminal work conducted by Michael Lipsky (1980). The street level bureaucrats are responsible for implementing policies and enforcing the rules and regulations of the government. These local level actors are the face of public policy. Lipsky's research analyzes how individual discretion influences the outcomes of clients. He also addresses the conflict between the clients' needs and the program's performance expectations. Identifying the power dynamic between the service provider and the client is critical to understanding the role the institutional policies have on client outcomes. Applying the perspective of street-level bureaucrats to understanding the relationship between volags and refugees can enhance our understanding of the influence the volags have as the gatekeepers not only to citizenship, but also to labor market entry and financial self-sufficiency.

There has been significant research conducted on the influence of service providers in the refugee's resettlement experiences. Nawyn (2010) explored the reproduction of gender and racial inequality through the policies of the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program and the personal interaction of refugees with refugee service providers or NGO subcontractors. Nawyn finds that the emphasis on employment among newly arrived refugees leads to resettlement agencies encouraging refugees to take low-skilled jobs that are historically conducted by minorities and women, thereby reproducing racial and gender job segregation. Scholars have suggested the refugees' relationship with the state for economic assistance has made them more dependent on the government than other immigrants and is a primary factor in shaping different paths for

refugees compared to other immigrants. Additionally, the agencies themselves are seen as reinforcing the U.S. based gender and ethnic hierarchies with refugee clients (Nawyn 2010; Bach 1988; Hein 1993).

This review of literature highlights the role of the welfare state, and in particular, the RRP, as a critical resource to labor market entry for newly arrived refugees. There are gaps in the literature related to the intersection between class, gender, and ethnicity within the execution of the welfare state assistance to immigrant groups. I have formulated the following questions to guide my research: (1) How do resettlement program service providers influence the labor force activity of their refugee clients? (2) How does ethnicity influence the types of services the clients receive? (3) How is the provision and utilization of resettlement services gendered? The findings from this research will contribute to our understanding of how gender and ethnicity shape interactions between service provider and client in the resettlement program.

Data and Methods

I selected a qualitative approach to capture the attitudes, interpretations, and experiences, of the service providers and to observe the actual interactions in real-time to gain a richer perspective of the client-provider dynamic (Mahler and Pessar 2006). Qualitative research is the preferred method among forced migration scholars (Korac 2003; Robinson 1993). I collected data from face-to-face interviews with service providers and participant observation of service provider-client interaction from three resettlement agencies to explore the influence of institutional policies on individual labor force outcomes.

The resettlement agencies were located in three urban areas in the U.S. (a Southwest city, a Northeast city, and a Southeast city). I used purposive sampling to select the research sites to include non-religious and religious-affiliated volags. With approval from the Internal Review Board at the University of Pennsylvania, I conducted interviews between September 2010 and May 2011. I also engaged in participant observation at resettlement agencies as a volunteer between June 2010 and August 2011, and as a job developer between October 2012 and

February 2013. During my time as a job developer, I worked one-on-one with over 45 refugees, participated in employment orientation seminars, and conducted online job search workshops with over 30 refugees.

The face-to-face interviews were conducted with four service providers from different resettlement agencies and immigration services in one city on the East Coast. Following traditional qualitative research methods, I used purpose sampling, as the goal of is to understand the experiences of a unique group and not obtain statistical generalizability (Glaser and Strauss 1967). In order to obtain the interview sample, I sent emails to the directors of the primary resettlement agencies in the city informing them about my dissertation research and requesting an interview. I received favorable responses from all the agencies and I was able to schedule appointments with a representative from each. Three of the participants were native-born white women and one of the participants was a native-born white male. They all had several years of experience working with diverse refugee populations. The interviews were held at their places of employment and were conducted in a semi-structured conversational format. They were all audio-recorded and ranged from 45 minutes to two hours. I referenced a guide throughout the interview to ensure that central topics of interest were discussed, although they did not have to occur in a specific order. The interviews included questions from the following topics: Volag collaboration, refugee group comparisons, labor force activity, housing assistance, social networks, and general attitudes and comments about the resettlement process.

Qualitative Data Analysis

I applied the grounded theory framework (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to direct the data collection and analysis. Glaser and Strauss developed a deductive research approach whereby the data guides the theoretical framework instead of collecting data directed by pre-conceived hypotheses. Grounded theory promotes a participatory and dynamic relationship with the data, as ideas are continually refined throughout the collection process. Accordingly, I entered intentionally

into the field with only guiding questions, allowing the inductive process to refine my research focus, and I conducted in-depth interviews until themes emerged.

I analyzed the field notes taken during my interactions at the resettlement agencies for common patterns, themes, and associations. I transcribed the audio-recorded interviews, and then entered the text into Atlas.ti 5.0, a qualitative analysis software program, for thematic coding and interpretation. Then, I analyzed the qualitative data from the volag interviews about their experiences and interpretations of the various dimensions of resettlement, with an emphasis on how gender shapes these experiences. I identified common themes articulated by the service providers that described their experiences during their involvement in the refugees' housing and employment decision-making processes. Pseudonyms are used for all individuals included in this study to protect their identities.

Results

Ethnicity, class, and gender were salient forces that interacted during the provision of resettlement services between the service providers and the refugees. The following three primary areas of significance for service provider-client interaction emerged from the data: (1) Service providers expressed ethnic-based differences for refugee employment prospects, job search activity, and utilization of resettlement services, (2) Ethnic and class differences in refugee social capital and relationship with service providers; (3) Gender differences in relationship with service providers and job search activity.

Service Provider-Client Interaction

The resettlement network has a strong influence on the outcomes of refugees. The interaction of policies and preferences within the educational system, labor force market, and government programs affect the refugees' economic activity (McCoy and Masuch 2007). Functioning as an intervening variable, the role of the volags as executed through the caseworkers and employment specialists shape the labor force opportunities for refugees and asylees.

The refugee resettlement services are developing their emphasis and internal capabilities to provide comprehensive pre and post-employment services to the refugees and asylees. Increasingly more employment programs and specialized positions are being created to allow the service provider to focus on job-readiness activities, employment counseling, and employer outreach. This growing specialization within resettlement service providers emphasizes the interest of the ORR in having a greater role in directing employment outcomes.

The majority of the face-to-face client-employment specialist interaction takes place during scheduled job search meetings. Initially, there is a formal orientation meeting, which is then followed by irregular job search meetings that last approximately thirty minutes to provide the client with assistance creating resumes, applying to jobs, preparing for interviews, and giving overall job search advice. Compliance with the employment program rules requires the client to participate in all interviews and apply for all jobs referred to them by their employment specialist.

The critical decision point arrives when refugees who are enrolled into the employment program sign a binding document that states they will accept the first available job or risk losing their cash assistance and face expulsion from the program. This agreement to accept the first available job, which is commonly a job their employment specialist identifies for them, and coordinates, (e.g., submits their resume, applications, and schedules interviews) generally without the prior knowledge of the refugee, submits the refugee to the will and preferences of their employment specialist and the employment program staff. The employment program staff members do evaluate the skills of their caseload and make recommendations based on personality, English-speaking ability, and probability of retention. However, on occasion the employer's interests are also included in the decision-making process, requiring the team to assume the role as a "staffing agency" or position themselves as serving the employer's interests as opposed to those of the refugee client's. The motivation behind this shift in priority comes from the desire to develop ongoing relationships with local employers that result in steady job placement for clients, and a good performance rating for the employee.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the resettlement service providers are typical of nonprofit organizations, i.e., young, college-educated, inexperienced female work force. The staff is purposefully ethnically and linguistically diverse, and often reflects the predominant countries of origin in the organizations current caseload, to serve the needs of the clients better. Nevertheless, the foundation of the staff is the young, white, liberal female. The turnover rate is remarkably high and varies by department. The employment services staff members tended to have higher retention rates than the caseworkers. When I inquired about this disparity, I was told that the caseworkers suffer from “burn-out”; they have a much higher client caseload and a wider-ranging list of responsibilities that require home visits, out-of-office activities, and frequent office meetings, in addition to receiving clients for impromptu visits, compared to the employment team.

The Power Relationship: Power & Employment Team

The employment team, serving as a “street level bureaucrat” to use Lipsky’s definition (1980), exerts power by deciding who to officially enroll or “intake” into the program and when. They expressed a preference to intake clients who have demonstrated a high degree of employability, i.e., those who have already participated in interviews or received a job offer. The employment specialists delay intaking individuals who do not appear motivated, are likely to secondary migrate to another state, or have English-skills that are inadequate for the workplace. This strategy results in under-reporting the true time to employment and actual low-wages for first job that many newly arrived refugees experience. The intake decision-making process was created as a strategy to improve the branch’s annual “employed to intaked” ratio that the state funding agency uses as part of its performance indicators, and is reviewed during considerations for contract renewal. The power dynamic between the client and the service provider is well documented, as Hasenfeld (1987) writes, “...the agency uses its power to set the parameters of the social work process in a manner that maintains and strengthens the interests of the organization. It does so primarily through its control over the intake, processing, and termination of clients.” However, theories of power have rarely been applied to explore the refugee

resettlement experience by sociologists (Tomlinson and Egan 2002; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2003). Immigration service providers are described as being on the *front-line* of the U.S. serving as *gatekeepers* to U.S. services, resources, and assistance, protecting information and making judgments as to which immigrant receives certain information (Clark 2011).

The service providers attempt to socialize clients to internalize the “American Dream”. They encourage the clients to view low-skilled employment as “working your way up by your bootstraps”. The framework stresses humility, not entitlement, among the clients. This is reinforced by (1) disseminating “success” stories of clients who worked in a low-skilled menial job first, then obtained a “job upgrade” or better position over time, and (2) marginalizing the stories of clients who immediately obtained well-paying positions in their field of expertise. These actions are framed as “managing expectations” on the part of the volags, but the reality is that these messages from the service providers inform the refugees about their perceived level in the social hierarchy.

Employees are encouraged to be extremely critical and authoritative when working with the clients to establish their expertise in the job search activities. Many women working at the agency mention cultural differences in gender roles when justifying the emphasis on authoritative communication styles, citing West Asian and Horn of African male clients as less likely to respect them because they are women. Interestingly, although there is a perception of cultural differences in gender relations between the U.S. and the refugees’ countries of origin, there is still greater effort extended to place male refugees in higher status jobs than there is for women. There is complicity in deferring to gender norms of the refugees’ country and exerting a preference to search for higher-paying jobs for the men than for the women.

As mentioned by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003), resettlement agency service providers have a greater awareness of the imbalance of power within the caseworker-client relationship. They are sensitive to the vulnerability of refugees, and to the risk of re-instilling in them a sense of learned helplessness that they may have developed during their flight. Accordingly, the service

providers emphasize empowering the refugees, especially the women, and have created programs and events to encourage entrepreneurship and to foster support groups for refugee women. Although there is an awareness of the importance of empowering the clients for psychological benefits, in practice, the caseworkers are concerned with maintaining credibility and respect.

During the training of new employees, the service providers who are on average younger and have less educational and professional work experience than their clients, emphasize strategies to establish respect and credibility as an authority with their client caseload. Consequently, they may take on a patronizing tone with their clients and rely on activating an ethnocentric hierarchy, where they have a higher status by nationality (due to their U.S. citizenship) and race, while simultaneously devaluing the importance of education and work experience in navigating the U.S. labor market. The message to the clients is that the service providers' fluency in U.S. culture and language, their cultural capital, provides them with an expertise that the refugees lack.

Job Search Activities

The employment specialists primarily take an authoritarian approach to the job search by pressuring the clients to apply for openings through the agencies' employer contacts. The specialists frequently complete online applications, create resumes, and draft cover letters for the clients. The majority of the job search activities takes place independently, with the employment specialist only occasionally emailing the client about job openings or invitations for or on-site interviews.

As an employment specialist, my average caseload consisted of 45 clients who were primarily Iraqi and Ethiopian professional male refugees. The professional refugee job search strategy consisted of a "two-prong approach" whereby I encouraged my clients to apply to both low-skilled service jobs, (preferring "start-tomorrow" job postings and "immediate hire" job fairs)

and to professional positions in their areas of expertise. I suggested a 4:1 ratio for applications, meaning for every four service jobs they applied to they should apply to one professional position.

During the initial assessment and orientation interviews, information on the client's work history, education, and skills were discussed. However, the client's English writing skills or online job search competencies were not assessed. The professional clients have intermediate to advanced English speaking skills and the assumption was that they write as well as they speak. Prior research indicates that non-native English language learners have varying levels of proficiency among reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The weakest area is writing and reading, especially for immigrants who are not familiar with the Latin alphabet. The expectation is for clients to conduct daily job searches online. It was only after several meetings that I became aware that their online application skills were severely limited, and likely a reason for low success-rate at obtaining an interview.

I conducted a series of job search sessions to evaluate the Internet search skills of all of my clients. In two-hour lab sessions, the most capable clients were able to apply to two entry-level positions, the entire process included using a search engine, job board (e.g., Craigslist) or job announcement aggregator (e.g., Indeed, Snagajob) to conduct their job search and identify suitable open positions, navigating the employer website, completing the online application, uploading resumes, and submitting the application. Exceptions to this average time of completion were made for clients who selected to apply for a position that required a cover letter or online assessment. There are several employers, Target and the Marriott, in particular, that include lengthy online personality assessment tests. These tests are difficult for English language learners due to the cultural references and vocabulary usage. The clients experienced significant difficulties in each step of the process; they had issues identifying relevant positions (due to the websites constant pop-up advertisements that confused them into giving personal information and taking them to external websites usually for educational/vocational programs), and extreme difficulty understanding the password requirements to create an application account, which often

resulted in abandoning the effort entirely and resuming their search on the job boards. For those who passed the complicated log-on procedures, the request for private information such as social security number raised the suspicions of many clients and they either closed the application or did not include the requested information. Others experienced difficulty providing the required information for their prior U.S. work experience and education. Many of them would try to enter their prior experience obtained in Iraq or Ethiopia, but they would not have the option to select a different country on the online application. As a result, they received errors and were restricted from progressing to the next step in the application. Uploading resumes proved to be relatively simple, however constructing a cover letter or email introduction was the most significant challenge I observed among the clients. Many would submit the application with a poorly crafted cover letter that contained significant grammar and spelling mistakes.

The online application systems have proven to be a significant barrier to clients during their job search. The time to completion per application has implications for their ability to find a job on their own, and reduces their chances of finding employment with the major local employers as many clients have incorrectly filled out applications in the system. In an attempt to mitigate this obstacle to employment, employment specialists will take the skill's assessment test for the clients. In so doing, they create an advantage for the clients compared to others (both native and foreign-born applicants) with similar English proficiency but who do not have access to employment services.

Some of my clients were open to implementing the two-pronged job search strategy but many were outspoken about wanting to apply exclusively to professional positions. "Managing expectations" was the priority on our employment team, because the majority of clients arrived expecting to get a job immediately, and a good one at that. Accepting the slow hiring process, applying to dozens of positions without success, and working in low-skilled positions were difficult steps for many clients, especially those from Iraq where class distinction in occupations is more salient in their refugee group than it is among Ethiopian refugees.

There are two strategies employed for newly arrived refugees and asylees, one is vocational training for future employment, the other is immediate entry into the labor force. There are advantages and disadvantages to each. Support for vocational training is limited from the volags, but through community partnerships, programs are becoming increasingly more affordable, accommodating, and diverse. Many refugees enroll in short-term vocational programs, (e.g., Home Health Aid Certification Program) while others enroll in community colleges.

I argue that the resettlement policies arbitrarily place refugees on either a path to skilled employment or a path to perpetual underemployment in low-skilled positions. At times, refugees enter into the labor force without training or education on managing expectations, and dealing with job dissatisfaction. One such example is that of Leila, a Yemen refugee who taught English abroad. She took the initiative to inquire at the apartment leasing office where she lived with her parents. She and her brother were both interviewed and subsequently hired after our referrals to the hiring manager. Leila quit after two days because she did not have adequate conflict-resolution or customer service skills to address customer complaints and angry outbursts. She was not trained on the process of quitting a job, which required her to inform her employer specialist before resigning and she was expected to inform the manager of her concerns before resorting to resignation. Instead of implementing this process, she fabricated a story about moving back to Yemen instead. As she lives in the apartment complex, the manager will quickly discover the truth.

Employment specialists prioritize placing lower-skilled clients in well-paid entry-level jobs at international businesses. At times, they inadvertently limit professional refugees' job search to either low-paid entry-level positions without much opportunity for advancement or semi-professional positions in their field of expertise, which are extreme ends of the job spectrum. The professional client's' failure to obtain a position in their fields of expertise oftentimes relegates them to the lowest level job opportunity, especially if they are working with volags during their job search that prioritize employer relations and retention over client skill-match. A common concern

expressed by the volags is that after referring a professional client for a well-paid entry-level position (that is highly-desired among most clients with limited education and limited-English proficiency (LEP)), the client will quit within a few months for a better job, thereby damaging employer networks and reducing the employment team's retention rate.

English Skills

Most of the studies on English proficiency have focused on the refugees' speaking skills. However, the weakness for many professional refugees is their English writing skills. These professionals usually speak English quite well, but have poor writing skills. Their limited writing ability is not easy to discover, as their speaking skills are usually all that is assessed during employer interviews and consultations with their caseworkers. However, as many professional refugees apply for jobs on their own via Internet (with significant success) they submit poorly written cover letters to the employers that effectively removes them from further employment consideration.

Volags are well aware of the importance of English-speaking proficiency in the labor market and so they have incorporated English as a Second Language (ESL) courses into their resettlement program services. If they do not provide ESL courses on-site, the volags refer the refugees and asylees to local community colleges or public libraries where free courses are usually available. The importance of English writing skills is often overlooked by service-providers, as many first jobs for the clients are entry-level positions in the service industry, generally as a cashier or sales associate. However, the professional clients are more likely to target entry-level clerical or administrative positions in an office environment as their first jobs, where their primary responsibilities would include drafting emails and general correspondence.

Gender Differences

Cultural differences regarding gender expectations result in different levels of employment activity among the male refugees. The Ethiopians, who are primarily asylees, (which is associated with greater self-motivation and active social network compared to refugees who

were passively resettled by the government) demonstrated greater desire to work any job than did the Iraqis. The Iraqis expressed a preference to remain unemployed and receive government assistance (which they feel they are owed) than to work a low-skilled position. My observations reveal a sense of entitlement among refugees from U.S. occupied countries of origin.

Professional women had a unique challenge in their economic activities due to strong cultural traditions for gendered household division of labor. The women that arrived in the United States with young children who were not old enough to attend government provided day-care or elementary school worked in the home as the primary care-takers. The older professional women did not have child-care as the major obstacle to employment, but rather their health and physical ability restricted them from applying to certain entry-level positions. The two primary occupations for entry-level positions in the area were cashier and sales representative/customer service representative, both of which required standing for long periods.

There is a glaringly absent discussion of the role of mental health as a barrier to employment, largely because the culture of the resettlement agency does not legitimize mental health concerns as valid reasons for suspending the clients' job search. The mental health department lacks a systematic process for collecting mental health information for each client and disseminating the information to other departments. There is no analysis conducted on the data, so there is a lack of knowledge on the most prevalent health issues, experienced by country of origin, age, gender etc. within the employment program.

The victims category described by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003) and learned helplessness by Seligman (1975) are useful definitions to apply to middle-aged professional refugees, especially given their relationship to the host country; they arrive as victims of the U.S. led war. They are received into safety by the very country that they hold responsible for their persecution. They are exhausted, many stated that they had already been through so much, they deserved to rest. As soon as they arrive, they are reminded that they will run out of assistance in only a few months, they owe the IOM money for the airplane tickets; and they have to find a job

immediately. This sense of urgency adds stress on already stressful event, moving to a new country. Tomlinson and Egan (2002) argue that the resettlement program has encouraged this victim mentality through a lack of power during the resettlement process.

One particular type of victim, the sick refugee, contends that they are too busy taking care of their ailments to look for work, which can be a legitimate excuse temporarily, but instead, is often used as a long-term escape route. One Iraqi refugee woman in her late 40s, who had been in the U.S. for a couple of months, has had multiple operations on her digestive system. She did not qualify for SSI and so she was expected to obtain immediate employment. She expressed enthusiasm at finding a job but she refused to apply for low-skilled positions as a housekeeper or cashier, or to work in any position that required her to stand on her feet, effectively eliminating the majority of entry-level positions. She desired to return to her position as an airlines customer service representative. She would often communicate that she was ill, depressed, and hopeless with her job prospects. However, she would also add that she was resilient and wanted to work to take care of her family, it is only that she cannot find a job.

Josh, a new resettlement caseworker, works exclusively with Iraqis due to his experience working in the Middle East, where he assisted Iraqi migrants, and his fluency in Arabic offered the following comment as it relates to job preferences and health barriers.

“One of our biggest challenges is people with physical needs or doctor appointments or bad hips or bullet or shrapnel in their leg from an injury over in Iraq and they don’t speak English and they’re like I want to work, but I can’t do this job because of physical things and I can’t do this job because I’m above it. And you’re like what, we have to have these come to Jesus moments where you’re like listen you have to work somehow and that’s what’s available right now ... “

“That’s when you find out who has money or not. And that’s what’s terrible to me because I’ll stay up at night and wonder how they’re going to pay their rent. Eight months later, they’re still not working and still paying their rent so you figure *okay...*”

Another Iraqi woman, a pediatrician in her home country, attended one meeting with her employment specialist and became so disheartened after learning that she was expected to get a low-skilled position that she effectively stopped her job search. She cited health concerns, headaches, and stress prevention- per doctor’s orders, she was not supposed to put herself in

stressful environments and accordingly she could not meet with her employment specialist, however, she could attend computer classes at the same location. When asked about the distinction her husband replied that the computer classes were going to help her find a job, but the employment meetings would not.

Josh describes gender differences in labor force activity largely as a product of cultural preferences and Iraqi gender norms but also due to limited human capital. He states,

“The wives, especially for the Iraqis, are kind of stuck in their houses and it just gives them something to do with their kids. The wives are not working, I would say almost exclusively the wives aren’t working. If they don’t have young kids. The wives are usually the ones who speak less English and the husbands don’t want them to work or a lot of times they would prefer them not to work so they don’t really pursue it. That’s been frustrating. Then it goes back to If you don’t speak English and you’re not physically able to do manual labor then you’re really there’s not ... The husbands are turning down jobs and the wives aren’t really turning down jobs because there’s not a ton that are getting offered to them anyway. If it’s not a hotel cleaning jobs. And that’s certainly something I would say most Iraqis think is beneath them anyway. It’s just tougher to find women work if they don’t have English skills.”

Ethnic based differences in resettlement

In an effort to achieve immediate employment, the refugee resettlement agency often funnels new refugee arrivals into particular industries and occupations in which they have established relationships with the employers. Resulting in a high employment rate but also high skill-mismatch and depressed long-term wages as refugees do not have much success in career development and economic mobility in the first few years of arrival in the U.S. (Census 2010).

In the interview with Josh, although he has only worked at the agency for a few months, he has significant insights into the Iraqi refugee group due to previous work experience with Iraqis. He identified differences in attitude, work preferences, and community interaction by refugee group. The refugees initially need a basic cultural orientation to the country, they need to learn how to take public transportation, how to turn on utilities, rent an apartment, make a doctor’s appointment, etc. After the introduction to the new society, they are then ready to begin their “life-changing” activities, such as enrolling in school, getting health care, and finding a job.

Many of the problems facing refugees are a result of them being taken advantage of, or exploited, or targets for crime, due to their distinctive “otherness” in public spaces. They are

unfamiliar with the policies, the system, and the language. They generally have an appearance of being lost and needing help, creating an easy opportunity to be taken advantage of by others. Employees of city services, hospitals, and landlords either quickly dismiss their requests due to language barriers, or are slow to address issues, ingredients to creating another marginalized group in society. In this sense, the Iraqi experience is not different from other refugee groups. It is only in the recent years, post 9/11, when Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crimes increased that the Iraqi refugees began to experience more intense harassment in public spaces. A few have even experienced broken windows and high school bullying due to their ethnicity.

Advocacy is a powerful term used by all the service providers I interviewed to explain the role of the agencies in the refugees' resettlement process. They emphasize the refugees' need for advocacy to ensure their fair and equal treatment in all aspects of social life, from housing and healthcare, to employment and education. The urging to invest in language resources, in each of these sectors is critical to successful integration of Iraqis in the host community and fosters a welcoming environment.

Unlike other groups who improved their quality of life upon arriving in the U.S., the Iraqis actually experienced downward mobility. Many of the Iraqis were middle or upper class, were able to work up unto the point of departure to the United States, and arrived in the U.S. with a considerable amount of savings. The Iraqis have a higher level of educational attainment and experienced a high standard of living than other refugee groups. Expectations for resettlement in the U.S. diverge greatly for the Iraqis compared to other refugee groups, of note, the Bhutanese, Burmese, and Sudanese. The Iraqis' expectations are to maintain a comparable standard of living, they inquire about laptops and cars one after rejecting a job offer to work in menial labor. This disconnect has created a difficult resettlement experience both for the refugees and for the Volags who are also evaluated by how quickly they are able to help the refugees become economically self-sufficient. One comment from Josh, describes this disconnect between expectations and reality for Iraqi refugees. He states the following,

“Most of the people coming over now 10, 15 years ago were middle class or higher and then when you bring them over here, “All right, welcome to America. I know you’ve heard how great it is for so long and now you’re getting food stamps. You’re going to live on welfare I know you have a bachelor’s degree or higher but the only thing we can offer you is a meatpacking job or something on some sort of assembly line or a dishwasher job.” And that’s really hard to take. **They’re not ready to start over.**”

In effect, Josh is suggesting that the American dream is different for the Iraqi refugee group. They were attracted to the money and material things, the symbols of prosperity, but the work-ethic, the pulling yourself up by the bootstraps, the nobility in taking jobs that are beneath them, did not resonate with them. Consequently, the Iraqis are critical of the resettlement program, frustrated and disappointed at learning that they are expected to start over. The psychological toll from losing one’s social status, esteem, respect, self-efficacy, can be monumental. A seasoned professional who learns that his years of experience, his skills, and his degree are effectively worthless and the language barrier makes him only eligible to clean bathrooms, or to work in assembly line, is heart-broken.

Iraqi refugees have developed a reputation for being particularly critical and outspoken about their dissatisfaction with the resettlement services. They are viewed as being particularly difficult to work with me because of their high expectations for the effectiveness of the job developers. The Iraqis expect the job developer to find a job for them, and they are selective when it comes to type of employment. They do not want to work in low-skilled jobs, especially cleaning, domestic or janitorial work, as it is believed they feel it is beneath them. Iraqi refugees on average have a higher education attainment and more professional experience than refugees from other countries do, which creates a class distinction related to attitudes toward social services, and expectations to maintain their occupational status in the United States. Refugees in this group blamed the host country labor market for their lack of success, discrimination, unequal opportunity structure, reliance on social networks and referrals in employment hiring practices, and incomplete information on desired candidates.

For some refugees, extended stays in asylum countries, like Turkey, where they were not allowed to work, created a passive attitude that is hard to shed upon arrival in their country of

resettlement. The age upon arrival has a significant psychological effect on the client's relationship to the labor force. Many are leaving senior level positions in their country of origin and their qualifications are not recognized in the United States. The prospect of having to start over from scratch in their 50s is unbearable to many people, and so they are resistant to the low-skilled entry positions and have a skill-match job or bust attitude. Unfortunately, many of these refugees arrive with families they are responsible for, so income is necessary, after the temporary resettlement support expires. Highly skilled adults in their 50s are less likely to find appropriate employment in their resettlement country.

A common question asked by refugees is "Why would they bring us here if there aren't any jobs?" Many of the recently-arrived refugees were professionals in Iraq and had a comfortable standard of living, most were upper class in the social scale. While some of the refugees had to flee Iraq for fear of persecution because of their profession and/or relationship with the U.S. intervention, others left because of the overall deterioration of the government's capacity to provide resources, infrastructure, and security. Many of the refugees felt like they had options to select other countries for resettlement that potentially had better job prospects. A statement by Nicole, a resettlement manager, explains the unique challenge facing the Iraqis who are from a higher social class than other refugee groups and who have a different relationships with the United States. She contends,

"Iraqis, SIVs, worked for the federal government. They are a very special case of refugees and we have a responsibility to help them due to our relationship with Iraq. Many are coming from Jordan. They are very educated and living off their own savings. Many suffered persecution. Most speak English and have access to resources. As a result, Iraqis have higher expectations of what their quality of life should be compared to those coming from a camp, but both groups get the same amount of money."

The responsibility of the United States to address the Iraq refugee experience is echoed by another service provider. Emily, one of the interview respondents, provides job development services to refugees after their initial eight months in the United States. She describes the lack of adaptability by the resettlement program to customize a resettlement process that would meet the unique needs of the Iraqi refugee flows as a serious failure. She states the following,

“Loss of psychological status and loss of purpose that happens for (the Iraqi) men especially when they’ve been socialized to be breadwinners and they’ve been socialized in an environment of great risk and danger. Then they suddenly land in this country where they’re being treated disparagingly sometimes treated like the enemy. They’re education isn’t respected. And....I don’t know, I feel like we’ve learned a lot of these lessons with resettling Vietnamese refugees but here we are again with a new batch of Iraqi refugees and were sort of flailing around and saying well let’s get you a temporary job at a factory because we can’t find you anything. And then the Iraqi refugee makes the decision where the best possible choice is to take a job with a government contractor and go work for Blackwater or something and go back to Iraq. Not because they want but that’s how they feel they can feed their family. That is a failure of U.S. refugee resettlement policy. And that’s my personal opinion. When it’s in their best interest to go back to a war zone that is not a good referendum on your refugee resettlement policy. It’s pretty pathetic.

RRP Policies about Iraqi Inter-Ethnic Tension

Additionally, the Iraqis have another unique characteristic in that not only are they from an upper class, they are also victims of sectarian violence. The refugee system acknowledges both the victims and the offenders’ refugee status, and so they find themselves neighbors to a group that persecuted them in Iraq. The Shias, Sunnis, and Chaldeans have all experienced violence committed against each other. This ethnic conflict, while it does not carry over in the same fashion in the United States, it has created a sense of mistrust and a lack of community among the Iraqi refugees. Compared to other refugee groups, the Iraqis are viewed as individualists, exclusive, and elitist. They often prefer not to live near other Iraqis, and when they have reached a level of economic success, they express a desire to move to “American” communities. Josh identifies this tension in the interview and implies an intentional indifference by the refugee program to incorporate the ethnic politics into their resettlement decisions. He states,

“The Iraqis generally don’t want to live near the other Iraqis. This was a total eye opener to me. It’s because they’re coming from a lot of different...

Shiites and Sunnis a handful of Palestinians and Kurds, Mandeans, and there’s not a lot of trust of other Iraqis, Shias were tortured by Sunnis and vice versa. So there’s a lot of mistrust. A lot of relatives back in Iraq don’t know that some of them are here in America. Because if word got out they would think that they were spies for America or were rich and so put the family back in Iraq at risk for kidnapping.

They all see each other, but if one person reports back and says hey, I saw such and such ... it’s an uneasy truce. No one calls back and reports who they see.

Any time I’ve gone over to a Bhutanese house there’s members from one or two other families hanging out. That’s not the case here. It’s based on tribal allegiances here. The nation was only created 90 years ago created by English. Just because they are all Iraqis doesn’t mean ...

The ethnic composition for resettlement here ... It’s relatively random. If I ever know they’re Shia or Sunni- it’s by accident. I don’t want to... quite honestly we could continue that but nobody else is going to recognize that and here in America they’re not going to be judged by that so they have to

get used to it, they can't complain about it. They might live next door to someone who is Shia and that's something they have to deal with."

The decision not to pursue ethnically sensitive programming policies and practices exacerbates the limited social capital the newly arrived Iraqi refugees have in the U.S. due to mistrust, resettlement neighborhood isolation, and lack of contact with refugees from different countries. The quote by Josh is a great example of the disconnect from social work-based practices related to inter-ethnic community-building and the resettlement agencies' focus on standardized service provision.

Conclusion

The influence resettlement service providers have on shaping outcomes for refugees has been largely underestimated in the literature. Their role as gatekeepers to U.S. services, information, and resources places them in a powerful position to direct refugee clients down particular economic channels. This research demonstrates the influence of service providers on Iraqi refugee outcomes in three areas, employment, education, and language access. The study also highlights the dynamic influence that ethnicity, gender, and class have on refugees' socio-economic outcomes through their interactions with the service providers. The findings from this paper add to our knowledge of the role of the welfare state and gendered migration in shaping the immigrant incorporation process and incorporates a discussion of the role of social class in shaping job preferences and utilization of government assistance. This research also contributes to our understanding of how the influences of ethnicity, gender, and class shape interactions between service provider and client in the provision of welfare assistance.

The research identified the following six findings: (1) volags expressed ethnic, class, and gender preferences for refugee employment prospects, job search activity, and utilization of resettlement services (2) development of ethnic & gender based labor pools with local employers & creation of ethnic industry concentration (3) ethnic neutral resettlement policies permit exacerbation of inter-ethnic rivalry in Iraqi labor market (4) incomplete assessment of human capital by volags leads to skill mismatch, delayed, or underemployment (5) lack of workforce

development programs and professional certifications leads to underemployment especially for Iraqi refugees and (6) tension between volag program goals and employment practices for refugees.

Limitations

The small sample size of service providers limits the diversity of perspectives presented in this research. In addition, the focus on the Iraqi refugee experience limits the generalizability of the results from being extended to other refugee groups. However, the goal of this qualitative research is not to provide statistical representation of the refugee experience, but to offer a greater understanding of the variations in resettlement and explore how institutional mechanism can shape the individual refugee experience. The insight obtained from the interviews with the service providers, and my experiences working in the resettlement field, supplied rich data that succeeded in illuminating the various interactions that occur between the individual refugee and the institutions of resettlement that have gone largely ignored.

This paper contributes to our understanding of the unique experience of Iraqi refugees who are facing downward mobility upon arrival in the United States. The lack of recognition for their degrees, licenses, and work experience severely limits many of those from achieving a similar quality of life that they had in Iraq. Cultural differences in gender norms for labor force activity, limited English skills, and the Iraqi refugees' general sense of entitlement to government assistance, reinforce the refugees' downward trajectory. The intersections among gender, ethnicity, and class create different relationships between Iraqi refugees and the resettlement program and different outcomes for refugees from policies that direct their activities related to employment, education, and English skills.

Distrust among the refugee population due to a history of sectarian violence has been cited as a source for limited community-based success and economic self-sufficiency. Despite the acknowledgement of ethnic-based tension among the Iraqi refugee group, there has been no effort to address the conflict through the resettlement program's decision-making regarding

different settlement patterns or the development of seminars and workshops to foster a sense of community across ethnic lines. Instead, the program's emphasis on obtaining a high employment placement rate each quarter leads to pressure placed on the clients to obtain the first available job.

Policy Recommendations

The results support a number of recommendations for changes in resettlement program service provision. First, the program should re-evaluate their method for assessing client skills. Clients need a thorough assessment of English speaking, writing, and reading skills, in addition to an evaluation of their competency in Internet usage, checking emails, and applying to jobs using online application systems. Many clients delay their entrance into the labor force simply because they do not possess the skills to conduct an independent job search, skills which are not necessarily required to perform on the job.

A heightened sensitivity and training related to discouraging employer-based gender and ethnic preferences for their hiring pool is also strongly recommended. The desire to employ clients as quickly as possible for the benefit of both the client and resettlement program can lead to deferring to employer demands and placing clients in jobs with poor working conditions.

Thirdly, greater oversight and standardization for job referrals and professional development should be implemented to reduce opportunities for preferential treatment based on gender, ethnicity, or class. I also recommend the development of workshops and seminars to address conflicts within the refugee groups in general, and inter-ethnic issues within the Iraqi group in particular, especially as it relates to resource sharing and community-building.

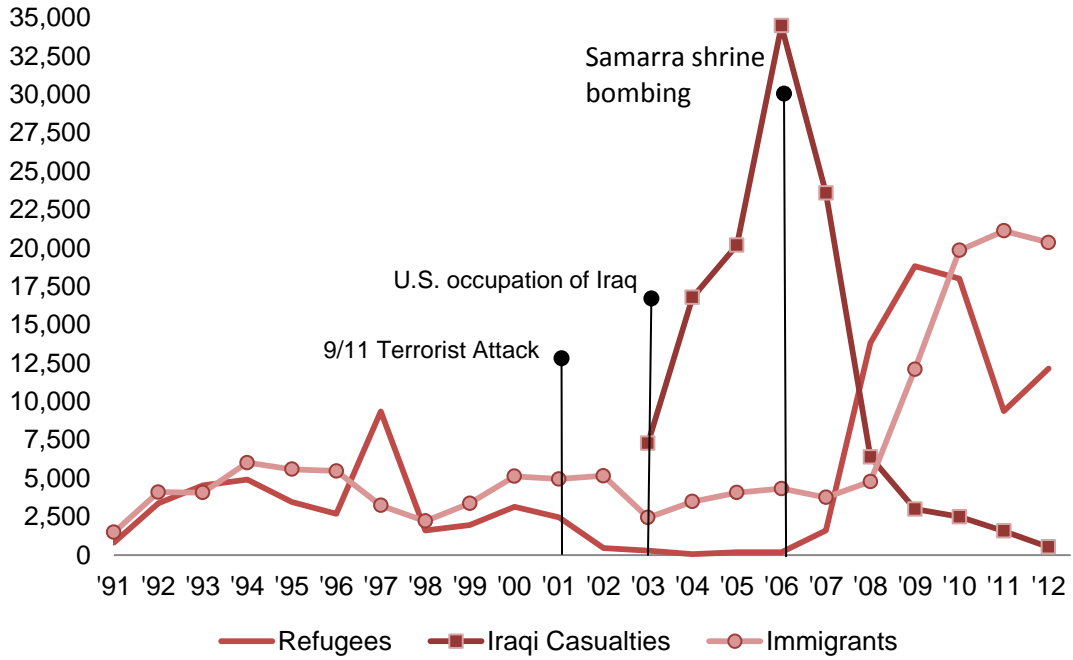
Lastly, a greater effort should be made to reconcile the caseworkers' tension between meeting volag program goals and providing client-centered employment practices. Increased visibility of employment efforts at multiple levels related to temporary and informal work is needed, in addition to addressing reporting strategies that could lead to under-reporting of unemployment and first job employment conditions (e.g. wages, hours, and benefits).

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should include in-depth comparative analysis of the institutional level policies of assistance to new refugee groups by refugee country of origin, by presence of pre-existing communities, and by type of volag to add to our knowledge of the institutional mechanisms that shape refugee incorporation into the host society. The variation in work culture, ethnic and gender composition of the service providers, as well as pre-existing co-ethnics in the community who can assist with the integration process, likely influence the type and extent of services provided by the organizations, and the utilization of services by refugees in interesting ways that have implications for program policies and service provision.

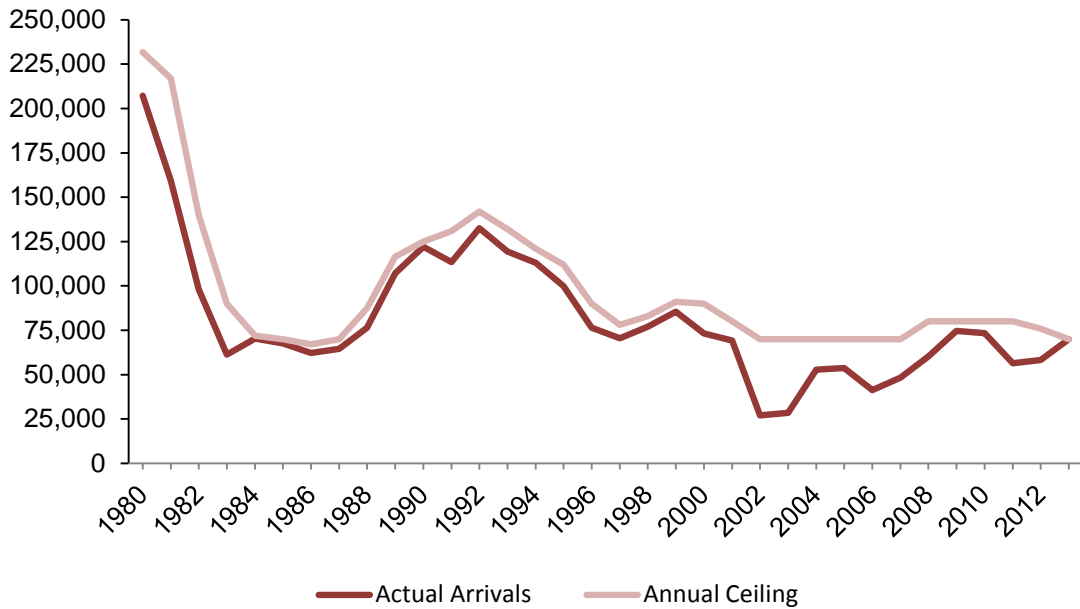
Tables and Figures

Figure 1a. U.S. Immigrant and Refugee Admissions from Iraq 1980-2012 Timeline



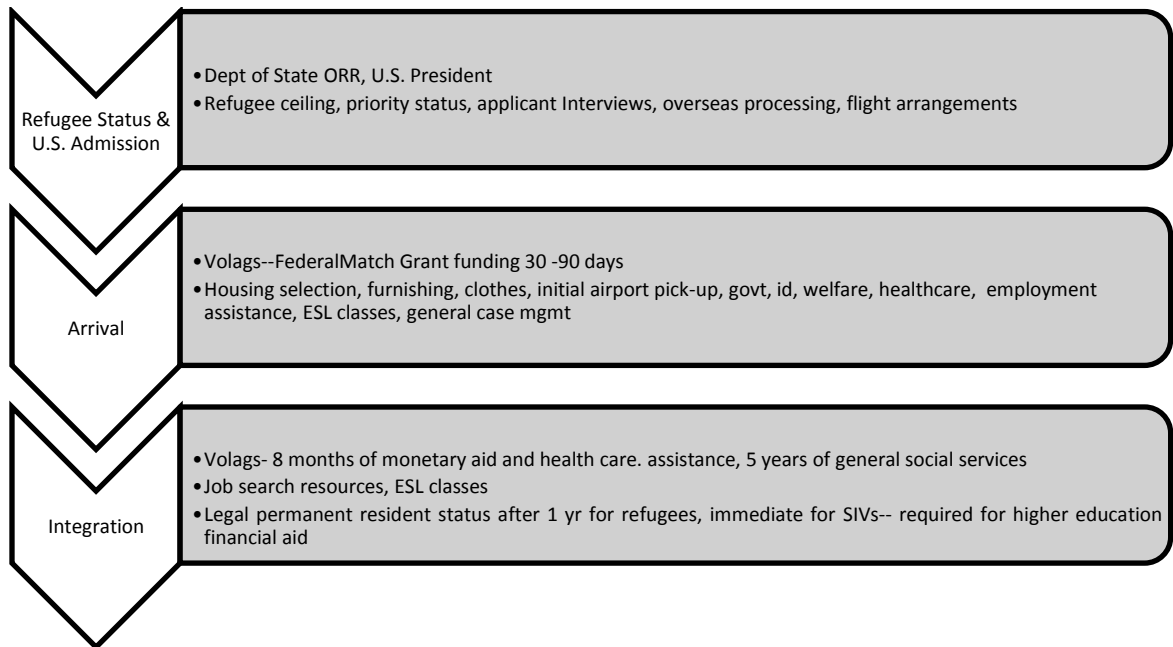
Source: WRAPS 2012. Refugee Processing Admissions and Arrivals Report; Department of Homeland Security. 2012. Immigration Yearbook; Brookings Institute. 2012. Iraqi Index.

Figure 1b. U.S Annual Refugee Admission Ceilings and Actual Arrivals, FY 1980-2013



Source: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Office of Admissions - Refugee Processing Center. 2013. Refugee Admissions Report as of May 31, 2013. Retrieved June 3, 2013.

Figure 2. Theoretical Diagram of U.S. Refugee Resettlement Process



CHAPTER 2

From Riches to Rags: Examining the Intersections of Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in the U.S Resettlement Experiences of Iraqi Refugees

Abstract

Iraqis are currently one of the largest refugee groups resettling in the United States. They have a complex relationship with the U.S. as many were forced to flee Iraq because of instability related to U.S. military interventions or due to death threats received for working with the U.S. military or U.S. non-governmental organization in Iraq. The political history between the two countries creates a unique context for the reception of Iraqi refugees in the United States. I use data collected from in-depth interviews with Iraqi refugees to explore how ethnic-based social networks and U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program intermediaries shape the refugees' process of economic integration. The findings indicate that Iraqi refugees face the greatest challenges in the areas of skill-matched employment, and navigating the ethnic-based labor market in the local community. The refugees had to be resourceful and creative to negotiate the resettlement program policies on employment search, school enrollment, and financial support. These findings contribute to our understanding of the refugee-agency relationship and the impact of resettlement policy on refugees' labor force outcomes.

Introduction

The Arab Spring revolutions and civil protests that toppled regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, among others, combined with the tenth anniversary of the Iraq intervention in 2013, invite the formation of new research questions around West Asian refugee experiences in the United States. This relatively new refugee group provides a unique opportunity to investigate the role of the refugee resettlement program and its effect on the labor force activity of new immigrants.

Migration scholars have traditionally focused on quantitative measures of immigrants' success in the labor force (e.g., employment rates and earnings). There has been less research conducted on the qualitative aspects of labor force activity, such as perceived barriers to entry, and employment strategies (Reitz 2007). I use grounded theory to explore the U.S. resettlement process for Iraqis and understand the factors that shape Iraqi refugees' labor market experiences and employment decision-making processes. The access to information, services, and support varies considerably for refugees based on institutional factors. Grounded theory emphasizes

understanding the subjects' point of view, making a conscious effort to create an equal interaction by providing personal information, opinions, and subjective accounts that make pure objectivity unattainable (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

The economic incorporation process for refugees has been explored by researchers in multiple disciplines. Refugee resettlement is a complex phenomenon that involves the interaction of micro, meso, and macro level mechanisms that are of interest to scholars in social work, sociology, political science, public health, urban studies, psychology, and demography. The role of ethnic-based social networks during this process of integration has been of particular interest to sociologists who study the effects of ethnic enclaves on labor force outcomes (Potocky-Tripodi, 2003; Sanders, Nee, Sernau 2002).

In this article, I explore the socio-economic integration of recently-arrived Iraqi refugees in the United States. I use a qualitative approach, analyzing in-depth interviews conducted with Iraqi refugees in a southwest city in the United States I will refer to as New Bethel. I explore how Iraqi refugees navigate the local labor market and I analyze how the intersections of ethnicity, social class, and gender shape the immigrants' job search process. The results of this study on the Iraqi refugee experience will help us understand how ethnicity, class, and gender interact to shape the refugee's social and economic integration into the host society. In the following section, I provide an overview of literature related to immigrant integration and refugee resettlement and I incorporate a discussion on the theory of intersectionality to provide a reference for analyzing the multiple layers of resettlement.

Literature Review

Refugee integration occurs on multiple levels in a layered context of transnational culture, gender, local reception, and state relationships. I define integration as a dynamic and multi-level process of interactions between the individual, community, and institutional structures that establishes a socio-economic trajectory for the newcomers. The socio-economic indicators most often relied upon to measure immigrant integration are sustainable employment, housing security,

and host-country language and cultural competency. The process includes the development of a relationship and the establishment of expectations from the state and its intermediaries, the community, the family, and the maintenance of relationships with those who remain in their country of origin. I argue that not only should these complexities be recognized in policy terms to facilitate the social inclusion of refugees in different spheres of society, but they should also provide strategies for wider social inclusion and integration or for building 'bridging social capital', to use Putnam's term.⁵

Context of Reception

This research is situated broadly in the immigrant incorporation literature, and specifically in the field of refugee studies and West Asian socio-economic outcomes in the United States. It is guided by the research conducted by Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, which identifies the context of reception as an influential factor in the integration process of immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Portes and Rumbaut's book, *Immigrant America*, joined the advent of research on contemporary immigration, and shifted the emphasis from micro-level interactions to studying the institutional level-structural factors that affect the individual migrant's socio-economic trajectory (1996).

The authors contend that, "For immigrants, the most relevant contexts of reception are defined by the policies of the receiving government, the conditions of the host labor market, and the characteristics of their own ethnic communities" (1996:84). They go on to describe twelve contexts of immigrant incorporation based on combinations of the three defining factors. Of particular relevance for refugees, Portes and Rumbaut identify three types of government policies that affect the context of reception for immigrants: exclusion, passive acceptance, or active

⁵ Putnam (2000) introduced the concept of 'bridging social capital' to emphasize its potential to generate broader identities and reciprocity, as opposed to 'bonding social capital' which 'bolsters our narrower selves' (2000: 22-3). He points out that 'bonding and bridging are not "either-or" categories' (Putnam, 2000: 23).

encouragement. According to this typology, refugees would be classified as “type 3” beneficiaries of active encouragement by the government during the resettlement process. The typology created by Portes and Rumbaut provides a framework for understanding the impact of government policies on refugee outcomes. Refugee status in the United States affects the immigrant’s point of entry into the society; it shapes the refugee’s relationship with the local community, the local labor market, higher education, and residential location. The context of reception and the role of intermediaries during the resettlement process have an influence on the economic activity of refugees.

Iraqi Integration

Scholars have suggested the refugees’ relationship with the state for economic assistance has made them more dependent on the government than other immigrants and is a primary factor responsible for shaping different paths for refugees compared to other immigrants (Nawyn 2010; Bach 1988; Hein 1993). Currently, Iraqis have the highest welfare utilization rate among all refugee groups in the United States (Office of Refugee Resettlement 2011). The fact that Iraqis are all also one of the only current refugee groups in the U.S. as a result of a U.S. military intervention and/or for assisting the U.S. in Iraq, might create a different relationship between the refugee and the U.S. government, one that implies a U.S. responsibility for creating the refugee conditions and thus responsibility for assisting the refugees during resettlement.

Iraqi resettlement patterns in the U.S. have created vibrant ethnic or Iraqi communities that have developed smaller ethnic labor markets that recently-arrived refugees and immigrants can access for initial entry into the U.S. labor market. Studies indicate that ethnic-based social networks are influential in shaping the labor force outcomes of immigrants in the United States (Granovetter 1973; Sanders, Nee, and Sernau 2002; Bailey and Waldinger 1991; Portes and Bach 1985; Aguilera and Massey 2003). Granovetter identified the role of interpersonal ties in the dissemination of job information and he argued that weak ties, from acquaintances, as opposed to close relationships, were more important in the labor market in gaining access and information

about employment opportunities outside of the individual's social network. Bridging holes in networks is described as the core advantage to leveraging one's social network for career advancement (Sanders, Nee, and Sernau 2002).

Context of Origin

Modern day Iraq was first created by the British Empire in the early 1920s. It consists of a combination of three vilayets from the Ottoman Empire, Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. The British carved out borders without regard to ethnic boundaries and thus created a state with competing ethnic interests (Fontana 2010). The Iraqi people are primarily comprised of three ethnic groups, the Shia majority, initially concentrated in the southern region of Iraq, the Kurds (Turks), who are concentrated in the north, and the Sunnis, the minority group that the British placed in power. Chaldean or Assyrian Christians are a minority ethnic group in Iraq; many of them have been internally displaced or fled the country because of ongoing sectarian violence and religious persecution.

Although the society has a rich history dating back to the early centuries, the League of Nations only formally recognized the state of Iraq in 1932. The British carved out borders without regard to ethnic boundaries and thus created a state with competing ethnic interests (Fontana 2010). Due to the preexistence of societies before the creation of Iraq as a nation state, the people within the borders of Iraq retained their ethnic and tribal identities, resulting in protracted ethnic conflict in representation among the political and economic spheres. Ethnic conflict regarding political and economic power among the Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds is an integral part of the country's history. The Sunni-led government has clashed with Shiites and Kurds since Saddam Hussein's rule in the 1980s, leading to the conviction of the president for crimes against humanity and attempted genocide of the Kurds. The Iran-Iraq War from 1980-1988 and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 both had fatal ramifications for the Shiites in Iraq.

Socioeconomic Status of Citizens Residing in Iraq

In order to understand the socioeconomic status of Iraqi immigrants in the United States, it is helpful to establish baseline counterparts for comparison and context. Knowing the national average of socioeconomic characteristics in Iraq allows us better context for evaluating the status of Iraqis in the United States. Iraq has not conducted a national census since 1987. Attempts were made to conduct a census in 2010, but due to rising ethnic tension around political representation and boundary-shifting due to census counts, the census was postponed. As of March 2012, the population census has not yet resumed. The World Bank, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and other independent organizations have published estimates on the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of the Iraqi population.

According to the CIA, approximately 95 percent of Iraqis are Muslim and only 5 percent are Christian (CIA 2012). The U.S. Census does not ask about religious affiliation, but we are able to proxy religious and ethnic affiliation through the ancestry question on the Census questionnaire. According to the 2012 American Community Survey, about 55 percent of Iraqi immigrants identified themselves as Arab, while approximately 35 percent identified as Chaldean/Assyrian, and about 7 percent identified as Kurds. Chaldeans are Christian minorities in Iraq. The national ethnic distribution in Iraq is about 75 percent Arab (including Shia and Sunni Muslims), 15 percent Kurds, and less than 5 percent is Chaldean/Assyrian (CIA 2012). Among the Arabs, it is estimated that approximately 65 percent are Shia and 35 percent are Sunni (CIA). Arabic and Kurdish are the official languages in Iraq, while Chaldean/Aramaic is a regional language.

Context of Origin

Findings from the Iraq Family Health Survey 2006-07 (IFHS), conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organization, provide a comparative profile of the socioeconomic status of Iraqis living in Iraq compared to Iraqis who have resettled in the United States (World Health Organization 2007). The IFHS is a nationally representative household survey of 9,345

households, reporting a 98 percent response rate. The average household size in Iraq is approximately 6.4 compared to the average Iraqi-born household size in the United States of 3.8. Women comprise approximately ten percent of the household heads in Iraq; this percentage is slightly higher in urban areas, and in Kurdistan. The average number of rooms per household is 3.3 and the average number of people per room is 3.8, meeting the UN definition of overcrowding, minimum of three people per room.

Gender disparity in educational attainment is evident in the Iraqi population, as roughly 16 percent of men completed secondary school compared to only about 10 percent of women. Approximately 3.4 percent of women compared to 6 percent of men have obtained a college degree (World Health Organization 2007). However, 87 percent of women are not in the labor force. The women who do work are evenly distributed between agriculture, and crafts/street vending, and professional/technical occupations. According to the latest estimates from the World Bank, in 2009, Iraq had the lowest female labor force participation rate in the world (13 percent). Comparatively, the U.S. reported a rate of 59 percent of Iraqi immigrant women in the labor force.

The latest available data indicates that the primary employment sectors in Iraq are services (56 percent), agriculture (22 percent), and industry (19 percent) (World Bank 2009). According to the CIA, in 2010, the national unemployment rate was about 15 percent. Iraq's population is approximately 31 million (CIA 2012). Approximately 66 percent of Iraqis reside in urban areas and the literacy rate is about 74 percent. According the IFHS, about 52.5 percent of women and 50.7 percent of men over the age of 11 are married. Roughly 37.7 of women and 47.8 percent of men are single and approximately 10 percent of women were formerly married.

Iraqi Immigration to the United States

Iraq's history of political instability, ethnic conflict, and wars with Iran and the U.S. has maintained a fractured society that has led many to flee to neighboring countries and seek international protection from domestic persecution. Iraqi refugees have diverse socio-demographic characteristics as multiple ethnic groups have sought refuge in the U.S. over the

past thirty years. Iraqis were impacted differently by the social instability depending on their ethnic affiliation, class status, and geographic location and so Iraqi flows varied in ethnic composition depending on the time of arrival. Iraqi migration to the United States has occurred in three phases.

Historically, Iraqis have not comprised a significant share of the immigrant population in the United States. It has only been within the last twenty years that Iraqis have numbered among the top twenty sources of origin for US immigration. Small numbers of Iraqis have immigrated to the United States since the early 1900s, before the creation of the Iraq state. The Immigration Act of 1924 greatly restricted Iraqi immigration to the United States until the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Immigration was limited to 100 Iraqis annually and only permitted family reunification cases, thereby limiting Iraqi migration to the Christian- Assyrian ethnic group. Iraqis became eligible for U.S. student visas in 1948 through an expansion of the Fulbright Program; young Iraqi-Christians took advantage of this opportunity to study abroad. The Immigration acts of 1965 and 1968 eliminated the regional quota and origin requirements, opening the doors for greater Iraqi immigration.

The first significant flow of Iraqi refugees to enter the U.S. was the Chaldeans, also known as Assyrian Christians. They fled Iraq during the 1960s and 1970s, due to religious persecution. The Iraq-Iran War in 1979 served as a catalyst for increased emigration from Iraq by the Christian minority and Shiite Muslims. The Iraq-Kuwait War in 1990 created thousands of Iraqi refugees, leading many Shiite Muslims to immigrate to the United States. The fall of the Ba'th regime, headed by Saddam Hussein, in 1990, created a social upheaval that stimulated the second major wave of immigrants to the United States. The Arab Sunni and Shia Muslims began fleeing Iraq, due to political conflict during Saddam Hussein's government administration. The 2003 U.S. invasion served as the catalyst for the third wave of Iraqi migration to the United States. During the war, the Iraqi infrastructure was destroyed and the citizens were no longer able to turn to their government for assistance.

It is estimated that approximately 118,000 Iraqi civilians were killed between 2003 and 2011 (Iraq Body Count 2013, O'Hanlon and Livingston 2012). One of the primary differences between the Ba'th refugees and the contemporary U.S. war refugees is that the Ba'th refugees fled a society with a functioning (albeit oppressive) government, while the war refugees left a country whose government had essentially imploded. The state became weak, riddled with corruption, and lacked the capacity to provide consistent services and reliable infrastructure. (Sassoon 2009).

There is some debate regarding the timing of the contemporary Iraq refugee flows (Libal and Harding 2009). According to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report the refugee situation in Iraq did not begin because of the 2003 U.S. invasion, as the international community had predicted, but rather large-scale internal displacement began after the 2006 suicide bombing of the al-Askari Mosque (UNHCR 2009c). The sectarian conflict is arguably, what led to the displacement of over 4.5 million Iraqis (Lischer 2008). Currently, Iraqis are the third largest refugee group in the world, behind Afghans and Palestinians. The U.S. - Iraq war in 2003 and the U.S. occupation from 2003 to 2012 are two of the primary catalysts for the recent Iraqi instability.

The largest Iraqi refugee flows have been to Jordan and Syria. These two neighboring countries have not ratified the 1951 United Nations Geneva Convention Regarding Refugees, and so they do not acknowledge or adhere to the policy of nonrefoulement, and integration, which includes unregulated settlement locations and employment authorization. However, they have provided asylum to over a million Iraqi refugees. Jordan was receptive to the refugees during the initial flows, but after an Iraqi bombed a Jordan government building, the Jordanian policies toward the Iraqi refugees became openly hostile, and they revoked many of the work and housing-related benefits.

The Syrian government feared that the Iraqis would attempt to settle permanently in the country of asylum, leading to a redistribution of Syria's ethnic composition. Sunnis are the ethnic

group in power in Syria, while the Iraqi refugees entering the country are predominately of Shia ethnicity and those seeking refuge in Jordan are primarily of Kurdish ethnicity. In October 2007, Syria imposed visa restrictions on the Iraqi refugees seeking asylum within its borders. The Syrian government limited refugee admissions to 5,000 a day, they only permitted merchants, businesspeople, and university professors with Syrian visas to enter. Egypt imposed similar admission policy restrictions.

Contemporary Iraqi Resettlement in the U.S.

The number of Iraqi refugees recognized by the United Nations (UN) has increased dramatically since 2003. However, the United States has only resettled a fraction of the Iraqi refugees; the majority of Iraqis migrated to neighboring host countries such as Jordan and Syria (Fagen 2007). The U.S. increased the background check and other security measures for Iraqis in 2012, resulting in delayed processing and admission backlog for Iraqis in the United States. According to the latest data available, the U.S. only accepted 49 percent of refugee applications from Iraq in 2003 (147 of 302 applicants), compared to an 87 percent acceptance rate for Vietnamese applicants (1,772 of 2,032 applicants) (Department of Homeland Security 2003). There are an estimated 1,785,212 Iraqi refugees worldwide, and the total Iraqi population of concern is 3,565,375 (UNHCR 2011). For 2011, the United States administration has stated a goal of resettling at least fifty percent of the Iraqi refugees recommended by the UNHCR (UNHCR 2011).

In the past few years, the state of Iraqi refugees has obtained international attention, partly due to reports conducted by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) on the dire conditions and severe obstacles facing Iraqis in the asylum countries of Syria and Jordan, and in the resettlement country of the United States (IRC 2009). An IRC delegation evaluated the "degree of adjustment" level of integration and resettlement achieved by Iraqi refugees in Atlanta, Georgia and Phoenix, Arizona. The delegation concluded that Iraqi refugees were experiencing extreme difficulty in obtaining employment and expressed a serious need for more resettlement

assistance in the areas of language acquisition, employment services, health care, and financial assistance. The IRC recommended that the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program increase federal assistance to refugees, including emergency rent payments for refugees in danger of being evicted, and provide them with better preparation before they depart for the United States.

The Arab or Middle Eastern population in the United States has increased significantly over the past twenty years. However, most population studies published pre-9/11 did not include Arab-Americans in their analyses as a unique group. Migration flows to the U.S. from Iraq are commonly been divided into two or three stages beginning with the Chaldeans, Christians, who emigrated from Iraq due to religious persecution during the early 1960s. The majority of Iraqis settled in Michigan and Illinois and entered the manufacturing industry in large numbers. The creation of the Office of Refugee Resettlement in 1980, and with it a policy of refugee dispersal, led to a shift in the geographic distribution of Iraqis. The ORR resettled many of the refugees arriving in the 1980s and 1990s in California, New York, and Texas. During this period, the ethnicity of the Iraqis shifted from Chaldean to Arab, as several refugees entering the U.S. were fleeing political persecution related to Saddam Hussein's administration and the U.S. war. The third phase is the contemporary refugee flows, which is a combination of Chaldean, Shia, and Sunni Arabs fleeing from Iraq due to the country's general instability, corruption, and weakened infrastructure.

The United States resettled a record number of Iraqi refugees in 2010 (See Figure 1a). The number of Iraqi refugees resettled to the U.S. fell by over fifty percent between 2010 and 2011, placing Iraqis as the third largest resettlement group arriving to the United States (9,388). The timing of significant events and casualties during the U.S. intervention in Iraq are included in Figure 1a to illustrate the relationship between unrest in Iraq and Iraqi refugee and immigrant flows to the United States (Iraq Body Count 2013, Department of Homeland Security 2012, and Refugee Processing Center 2013).

According to the ORR (2010), the U.S admitted 74,654 refugees in FY09, the three largest groups originated from Iraq, Burma (18,275), and Bhutan (13,317). The Iraqis resettled in California (4,837), Michigan (2,315), Texas (1,489), Arizona (1,354), and Illinois (1,184). California, Michigan, and Texas have the oldest established Arab communities in the country. Detroit, Michigan and El Cajon, California are distinguished as the most receptive resettlement cities for Iraqi refugees.

Iraqis are admitted into the U.S. under two visa categories, “refugee” or “SIV” (Special Immigrant Visa status). One of the primary distinctions between Iraqi refugees and SIVs is that SIVs obtain legal permanent residency upon admission to the U.S. while refugees have to wait to apply for residency after living in the U.S. for one year. Iraqis can receive SIV status while still working and living in Iraq, while refugees must reside outside of the country for at least one year. Once in the United States, SIVs are eligible to enroll in the Refugee Resettlement Program to receive the same resettlement services and assistance as refugees, but only if they submit a program enrollment request within ten days of admission into the United States.

According to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS 2009) SIVs may be available to those who meet the following criteria, “Iraqi nationals who supported the U.S. armed forces or Chief of Mission authority as translators or interpreters, or Iraqi nationals who were or are employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government in Iraq on or after March 20, 2003, for a period of at least one year.” The 2010 Department of Defense Appropriations Act expanded the SIVs public benefit eligibility to become comparable with refugee benefits:

“Iraqis Associated with the United States Under various Priority 2 designations, including those set forth in the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act, employees of the U.S. government, a U.S. government-funded contractor or grantee, and U.S. media and NGOs working in Iraq, and certain family members of such employees, as well as beneficiaries of approved I-130 (immigrant visa) petitions, are eligible for refugee processing in Iraq.”
Pg 11.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/148671.pdf>

The United States is the world leader in UNHCR-sponsored refugee resettlement.

Approximately 66,300 of an estimated 88,600 UNHCR sponsored refugees were resettled in the U.S. FY 2012 (Refugee Processing Center 2013; UNHCR 2012). In 2010, the U.S. resettled

73,311 refugees followed by the two other traditional immigrant countries, Canada and Australia, (resettling 6,706 and 5,636 respectively). While the U.S., Australia, and Canada are the primary countries of permanent resettlement for refugees recommended by the UNHCR, the countries that host the largest refugee populations, as the first country of temporary asylum (or host countries), are Pakistan, Iran, Syria, and Germany⁶.

The primary difference for a refugee living in a resettlement country and a host country/asylum country is that the refugee has a long-term permanent “durable” solution in the resettlement country and has the right to work, go to school, move around the country, and apply for citizenship. These opportunities are not guaranteed in a host country. In fact, a good example of this distinction can be seen in the case of Afghan refugees who fled to host country Pakistan. In 2012, the Pakistani Government announced a plan to repatriate all the Afghan refugees to Afghanistan beginning in 2013. Host country governments provide temporary asylum to the refugees until a permanent durable solution can be obtained. The three durable solutions as defined by the UNHCR are (1) voluntary repatriation to native country, (2) integration into host country society, and (3) third-country resettlement from country of asylum.

Economic Incorporation of Iraqi Immigrants

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report to Congress (2010), reviewing the status of Iraqi refugees and SIVs in the U.S., described their immigrant situation as distressed, largely due to their high levels of unemployment. The recent economic crisis has drastically reduced the number of entry-level jobs available to immigrants. Hiring an individual from a currently U.S. occupied country, from the Middle East, a region that has strong negative

⁶ As of 2012, there are only 26 countries that have official resettlement programs, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Bulgaria (implementation in 2012 onwards), Canada, Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary (implementation in 2012 onwards), Iceland, Ireland, Japan (the only country in Asia) (pilot program), the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Paraguay, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, and the United States of America (UNHCR 2012).

associations with terrorism, is rife with discrimination and political controversy. The GAO report was motivated largely by the desire to evaluate how the refugees and SIVs who worked with the U.S. government in Iraq were being treated in the United States. The reporters for the GAO report discovered that despite the high unemployment rate for Iraq refugees, the Department of State never implemented the government employment program designed for Iraqi refugees and SIVs authorized by Congress in 2009.

Numerous Iraqis were unable to gain employment upon arrival in the U.S., and they have continued to experience significant barriers to integration even though they are a highly educated immigrant group. Approximately 61,672 Iraqis were admitted to the U.S. as refugees, and another 4,613 immigrated to the U.S. as SIVs from fiscal year 2007 to 2011 (ORR 2012). The latter group consisted of individuals who assisted the U.S. intervention in Iraq by providing linguistic and cultural services. These individuals have been authorized by Congress to receive temporary positions in the U.S. working for the government in a similar capacity.

After significant international criticism, the U.S. increased the annual admission ceiling for Iraqis from 200 in 2006 to approximately 17,000 in 2009. The Iraqi refugees arriving in the U.S. are highly educated and many have professional skills. The vast majority of Iraqis are underemployed, working in low-skilled occupations, and are unable to utilize their skill-set as a result of general high unemployment during economic depression, and their particular location in society, which makes them vulnerable to discrimination based on ethnicity and citizenship status (IRC 2009).

The Iraqi refugee experience in the U.S. invites new research on the factors that influence immigrant integration, particularly as it relates to the labor market, given their low unemployment and relatively high human capital. Research on ethnic-based social networks has focused on the labor force activity in ethnic enclaves (Bailey and Waldinger 1991; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Portes and Zhou 1992; Sanders and Nee 1987; Zhou 1992; Sanders, Nee, and Sernau 2002). The debate continues, but the key research findings indicate that when working in

mono-ethnic minority business, co-ethnics are more likely to receive lower wages, lower quality working conditions, and fewer opportunities for advancement (Zhou 1992). The benefit arises when recently-arrived immigrants are able to leverage their cultural capital to obtain a job quickly and build U.S. work experience (Portes 1995; Sanders and Nee 1996). The individual is able to receive “training” on U.S. work environment, policies, and procedures, before entering the mainstream labor market (Bailey and Waldinger 1991; Sanders, Nee, and Sernau 2002). New social networks are formed among co-ethnics who might not have had a relevant social tie in their native country, but are now useful in sharing employment information in addition to serving as a vehicle to transfer knowledge on general community resources. Bailey and Waldinger (1991) referred to this phenomenon as emergent adaptation.

Alba (2005) uses the concept of bright and blurred boundaries to describe the process of assimilation for immigrants, arguing that shared race/ethnicity, religion, language, and class cultural aesthetics influence the ease in which an immigrant is incorporated into the host society. Following this argument, we would expect to see different economic trajectories and labor force participation for refugees by degree of similarity to host country socio-demographic characteristics, particularly race/ethnicity, language, and educational attainment. Iraqi refugees may have a shared class culture and educational attainment, but have “brighter” boundaries concerning religion, ethnicity (those with Arabic names in particular) and language. Chaldean-Iraqis (a minority ethnic group in Iraq that has experienced persecution for their Christian identification) might have different experiences due to their shared Christian faith with mainstream U.S. society compared to the Sunnis and Shiites, whose beliefs are not only in the minority in the U.S. but are also negatively associated with religious extremism and terrorism.

Studies show that access to job information is obtained through gendered and racialized social networks (McDonald, Lin, and Ao 2009). The transfer of information about job openings and informal referrals has become a common way individuals gain entry into the work force.

Research by McDonald et al (2009) indicates there is a disparity in access to job information by race and gender, and this inequality increases as the level of supervisory duties increases.

Intersectionality

I employ the concept of intersectionality as articulated by Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) to understand the influences that race, gender, nativity, and class have on the refugee experience in the labor market. The concept of intersectionality is generally defined as the study of the intersections of multiple systems of oppression. As a theory, it examines how social categories interact dynamically to produce varying positions within the multiple systems of oppression, creating different shades of inequality. The power relationship shifts depending on the context and the individual's standpoint. Individuals are alternately oppressed and the oppressor, experiencing both sides of privilege. The theory is particularly useful in the study of refugees, as this immigrant group's experiences in the country of resettlement are composed of unique interactions between nationality, gender, ethnicity, and class that shape their opportunities during the economic and social integration process.

Research on the gendered welfare state contributes to our understanding of refugee resettlement by producing literature on the impact of gendered institutional policies and practices on client socio-economic outcomes. The literature provides us with insight on how refugee clients might experience a gendered resettlement process that results in different labor force outcomes by gender. Scholars of gendered welfare states explain how assumptions about gender inform the policies and practices of welfare regimes and are institutionalized in the overarching structure of the state organization. Thus, the social programs available to citizens, and in this case, refugees, will either reaffirm or modify the existing gender relations on the micro and meso levels of society (Sainsbury 1994). The expectations for work, study, and child-care provision in resettlement and welfare policies have gendered implications for the socio-economic trajectory of Iraqi refugees; this argument is explored by Stephanie Nawyn (2010), who contends,

“Resettlement agencies are conceptualized as social institutions that reinforce the gender and racial/ethnic subordination of refugees.” (Nawyn 2010:150).

The major research findings in the study of gendered migration indicate that the migration process presents different challenges for women than it does for men on all three levels within society, individual, community, and institutional. The opportunity structures, access to networks, cultural expectations of behavior, labor demand, familial responsibility, human capital, and state migration policies are all shaped by gender in both sending and receiving countries.

Refugee Studies

Mamgain and Collins (2003) identify English-speaking proficiency and U.S. work experience as the primary determinants of higher wages and employment for refugees in Portland, Maine. Drawing from qualitative data from local volags in Portland, the authors contend that the most successful employment strategies include establishing social connections with members of the city’s dominant racial group. Co-ethnic contacts are useful in obtaining entry-level employment, but for refugees searching for higher-paying positions, it is networking with the majority racial/ethnic group (whites in most instances) that is most effective. Their findings suggest that the Iraqi enclaves and the use of Iraqi social networks for professional employment opportunities are not as advantageous as the creation of mainstream contacts. The scholars found that local work experience was the strongest predictor of higher wages for male refugees. Suggesting that labor market trajectory is more responsive to those with any level of work experience.

Jen’nan Ghazal Read (2004) explored the influence of gender, nativity, and racial/ethnic status on employment outcomes in the United States. She compared the labor force participation rate of Arab immigrant women to those of native-born Arab-American women and white women. Her results indicate that Arab immigrant women have higher educational levels than the native-born counterparts but a lower rate of labor force participation. Read argues that this disparity is largely due to the Arab immigrant women’s adherence to traditional gender norms that prioritize

familial obligations and household work for women instead of economic activity in the public domain.

Highly skilled refugees commonly experience underemployment due to the local labor market skill-mismatch, credentialing and licensing barriers to practicing their professional occupations in the country of resettlement. While non-refugee professional immigrants may have better chances of securing skill-matched employment, the first job many of these immigrants obtain is oftentimes a short-time transient position as an interpreter (Burcu 2013). McCoy and Masuch (2007) compared the employment success rate between low-skilled and high-skilled Canadian immigrants and found that high-skilled immigrants have greater difficulty finding relevant entry-level positions than do low-skilled immigrants because of professional regulations on licenses and credentials.

While the majority of the immigrants provide voluntary, unpaid, interpretation services to their family, friends, and local nonprofit organizations, many are also able to obtain paid positions. Recently-arrived refugees who possess above average English-speaking skills are often encouraged to apply for interpreter positions, and to volunteer as an interpreter to include it in their resume as relevant experience. Female professional migrants are less likely to work post-migration than are males, largely due to immigration restrictions (male is often the primary applicant) regarding labor activity, and they are even less likely to work in their field of expertise (Iredale 2005). Their absence from the labor force is largely due to familial obligations, English skills, and cultural differences regarding gender roles (Burcu 2013; Read 2004).

The research on refugee economic outcomes indicates that labor force participation, skill-matched employment, and earnings, are influenced by human capital characteristics, resettlement location, and utilization of ethnic-based social networks. Less is known about how institutional-level policies interact with these variables to shape the refugee's outcomes. The process of reception is sensitive to the ethnic social network, but the refugee's labor force activities are also shaped by the restrictions put in place by policies and procedures of the

refugee resettlement program. The decision-making process to pursue higher education or professional development is often weighted against the immediate demands of the resettlement program to obtain immediate employment. Choosing the latter also has negative implications for the prospect of entering into a skill-matched profession given that the hiring process takes longer on average than a low-skilled customer service position.

Previous literature has examined the role of ethnic-based social networks in influencing labor force outcomes, but few research studies have applied the theory of intersectionality to explore how the interactions between institutional policies, gender, and inter-ethnic conflict also shape economic activity. Additionally, while some research has begun to explore West Asian integration, the experiences of West Asian refugee groups remain understudied. The unique experiences of Iraqis, in particular, are important to study due to the significant and controversial military intervention between the U.S. and Iraq, and the subsequent militarization of the Iraqi refugee population (many who were persecuted due to their employment with the U.S. military). My research will address this gap in literature, contribute to our understanding of Iraqi refugees' economic incorporation in the U.S., and identify the ways in which ethnicity, gender, and class intersect to produce different experiences throughout the resettlement process and establish different trajectories in the labor force.

Iraqi refugees have encountered significant challenges during their resettlement in the United States. Given their unique relationship to the United States, their socio-economic background, and their politicized resettlement patterns, the Iraqi refugee experience provides the field of sociology insight regarding the influence of the context of reception, and the interactions of class, ethnicity, and gender on the immigrant integration process. I have formulated the following research questions to explore how the roles of institutional structures and social networks on refugee labor force activity are influenced by the intersections of ethnicity, gender, and class: (1) What roles do the resettlement program and ethnic networks have in shaping refugees' labor

force activity and educational pursuits? (2) What are the primary challenges to employment facing refugees? How do these challenges differ by class, ethnicity, and gender?

Data & Methods

Drawing on data I collected from in-depth interviews with Iraqi refugees and ethnographic research of resettlement agencies, this paper illuminates the social forces that shape the resettlement and integration experiences among Iraqi refugees. Analysis of the qualitative data from refugees regarding their experiences and interpretations during their initial resettlement in the United States includes an exploration of refugee experiences with the labor force, higher education, ethnic community, and resettlement agency services.

Qualitative research methods are appropriate for migration research, as national surveys generally do not have large enough samples of the population of interest to conduct statistical analysis. The complex experience of resettlement demands in-depth research in the analysis and interpretation of the processes, concepts, and attitudes experienced by the migrants (Mahler and Pessar 2006). Qualitative research captures the lived experience of the people in the study. The approach emphasizes a holistic interpretation in context, which allows for the analysis of complex processes and concepts, such as gender relations or resettlement (Mahler and Pessar 2006).

Qualitative interviewing has also been the preferred method among forced migration scholars. Korac (2003) along with others (Robinson 1993, Montgomery 1996) outlined the necessity of qualitative interviewing when trying to gain insight into refugee experiences. I argue the majority of qualitative studies on refugees resettlement experiences have focused primarily on the individual-level factors, leaving the state and institutional actors largely unexamined on the periphery, creating a myopic view of resettlement.

Research Design

I collected the data used for this research through in-depth interviews with Iraqi refugees. With approval from the Internal Review Board at the University of Pennsylvania, I interviewed former clients of resettlement agencies and affiliates in one city on the West Coast. I conducted

interviews between June and August 2011. I used the purposive sampling method to select refugee resettlement agencies in a large west coast city to serve as research sites. The primary criterion I used to guide my selection was the resettlement agencies' estimated refugee arrival flows from Iraq. I selected the research site based on the size of the resettlement agency's Iraqi refugee caseload because the ORR directs Iraqi refugee arrival flows toward specific locations in the United States; they are not evenly distributed throughout the country.

The sample population criteria consisted of Iraqi refugees who are current or previous refugee resettlement program recipients through a resettlement agency, are 18 years or older, and possess an advanced English proficiency. I derived the sampling frame from resettlement agency referrals. I used a three-prong approach for my recruitment method to include diversity in my sample frame and to obtain participants who were not direct referrals from the agency. I engaged in the following activities to recruit refugees: (1) received referrals from a volag gatekeeper (2) posted flyers in English and Arabic at the local library, community colleges, and shopping markets (3) arranged for the priest of a popular Chaldean church to make an announcement about my research to the congregation after Sunday mass. For the first activity, I coordinated with a volag service provider to identify eligible refugees, introduce them to my project via email, and create a referral process for interested individuals. I followed up the volag's email with personal phone calls to recruit and schedule interviews. Of the ten refugees included in the email, approximately six expressed interest by contacting me directly via email, or by requesting contact information from the key informant. I then followed up with emails and phone calls to the refugees who expressed interest in participating in the interview.

I conducted in-depth interviews with 10 Iraqi refugees (6 women and 4 men). The ten refugees I interviewed were all Iraqis who had lived in the United States for five years or less but who were post-eight months of cash assistance from the resettlement program, and thus were no longer active cases for the resettlement agency. The interviews were conducted in English, without the aid of an interpreter. The interviews took place at an agreed upon location, with most

of them conducted privately in a small study room in the public library, two interviews with female Iraqis were conducted in their homes. The participants read and signed consent forms and permitted the interviews to be audio-recorded.

The interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to two hours. The interviews were in a conversational format and semi-structured. I referenced an interview guide throughout the interview to ensure that central topics of interest were discussed, although they did not have to occur in a specific order. At the beginning of the interview, we discussed the goals of my research, the details of confidentiality, and my graduate program. The interviews initially included questions from the following topics: volag interaction, labor force activity, housing assistance, educational pursuits, social networks, and general attitudes and comments about the resettlement process. However, following the grounded theory method of continuous analysis and revision during data collection, additional questions regarding ethnic competition in the local community were included in the interview guide due to its organic emergence in the interviews as a significant issue for the respondents.

My role as a participant in the interviews must be addressed, given the perspectives of feminist research and grounded theory on identifying and exploring the researcher's personal experiences, characteristics, and biases that might be relevant to the study or influence the respondents' behavior. I am a black native-born woman from the South, at that time I was in my late 20s, younger than most of the respondents, unmarried, without children (the respondents inquired during the interview), in a PhD program (higher educational attainment than the respondents), new to the area, and I did not speak Arabic or Chaldean. The intersection of ethnicity, class, immigration status, gender, and age were salient in the conversations I had with the respondents and I acknowledge that these combinations may have influenced the texture or shape of our conversations.

The decision to conduct the interviews without the aid of an interpreter was influenced largely by the desire to create a sense of security and confidentiality among the participants

without fear of a co-ethnic or Iraqi hearing criticisms about their community and to reduce the likelihood of receiving socially desirable responses. The result of this decision was the creation of an advanced English-speaking sample that consisted of many upper class elites who have different perspectives, expectations, and human capital than what we would expect among the general population in Iraq.

I was able to obtain a balanced gender and diverse ethnic representation in the sample, but doing so may have had the effect of raising the average time lived in the U.S. (as lower class refugees would need more time to learn English in the U.S. due to arriving with a lower-level of English ability). I would also expect that the women in the sample are more likely to be from the upper class given their English-speaking skills. Many refugee women, due to familial obligations and low level of labor force participation, are not able to advance as quickly in ESL courses or have as much exposure to English in the U.S. after arrival compared to their male counterparts. A consequence of requiring advanced English skills among the interview participants may have been a greater salience of class and ethnic competition than would have been experienced among a cohort with limited English skills and educational attainment.

Due to the participants' vulnerable position in society, and their complicated relationship to the government, suspicion about the purpose and use of the interview information was to be expected. In an effort to alleviate their concerns and invite candid conversations, I implemented strategies suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to promote equality in the interview interaction. I provided personal details such as my place of birth, family characteristics, program of study, opinions about the area, and I provided information on local services and possible solutions to their problems when relevant. Additionally, I expressed sympathy and understanding during their responses about the hardships they experienced. The interview was intentionally informal and I encouraged elaboration on comments and pursued topics that were tangential to the main issues included in my interview guide.

In spite of these efforts, I acknowledge the possibility that due to the cultural differences between the interview participants and myself, my role as an outsider might have limited their forthrightness or critique of the co-ethnic community. Alternatively, my position might have inspired their candidness, as I am not a part of the community so the desirability bias is not as salient for Iraqi community questions. As one male participant apologized for speaking negatively about Chaldeans and went so far as to suggest that the comment be erased from the record until reassured of confidentiality. Another respondent mentioned that Iraqis do not complain about other Iraqis, as it is poor etiquette to do so. However, it is possible that social desirability biases were activated for questions about American discrimination or attitudes about American minorities, the latter of which they had virtually nothing to say.

Method of Analysis

I used the grounded theory framework (Glaser and Strauss 1967) to guide the qualitative portion of my data collection and analysis. Glaser and Strauss developed a deductive research approach whereby the data guides the theoretical framework instead of collecting data directed by pre-conceived hypotheses. Grounded theory emphasizes the organic nature of qualitative methods for social research. It promotes a participatory and dynamic relationship with the data, as ideas are continually refined throughout the collection process. Accordingly, I entered the field with only guiding questions and allowed the inductive process to refine my research focus. I conducted in-depth interviews until themes emerged. Following traditional qualitative research methods, I used purpose sampling. As the goal of qualitative research is not generalizability but rather to explore the process and experiences of a unique group (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

I employed thematic analysis of the interview data. I transcribed the audio-recorded interviews, and then entered the text in Atlas.ti 5.0, a qualitative analysis software program, for thematic coding and interpretation. I identified common themes articulated by the refugee respondents that describe their experiences during their integration process. In order to ensure

confidentiality, I replaced the respondents' names, local community colleges, cities, and states with pseudonyms. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of the interview participants.

Given the interview requirement of English proficiency, the sample is not expected to reflect the experiences of the average Iraqi refugee. Rather, it is likely that given the relationship between English proficiency and education/class status, the sample pool will have a higher level of educational attainment and Iraqi occupational status than would be expected in the Iraqi refugee population. Accordingly, most of the respondents were college-educated upper class Iraqis who do not identify with the Chaldeans, a group described by the respondents' as lower educated and occupants of the lowest rungs of the Iraqi social hierarchy.

Due to their vulnerable position in society, and the negative images of Arabs in the media post 9/11, a suspicion of research among the refugee population would not be surprising. Those who were willing to participate in the research might have characteristics and experiences that differ from the general Iraqi refugee population in the United States. An example of this effect was articulated by one of the college-educated female respondents, she mentioned that her husband was suspicious of the research and did not think participating was a good idea. She, in contrast, was not worried because she was familiar with academic research and understood the purpose of it. Her husband accompanied her to the library and waited for her until she was finished.

In order to compare the interview sample to the greater Iraqi immigrant population in the United States, I have included relevant statistics from the 2011 U.S. American Community Survey. My sample was sixty percent female and had an average age of 33, which is much younger than the national average of 40 for the overall U.S. Iraqi immigrant population. Sixty percent of the respondents were married; and only one of the married couples did not have children, which is consistent with the national average marriage rate for Iraqis. Eighty percent of the sample had a college degree, which is a much higher proportion than the overall Iraqi population, as only twenty percent of the national Iraqi population has a bachelor's degree, and even higher than the overall foreign-born and native-born populations (16 percent and 18.3

percent respectively). Approximately 55 percent of the current Iraqi immigrant population entered the U.S. after 2000, while all of the interview respondents arrived in the U.S. in the past ten years.

The Iraqi unemployment rate, at 11 percent, is almost twice as high as are the native-born and foreign-born counterparts (6.4 and 6.6 respectively). Labor force participation rate is approximately 54 percent compared to 67 percent for the foreign-born population. Notably, only 41 percent of Iraqi immigrant females ages 16 and over are in the labor force compared to 57 percent of foreign-born female counterparts, despite similar levels of educational attainment between Iraqis and the overall foreign-born female population. Approximately 27 percent of Iraqi immigrant women have a bachelor's degree or higher, comparable to the 27 percent for the overall foreign-born population. The gender disparity in the national labor force participation is striking and the pattern is apparent in the research sample. Of the six women interviewed, only two were working in the labor force (approximately 33 percent). Although half of the interview sample was unemployed, the one unemployed male had been unable to look for a job due to familial obligations, which included taking his wife for cancer treatment and taking care of his young children.

The respondents' countries of asylum mirror those of the greater Iraqi refugee flows, with all of them fleeing to Turkey, Jordan, or Syria. While Syria has received the majority of Iraqi refugees worldwide, more of the respondents fled to Turkey, which has received the majority of Christian Iraqis. All the Chaldean respondents were flown to the U.S. after claiming asylum in Turkey. The three SIVs are all Muslims who were living in Baghdad working for the U.S. military. The Chaldeans were the only respondents who mentioned personal death threats as the motivation for fleeing Iraq. While Chaldean/Christian Iraqis comprise only five percent of the population in Iraq, they represent forty percent of the Iraqi refugee population (UNHCR 2013). Although Chaldean and Assyrian Christians share a common ethnic and linguistic history, there are differences in social class.

All the respondents interviewed were receiving food stamps compared to 14.5 percent of the U.S. Iraqi population that is currently receiving cash assistance and approximately 46 percent that is receiving food stamps (this proportion is much higher than the 15 and 3 percent reported by the overall foreign-born population). The poverty rate is forty percent for Iraqi immigrants, which is twice as much as the total foreign-born population. As mentioned earlier, the ORR's 2011 Survey of Refugees reported that Iraqis welfare utilization is the highest recorded among all refugee groups, by more than twenty percent. This significant trend could be the result of the Iraqis relationship to the state, by creating a sense of entitlement (viewing the United States as responsible for their plight due to the country's prolonged military intervention in Iraq), or due to their experience as former citizens of a country that promoted a socialist state (developed under the Ba'ath's influence).

Results

One of the most significant barriers to successful incorporation in the U.S. is underemployment. My analysis of the data revealed the importance of context of reception, refugee resettlement policies are critical determinants of outcomes and the availability of ethnic-based social networks have a profound impact on adjustment. Likewise, outcomes such as underemployment reflect the complex interplay of ethnic and class competition. Gender has a significant impact on economic opportunities as a result of interactions with resettlement program policies regarding child-care, educational pursuits, and work preferences.

Ethnic and Class Competition

The majority of the new flows of Chaldean refugees lived in Turkey refugee camps under harsh conditions. Many of them fled Iraq after receiving death threats from Muslims over their Christian faith. Although the Muslim/Christian conflict was largely a power grab amidst the instability created after 2003, it began in earnest after 2006, and affected many of the citizens who had previously lived peaceably with each other. The ethnic-power balance was a salient factor in the sectarian violence in Iraq and a leading cause for the refugees' flight to the United

States. The majority of the current Iraqi refugee flows to the United States are Chaldeans. The resettlement of Iraqi refugee groups into U.S. communities that have a different ethnic distribution than in Iraq changes the Iraqi social hierarchy and shifts the power balance

Through the interviews, it became apparent that experiences in the local labor market varied considerably between the Chaldeans and non-Chaldean Iraqis (i.e., Sunni Arabs, Shiite Arabs, Kurds, and Armenians). The majority ethnic group in the *Iraqi community* was Chaldean, and the respondents reported that the Chaldeans actively discriminated against non-Chaldean Iraqis in their hiring practices in the local ethnic economy. Non-Chaldean Iraqis arriving in the Iraqi community have the challenge of a double burden, as they experience discrimination in the local labor market by Chaldean Iraqis, and in the larger economic pool by U.S. employers who discriminate against Arabs in general, immigrants, and English language learners, and who do not recognize foreign credentials, education, or work experience. The traditional ethnic hierarchy in Iraq has been turned on its head in the United States. The Chaldeans have established close-knit communities in the areas where they have been resettling for the past twenty years. In these communities, the Chaldeans have obtained higher socio-economic status, and business ownership. Consequently, when new flows of refugees arrive from the ethnic social class that persecuted them in Iraq, they are unwilling to cede their status, or share their resources with them. Of the ten interview respondents, only three were Chaldean, but all three were employed quickly, and none of them commented on ethnic discrimination. Only one young Chaldean male respondent noted that the co-ethnic employers take advantage of their shared background to exploit the new workers through low wages, few benefits, and strict scheduling. Inter-ethnic competition is the most salient theme from the interviews with non-Chaldeans. Farah, one of the college-educated Iraqi refugees described the level of competition and class conflict as follows:

“My husband always says we were successful people in our country and since USA is the country of opportunities we have to be successful in our country and here. Because lots of people that don't have education they come to the USA. I don't know if you know. If you see the Chaldean. You know the Chaldean what they are? They are the first people they live in Iraq.

There are lots of Chaldeans they move to the USA and they have now lots of stores nice stores in the rich places in New Bethel, I'm not talking about the other places, but New Bethel, I think it's the richest place in USA. They have lots of areas. They are successful people. Lots of people they move and they don't have education but they have their successful job. Therefore, we have to do our best to be successful in the USA. But it takes years. Maybe because we have babies, maybe because the time we arrived, during the crisis. Maybe. Lots of reasons. But we have to do our best. Because we don't have, we don't know lots of people.

I don't know if I'm talking ... there's a competition between the people themselves. Sometimes the people who know you and your country they say, "Oh, look at you" like something. But the foreign people, "oh you have education you have like this", they encourage you. Different communities but this one don't help you this one help you. They encourage us to do better."

She described the ethnic competition as divisive in the community in the following excerpt:

"Maybe this is for sociology; I think this makes problems for families. There's a problem between the families themselves. There are some who come and find the jobs and those who come and don't find job. They say you don't have job I am working you don't work. I don't want to talk to them because they say these things. Just like, they make shame for me. Why they say that? And this makes problems and therefore we don't want to anybody we don't want to visit anyone and we are closed off ourselves."

Another college-educated female respondent, Khalida, discussed how she and her aunt (her anchor) debated resettling in the Iraqi community. She said the following:

"Her husband's relatives live here. She didn't want us to come in this area. She said the lifestyle of the people here it doesn't match our lifestyle. She said the level of education. She said you will feel like you are in a village. Because we used to live in an area in Iraq where most of them are scientists. My father had a PhD degree in history. So there's an area in Iraq, in Baghdad which most of the people there, the majority, 90 percent, they have a higher education and they have PhD degrees or master's degree at least. So she said you will not be able to communicate with the people (Iraqis in the U.S. neighborhood)."

Eva, one of the refugees who lived in a refugee camp in Turkey after receiving Christian-based death threats, has a different perspective on the ethnic relations in the area. She did not mention anything negative about the relationships there. She made the following comment to emphasize how safe she feels in the United States compared to the situation that she left in Iraq,

"There is some place; some people say, "Hey, are you Muslim? I guess you are." They don't accept you because you know the colors, if she a Muslim or Kurdish or I don't know what is. Now, you can go. No one ask you. "You are from where? You are from Baghdad, no. No, I'm sorry. No Baghdad just from Mosul— or some place..."

Khalida, an upper-class Armenian woman who is currently unemployed, has had multiple negative experiences in the ethnic-labor market. I have included her summary of the history of ethnic tension between Chaldeans and Arabs in Iraq and in the United States to provide a clearer understanding of the interaction between class and ethnicity in the resettlement community.

Khalida

“And I don’t want to work with a job with the Iraqi community anymore. For the Chaldean-
for me-

- I don’t want to talk about that because it’s kind of discrimination- I don’t want to mention
that-

Here the Chaldean community is strong in New Bethel and in Iraq they didn’t have a good reputation, so the Armenians were an educated people and well-known. They came as refugees in 1915, but our grandparents sacrificed themselves to raise a good generation and all of them are educated. Chaldeans didn’t have that good reputation, so from Iraq, they didn’t have that good reputation, the Iraqis didn’t like them, I didn’t know that in Iraq. When I came here, I noticed how they discriminate between the people. the owner who fired me, was a Chaldean, the second one, the manager, was Chaldean, the owner was Palestine Arab. I have friends in Iraq who were Chaldeans but the majority here, no. They ask do you know how to speak Chaldean. They say no. if you’re not Chaldean here you will die. (Laughs) because you can’t get a job. I speak Armenian, they speak Chaldean, we both speak Iraqi-Arabic, which is the normal way but here they want to speak Chaldean.”

Co-Ethnic Employment

The initial resettlement location, as the foundation of the context of reception for refugees, is a critical factor in influencing their initial labor force entry. Placement in pre-existing ethnic or national communities can increase the likelihood of immediate employment within the local ethnic labor market, and provide easy access to the language, food, and familiarity from their native country. Due to the history of Iraqi migration flows, the largest and most-established communities are in Illinois, Michigan, and California. While these communities have a shared country origin, they do vary in ethnic composition. In California, Chaldeans are one of the largest and oldest ethnic groups in the Iraqi communities. Accordingly, resettlement to a predominately Chaldean-Iraqi community will pose more of an advantage in the local labor market for recently-arrived co-ethnics compared to Arabic Iraqis.

Resettlement location decisions can then either heighten or mitigate the salience of ethnicity during the refugees’ integration process. Ethnicity and class are intertwined in the

resettlement experiences of Iraqi refugees, as they are intertwined in the political history of Iraq. These intersections of ethnicity and class can be explored using the perspective of intersectionality, where we do not try to separate each factor and examine it apart from the other, rather we take a holistic approach. We attempt to understand the experience of the individual by addressing how ethnicity, class, and gender interact to produce varying experiences that alternately privilege and oppress the individual depending on the situation.

In this case, Chaldeans experience a unique position in their resettlement location by being able to leverage their established ethnic-based network to gain early entry into the labor market. Arabic-Iraqis, in contrast, face significant oppression and discrimination in the labor market by both Chaldean Iraqis and Americans, which they explain away by citing their poor language skills (in Chaldean and English). Rafid is an example of a young Chaldean male who obtained several entry-level positions immediately due to his relatives' social network. The jobs he was offered were low skilled and unrelated to his area of expertise. He was unsuccessful in obtaining a job in computer hardware maintenance, which was his occupation in Iraq. Although he was able to gain immediate employment, he was dissatisfied with the co-ethnic relationship at the workplace. His current job is working as a gas station attendant for an American employer. He said the following when asked about the ethnic relations at the workplace:

Rafid

"I ask him (his American manager) can I have 6 days (for vacation). He said yeah you can. Man, if I said that to an Iraqi person he's going to kill me, yeah you can have a vacation for a long time; yeah you don't have to come back (laughter)"

Rafid

(In response to the ethnic composition of his current place of employment)

"No, they're not Iraqi people, they're all American and that's a good thing. I don't want to work with the Iraqi people anyway ..."

I: Why not.... (Long pause)

"Well, they're like parents. They're like someone in our family. So when they come someone new they are the first person go out and they don't want to pay you more money, if you have experience for many years for like 10 years they will still pay you 8 bucks and they're not going to give you more than 5 cents."

Rafid's comments illuminate the potential advantages and disadvantages to co-ethnic labor markets. Immediate employment and workplace cultural fluency are two significant advantages,

while poor working conditions, low pay, and potentially limited opportunities for advancement are disadvantages from working in a co-ethnic business compared to a larger, mainstream organization.

Ethnic-Based Social Networks

The role of the anchor, or sponsor, for refugees has been largely left unexamined by sociologists, despite the significant body of literature on ethnic-based social networks. Anchors have the potential to be a refugee's critical asset in navigating the social community and the labor force. They can incorporate the refugee into their social network, guide them around the community, and give them advice regarding the local labor market and the education system. The sponsors are usually the first people the refugee sees upon setting foot in the U.S. and they often welcome the newcomer into their home for an initial reception period (varying from a few weeks to a few years).

It is sometimes the case that the U.S. sponsors are merely acquaintances or distant relatives with whom the refugees do not have a close relationship. These sponsors agree to provide the refugees with temporary housing assistance, but after the first few months, they are expected to find independent housing as soon as possible, creating additional stress, and a precarious housing situation. Anchored cases are frequently resettled with distant relatives who have agreed to house and assist them during the initial months after arrival. At times, these relationships are weak and refugees often feel like they are imposing on the host family. They have additional pressure to find a job and their own apartment as they feel they have overstayed their welcome. The amount of social capital available to the anchored cases varies. While the refugees' relatives may offer initial assistance; they do not always help refugees find employment. If they do, it is often with a co-ethnic where the refugees are likely to make lower pay and/or be at greater risk for exploitation than they would be in the mainstream labor force.

Zaid, a middle-aged professional Iraqi, has been unemployed for the entire year that he has lived in the United States to focus his energy on being the primary child-care provider for his

young children and helping his wife attend her cancer treatments at the local hospital. He was an anchored case and expressed surprise that his relatives in the area did not offer him any support. He was forced to take care of everything on his own.

In Rasha's case, she traveled to the U.S. alone from Turkey. She was planning to resettle in New Bethel to be near her friend, who was the only person she knew in the United States. Her friend's father has lived in the United States for thirty years so they were well established in the community. The following is her description of her experience when she discovered that she was not going to her preferred resettlement location.

"First I told Immigration, I need to go to New Bethel because my friend was there and her father has been there for 30 years, but when I arrived to Chicago airport, they told me you go to Dallas, and I say, "Where is Dallas?" and they say "Texas.". I say "Oh ok, but it's New Bethel right?" They say, "No, it's another state." What! Oh my God! I told her "Please check, I want to go to New Bethel." She told me No.... I suffer a lot.... I cried.... I have trouble in the airplane; I throw up because of the long way."

Rasha stayed in Dallas for only a few months before her father's friend paid her travel expenses to move to New Bethel. Once there, he provided her with his spare apartment paid for by his employer. She was able to stay there rent-free for a year, until her friend's housing stipend was discontinued. Rasha decided to remain in the apartment even though it was expensive in order to have enough space for her mother to join her from Iraq.

The quality of the housing in New Bethel was often described as expensive, old, and roach-infested. However many of the respondents loved the climate, as it reminded them of the weather in Iraq, and all of them described having access to an Iraqi stores and living in an Iraqi community as beneficial for newcomers who do not speak English very well. The limited public transportation system made living in walking-distance to Iraqi stores an asset. Despite this fact, residing in apartment complexes with other Iraqis was a contentious issue due to class-based differences among the Iraqis. The urban residents who lived in Baghdad differ in educational status and income than those who reside in the rural areas of Iraq. In the United States, both groups are resettled in the same areas, resulting in class conflict over limited resources, namely local employment opportunities.

Farah describes how cultural norms for social relations change after resettling in the United States in the following excerpt:

Farah

"Despite of our downstairs neighbor. They are from the same place we don't make relationship because we don't have time, because of the kids. You know the same relatives in our country, the relationship was different. But, when we move here, we integrate with the community. Because we see that here. Ok. I talk about my big uncle or my youngest uncle, if he wants to come to our house he come, he knock the door and come. But, the other one, because he lives there he has to call and "can I come?" you can come sure. And, the same thing happened to us after being there. We integrate with the community and when we want to go to another place, we have to call. Ok. I come tomorrow? Therefore the same thing with the neighborhoods, only there's hello, hello that's it."

While the Iraqi neighbors who lived below Farah's apartment did not complain about the noise her children made, the American tenants who previously resided in the downstairs apartment did complain, causing the landlord to discuss the issue with Farah privately. Farah observed that social distance is greater in the United States. She mentioned that her family has gradually become socialized to a different way of interacting. In Iraq, people would make impromptu house visits, without giving advance notice, but in the United States, she pointed out, it is preferred to be more formal. People here make plans, they call ahead before they come by, and after a while, Farah and her family began to engage in similar behavior. Even if it was to visit another Iraqi, they called ahead. This is partly what the respondents mean when they say living in the United States changes you. Farah said she is not friendly to her neighbors. At first, she explained that she did not have time, but then she went on to suggest that it was a cultural issue, she described it as the norm to solely to exchange pleasantries and wave as opposed to having deeper relationships and more intimate interactions with your neighbors. This increase in social distancing hinders their chances of expanding their social network, by limiting the development of relationships with Americans, who have a greater influence on providing opportunities to obtain higher-paid employment than the Iraqis co-ethnic social capital.

Underemployment: Skill-match Employment Obstacles

Skill underutilization, or skill mismatch, is a phenomenon that has been the focus of immigrant research since 2008. Data shows that many highly educated foreign professionals are relegated to low-skill jobs (e.g., taxi drivers, laborers, service workers) due to domestic licensing and certification requirements. Despite recent calls for professional certification changes at the local, state, and national levels, progress has not been made. In 2011, professional refugees still identify skill-match as the primary employment challenge they face. The refugees find it extremely difficult to invest the money, time, and training needed to obtain the necessary certificates and licensure, especially when they need to find gainful employment immediately in order to pay for their basic needs. English proficiency is one of the greatest impediments to obtaining skilled employment (Batalova and Fix 2008). The licensing and certification standards are established by a complex and fragmented system that includes state, local, private-sector, and occupational boards in the decision-making process. Occupational licensing authority lies with the state and local governments, the federal government has no power to set or change policy (Batalova and Fix 2008).

Of the six respondents who were employed, only Ibrahim, a male Chaldean who was formerly an owner of a manufacturing company in Iraq, was currently working in his field of expertise, albeit in an entry-level position.

Ibrahim

“But here I couldn’t find the job, the proper job for me. So I started living in a low level, so I used to own my little factory for bottles, water bottles not big ones, just the little one and then when we came here I try to find something like management and supervision, but all they all ask for experience within the U.S. here, so it was hard. So since I have been here in this job, this is my first job in September 2008 I started it then.”

All the respondents described difficulty in obtaining employment in general and many viewed additional post-secondary education as necessary to meet the U.S. qualifications for skill-matched employment opportunities. One of the respondents, Sura, reported success in

leveraging her ethnic social network to obtain skill-matched employment, but this was the exception. The following is an excerpt detailing how she learned of her skill-matched position.

Sura

“This friend is like my cousins’, she has some relationship with them, and they told her about me like I have a bachelors in computer science and I am working at 7-Eleven. So she is kind of like okay send me your resume and let me see what she knows. Actually, I had some skills as a computer science or so I was eligible to work and it was a testing. Yeah also, I got training there but they paid everything for me. So as I got the training I got the job and I was working perfect and excellent.”

Sura worked in this position for several months until the company experienced massive lay-offs. She is now using her unemployment benefits to pay for community college.

Familial Obligations

Interactions between gender and welfare program policies regarding child-care, educational pursuits, and work preferences are an example of the influence institutional level factors on individual and household decision-making processes. These welfare program polices served to reinforce traditional gender roles within the Iraqi refugee households. Married couples were often forced to select one spouse to stay home to care for the children while the other looked for full-time employment, due to limitations in child-care aid provided by the welfare program. These limitations reinforce traditional gender roles by supporting separation of the household division of labor between the public and private spheres. Limiting work outside of the home for the wives also had the additional effect of restricting their social networks, and most importantly, opportunities to speak English, creating a downward spiral for skilled employability due to limited English-speaking proficiency.

Iraq has one of the world’s lowest labor force participation rates for women, even though a significant number of women have college degrees. It has been argued that the society views women’s education less as a tool for economic pursuits and more as a skill for imparting cultural knowledge and history to their children (Read 2004). Reflecting the pattern observed in Iraq, Iraqi immigrants in the U.S. also have one of the lowest employment rates for women, and one of the highest rates for educational attainment, lending support to the idea that education is not viewed

as a path to entering the workforce (Census 2011). Despite this cultural tradition of women not working in the labor market, the interview respondents did not express a preference for working exclusively in the home. In fact, the interview respondents indicated a desire to work, and identified child-care as the primary obstacle to pursuing full-time employment.

The refugees expressed ambivalence toward the resettlement and welfare program services and policies. While many respondents praised the individual case managers, employment specialists, and volunteers who assisted them during their initial resettlement to the U.S., many voiced frustration over the expectations of immediate employment, housing costs, and limitations for workforce development. Expectations for resettlement assistance varied according to each individual refugee. Most of the respondents felt that the resettlement agency provided adequate service and proved to be a valuable resource when they encountered various problems during resettlement; many of them took advantage of the ESL courses and the job search appointments with the agency staff. The common complaint regarding the RRP was the unrealistic expectation of immediate employment and the limited financial assistance the refugees received upon arrival. They described the funding as inadequate, oftentimes forcing them to have to borrow from their family and friends to pay the rent. The urgency to find employment also added an incredible amount of stress and anxiety to the already stressful process of resettlement.

Mental health advocates and resources are not a significant part of resettlement program experience for the average refugee, which may exacerbate periods of depression and frustration the Iraqis experience during the initial stages of resettlement. Financial insecurity was unexpected and hindered their ability for upward economic trajectory gained through advanced education, vocational training, English classes, skill development, and/or skill-matched employment. At the end of eight months in the U.S., the refugees were transferred to the county welfare agency called Public Aid. The refugees received cash assistance through Public Aid, and met regularly with their assigned caseworker to submit verification of hours studying and/or searching for jobs to continue receiving the assistance and to qualify for child-care subsidies.

The ESL requirement is waived for those with advanced English speaking ability, and those respondents were able to take advantage of a policy that allows them to substitute studying at the library for ESL classes. Many of the refugees study their college coursework at the public library and submit their hours to Public Aid for verification. Many of the respondents were critical of Public Aid job search requirements, as Public Aid policies do not allow college enrollment to substitute for job search activities, requiring the refugees to attend classes and then search for jobs a minimum of four hours a week.

The refugees learned through word-of-mouth in the community that after living in the state for one year, they could supplement their monthly income through the financial aid they receive by enrolling in the local community college. The state has a policy for providing grants to refugees and waiving the fees for matriculating students with only a high-school education level. The refugees with university degrees would have to pay the full tuition, causing many to misreport their educational attainment in order to lower their college expenses. The following excerpts illustrate the varying opinions on using the financial aid to supplement their income and the high cost of education in the United States compared to Iraq:

Saba

“My friends told me I can have income (*by telling the community college that she only has a high school diploma in order to qualify for financial aid*) but I find it difficult. But it is different because I have a bachelor's degree and I refuse to ignore this degree. Because I really worked hard and studied hard and I don't want to ignore my past. Ok.”

“Because many Iraqis come here and many of them prefer to stay at home and prefer to take advantage from the county and waiting to finish this one year and go to Monroe (*local community college*) to have another income. I don't want this for me and for my husband. We're a different kind of people. You know when you live with this kind of people they can affect your opinion. So I avoid many people here, not because they are bad, no, because they are not fit to my thinking.”

Saba comes from the upper class in Iraq and she views educational attainment as a distinguishing characteristic between herself and the non-urban Iraqis who she feels she now lives among in the United States. She does not want to hide her Iraqi education, to obtain financial aid. She views it as taking advantage of the system and implies some Iraqis have a sense of entitlement she does not want to indulge in.

Rafid

(In response to a question about financial aid)

"I have no idea about that. I don't want to be like, I don't want to say "poor guys" but many people want those things but I don't want it.

(Why not) Because you have to fill out these papers and they want to know how much money do you have in the bank, how much, where do you get this money from? Nothing for me. I don't want to do that."

Rafid, who was not from the elite class in Iraq, also echoes Saba's sentiment that taking financial aid is akin to being on welfare; it is something "poor guys" do. Both Rafid and Saba voice their contempt for financial aid with a sense of pride of not having to stoop so low. Ahmed, a middle-aged professional describes financial aid in a different light. He views it as a loan, something that was unheard of in the educational system in Iraq. He is not comfortable taking a loan and the tuition costs are too high for him to afford to pay them with his current salary.

Ahmed

"Actually I would like to continue my hard study but I stopped because I was told that I have to get a loan to pay for my study and to cover my life cost. There is something that was a surprise here, back in our country, the study is free, when the study at the university free they encourage us to study. Especially Baath entered in 1998 or 1997. They encourage students to study and they give them money to encourage them to study money to pay for food or for clothes so they help them they can depend on themselves. It was grand structure. So when I came here I survive, but actually I would like to continue my hard study in English but the problem is the loans and my family, I have to support my family. I would like to continue in English I would like to improve myself be better specialist or get a degree."

The interviews revealed the community college as a meeting place to socialize with other Iraqis, share information, and as a place where class-based attitudes are revealed. Applying for loans appears to be a savvy strategy executed by refugees to supplement their income, and it is advice that newcomers hear early in their arrival period as something they should plan to do once they become eligible for aid the following year. It is also a point of contention between the classes, where taking financial and deferring employment to attend school can be seen as unambitious, dependent, and low-class. Those from the upper class would not resort to asking for what they perceive to be a hand out.

The resettlement case manager was not a salient presence during the interview, the relationship was only mentioned when prompted, and then the responses lacked depth or

significance. The employment specialist and the volunteers in the computer lab for job search appointments, people who were seen as having an active role in their job search, were mentioned warmly. The New Bethel refugee program distributes the provision of services through several entities. Health care and welfare are managed by a city department, which requires refugee attendance in ESL courses or job preparation to receive funds, while the social integration and housing is provided by local resettlement agencies.

Both the service providers working with the Iraqi refugee population on the East Coast, and the employment coordinators and volunteers in New Bethel, made similar comments regarding the reason for high unemployment among highly-skilled Iraqi refugees. They suggested class differences were responsible for low labor force participation, rather than English-skills (which affect the women more than it affects the men) and the lack of foreign credential recognition for professional occupations in the United States. Many of the upper class Iraqis do not want to take a job that is beneath them, cleaning jobs are looked down upon in Iraq, so many of the refugees would rather enroll in school and use the financial aid to pay their bills than to work in low-skilled occupation/menial labor. Learning how to negotiate the labyrinth that is the refugee resettlement program, requires a savvy picked up through the help of co-ethnics, given the structural limitations to financial security, understanding the day-care subsidy requirements, job search stipulations, and income-based health care limitations, leads to a perceived need to “cheat” the system.

Perceived employer discrimination varied by ethnic identity and desired occupation. Refugees who applied for security, government, or airport jobs often voiced concerns that they were denied a job because of discrimination, as terrorist profiling and U.S. - Iraq relationships were more salient in the job responsibilities and industry sectors. I assume the prevalence of perceived discrimination varies by industry as well as the local labor market, regional variation in co-ethnic concentration, and relationship to Iraq. For example, discrimination in New York City or Washington, D.C. might be higher due to the cities' involvement in 9/11 and the physical

presence of high profile international organizations. Since the Iraqi community in New Bethel is one of the oldest in the country, and well established in the local business sector, I expected lower levels of perceived employer discrimination among the Iraqi refugees. Additionally, New Bethel is not a primary terrorist target like other major cities (e.g., New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles). Employer discrimination is highest in areas of national security, which probably receives more job inquiries from Iraqi refugees than other refugees, as many of the Iraqis are former employees of the U.S. military in Iraq, (e.g., serving as interpreters, security guards, etc.) a relationship that resulted in their refugee status eligibility.

The likelihood of obtaining a skill-matched position depends largely on institutional factors and social networks. Resettlement program policies, service-provider referrals, and social network resources all influence the labor force entry point for Iraqi refugees. A “first-job” approach to the labor market might result in securing immediate employment, but it can also have the effect of reducing the amount of time, energy, and interest the refugee has on finding future skill-matched job opportunities. For those refugees who maintained interest in professional development, the provision of child-care for women while they conducted job searches, participated in vocational training courses, or attended college classes was also influential in allowing them the time and space to develop transferable skills and identify relevant employment opportunities.

The degree of adherence to traditional gender roles varied among the respondents. The college-educated women generally expressed a desire to obtain a professional position and move away from the traditional role of women solely performing domestic work. However, many acknowledged that their role as the primary care-taker for their young children created a significant barrier to doing so. The solution was either to postpone education and their job search until the children were old enough to go to pre-school, or to utilize the welfare child-care subsidy to attend classes and/or work. Ahmed, a middle-aged professional man had this to say about his wife’s labor force activities:

Ahmed

"I like her to work, and she likes to work, but the priority is for the children, for our children. We already enrolled the twins in kindergarten and in August they will start elementary school and the little girl so in this case she will have some time if she finds a job she will start working."

Farah, a married woman with three kids, notes that the decrease in funding from Public Aid from seven hours of child-care to four hours has caused her to limit her job search and educational pursuits. In the following excerpt, she describes the daily stress of taking care of her children and making time for personal development. She emphasizes the need to prioritize her children's welfare and her husband's career over her personal ambitions.

Farah

"Because I have the kids and they decrease the hours they don't let me put my kids for seven hours. They decrease the hours. Because they are babies after I come from the library I have to make lunch I make breakfast and this baby do like this and this baby ... it's crying. Aaah! I have a headache. When I arrive in the library, I spend maybe half an hour relaxing. And then ... I depend on my husband now. I push him to get a job first, and then I'll take care of my daughter. In kindergarten, they have three books I have to read and what should I do? This is my homework in the summer. What should I do to my daughter because she will go to kindergarten? She's in kindergarten not in high school ok. But, I want her to be strong when she enters the school. I want her to depend on herself. Therefore, I have to work on my daughter now it's important for me to. You know I have to work on myself on my daughter on my family on my husband. Lots of things. It's important."

Public Aid provides cash assistance to refugees, but if they are searching for jobs, they have to record at least 4 hours of studying a day. Many Iraqis study in the library so there is a sign-in sheet there that Public Aid uses. Public Aid also provided money for up to seven hours of child-care, but after the budget crisis, it was reduced to four. Farah still takes advantage of this and hires a private baby-sitter to watch her three kids when she wants to study or go shopping, etc. She says that she cannot leave her three young children with any family/friends, anyone she knows because her children are very energetic and require too much for work for anyone else besides the parents and the baby-sitter.

The following excerpt from my interview with Khalida serves as an example of prioritizing future career goals over immediate low-skilled employment:

Khalida

“I was searching for a job all summer and I couldn’t find anything and then one week ago they contact me for a full time job for ten months. I told them I can’t do full time because I need the computer science class.”

Khalida did not take the full-time position she was offered to pursue higher education. She believed that it was better to make short-term sacrifices for long-term career success. Many of the respondents grapple with this question frequently as despite the fact that their English-speaking skills are improving, and they are gaining U.S. work experience, but they are hitting a glass ceiling on career advancement. Many consider attending the community college and pursuing certificates to work as pharmacy technician, a currently popular occupation in the Iraqi community that offers mid-level skill status and opportunities for advancement. However, some are not used to the idea of paying for school or incurring debt to pursue a higher degree. For these individuals opportunities for socio-economic trajectory are even more limited.

Overall, unrealistic expectations, precarious living conditions, and limited agency assistance were the primary unexpected challenges the respondents faced during their resettlement to the United States. Rafid, a young Chaldean man in his early twenties described his experience in America as disappointing and far from what he was told to expect, even though he lives with his relatives and was provided multiple job opportunities through their connections. Rafid stated the following:

Rafid

“The people that were living here gave us this big picture that we will be living like a millionaire in one month and we will find a better job for you and you will work in the work you like and you will go to college and you graduate maybe less than a year. We said, WOW. Yeah, that's why we are here. So yeah, that's good you know everybody like that. After we went here, we said WHAT ... IS ... ALL ... THIS?
First of all, you have to find, the first thing you have to do is find a job. And after you find a job, you have no time to do your school and if you go to school, you can't do anything that's left. Between the school and a job, you have a full-time job. So that's kind of not of the dream that we used to. But I told you we have a nice picture of here in America, and yeah we can't do what we had in Iraq. Couldn't do it in a short time. We know we're not going to do it in a year or something. We can kind of figure, three years. Like now, we have almost three years in America. (PAUSE) I guess I change myself a little bit; I have a little better job and a nice life, but not what I was, like, what I wanted to have. Yeah. (Laughs). It's way, way, way different ”

A sense of limited possibilities, or missed opportunities, was intimated by Ibrahim, a middle-aged Arab man who was a business owner in Iraq. He described his situation in the U.S. as a resignation to limited success, as someone who feels that his best years are behind them, and he arrived in the U.S. too late in life. He is now too tired from all he endured in Iraq to have the energy to start over again from the beginning. His comments illuminate the particular hardship facing refugees upon arrival in their country of resettlement. The psychological toll of fleeing their home country is significant, but instead of resting and recovering from that experience, they are expected to arrive in the host country and immediately begin searching for a job and looking for affordable housing. The tension between the pursuit of the “American Dream” and recovering from their ordeal, could explain initial underemployment or delayed entry into the labor force, as well as explain initial disappointment and frustration with the resettlement program policies promoting self-sufficiency. This tension is evident in Ibrahim’s words as he states,

Ibrahim

“Because they are tired and people will be coming here, this is very important they don’t do their best here, they are just okay, they complain a lot. And then okay I can’t do this, but if I were here 15 years ago I would be doing a different thing now, but I came here late although my friend in Detroit said it is never too late. So if I was here 15 years ago with only one child or two, I could.... – but now I have a family to take care of, if I was single oh my God I would be like something big.”

Another common sentiment echoed among the respondents is the sense of confusion and indignation over the challenges to employment in the United States. They questioned the purpose of spreading false promises about the ease of obtaining a high-paying job, and stated that they would have gladly gone elsewhere if they had known about the true state of the economy. This particular cohort of respondents arrived during a significant recession in the United States due to the housing market crash. Unfortunately, adjustments were not made to the RRP time limits for economic self-sufficiency and many refugees still found themselves unemployed at the end of their resettlement assistance. The following quotes exemplify this general sentiment:

Zaid

“Sometimes I just wonder how come they still bring people over here while they don’t really support them.”

“I was surprised about the jobs and also about the welfare. I told you they (have) a lot of sanctions in this (program) and there’s nothing we really can do about it. I thought they would support refugees for free for four or three years without even talking to them until they find out what the hell is going on.”

Khalida

“And my only question is- which I always asked- if there is no opportunity to work in the United States why are they receiving refugees? This is my question. This is the question. I’m educated, I’ve tried to find jobs, you saw in many places, entry level, non-qualified jobs and qualified jobs all the kinds of jobs, and I covered all the surface and I couldn’t find a job. And the problem is not me. I know myself and my abilities and I was just surprised at the way the people have to find a job through the relationships which the refugee doesn’t have a relationship with the people here, with the companies. So my question is if there are no opportunities why bring the refugees here?”

Conclusion

In conclusion, the intersections of ethnicity, class, and gender interact to influence the labor force experiences of Iraqi refugees by informing job preferences and employability in the local labor market. The roles of ethnic-based social networks and institutional policies, as key components of the mode of reception, shape the refugees’ decision-making processes related to housing, education, and employment. These components also direct the labor force entry-point for refugees. The emphasis on immediate employment and economic self-sufficiency has resulted in increased psychological distress, anxiety and frustration as the recently-arrived refugees find themselves in another insecure living situation with little hope of regaining the quality of life they were accustomed to in Iraq. Navigating the resettlement and welfare policies is a critical factor in the speed and magnitude of success experienced by refugees.

The findings indicate that Iraqi refugees face the greatest challenges in the areas of skill-matched employment, and navigating the ethnic-based labor market in the local community. There are also significant gender differences regarding access to work and educational opportunities, largely due to individual-level adherence to traditional gender roles and macro-level eligibility requirements for child-care subsidies. The refugees had to be resourceful and creative to negotiate the resettlement program policies on employment search, school enrollment, and

financial support. These findings contribute to our understanding of the refugee-agency relationship and the impact of resettlement policy on refugee labor force outcomes.

My research has explored the role of social networks and the Refugee Resettlement Program in influencing the economic trajectory of refugees. My findings support previous literature on the utilization of ethnic-based networks for immediate low-skilled employment. However, my research adds to the field by identifying inter-ethnic conflict within Iraqi refugee groups that creates sectarian competition in the local labor market. The RRP and local welfare services were not identified as formally acknowledging the ethnic-based employment discrimination occurring within the Iraqi enclaves. This lack of awareness has led to continued resource grabbing and the reproduction and maintenance of an inverted power hierarchy between the Chaldeans and the Arabs in local Iraqi communities. The Chaldean-Arab ethnic tension was the most salient theme in the interviews. Greater sensitivity to Iraqis deep-seeded ethnic tension and competition by resettlement agencies could improve the short-term economic outcomes of non-Chaldean Iraqis.

Limitations

My qualitative results are limited to a non-representative sample of Iraqi refugees that has a higher than average English-speaking proficiency and educational attainment. Although the conclusions are not generalizable to the greater refugee population, their experiences do provide insight into the resettlement process.

Policy Recommendations

My findings have implications for the national refugee resettlement program as well as local social service programs, and institutions of higher education. My analysis revealed that the resettlement program and ethnic networks are influential factors in the timing and type of labor force activity. A greater consideration for the national history of ethnic conflict of a refugee group should occur during the resettlement location process. Awareness of tension and employment discrimination between Chaldeans and Arabs by the resettlement agencies could lead to the

agency taking on the role of intermediary in addressing ethnic-based issues and advocating for increased tolerance and inclusion in the local community.

In 2010, the ORR held a national consultation with approximately 800 stakeholders in the refugee resettlement network to identify the primary obstacles facing refugees during resettlement and to solicit suggestions and recommendations for improvement. The participants provided the ORR with recommendations on 21 areas, including secondary migration, daycare services, job readiness, professional recertification, and housing. Issues with recertification and underemployment were discussed during the consultation. The participants identified recertification as a lengthy and costly process that varies by state (ORR 2010).

The ORR adopted one of the recommendations from the consultation to create partners with the Departments of Labor and Education to establish national recertification policies and remove licensing fees for refugees. The ORR is also in the process of creating industry-specific vocational training for refugees to be facilitated by nonprofit organizations in addition to developing finance opportunities (Individual Training Accounts through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998) for refugees to use to pay for vocational training.

My results support these findings, as they indicate a need for greater emphasis on professional licensing and the utilization of transferable skills for highly educated refugee groups like the Iraqis. The consideration of prior occupation should be incorporated in the resettlement location decision-making process, as secondary migration is directly correlated to professional license policies and ease of skill-matched employment. The RRP funding should be more sensitive and responsive to significant changes in the economy that will likely have a negative impact on the short-term employment prospects for refugees. The refugees I interviewed arrived during the 2008 economic crisis when national unemployment was at a record high. Studies consistently show that during periods of high unemployment, immigrants and minorities are disproportionately affected. Given this relationship, safeguards should be put into place that provide extended assistance for at least 12 months. The safeguards should include

comprehensive rental assistance, (with a rent-cap in place based on average rent in proximity of the resettlement agency) and cash assistance for food, household items, and child-care (which is based on a pre-determined budget derived from the local consumer goods index). Improved knowledge and access to resources for degree equivalency and transcript certification for refugees would also streamline the process and shorten the transition periods between arrival, enrollment, and employment.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should include mixed method studies of post-secondary and vocational program opportunities, financing, and career outcomes for Iraqi refugees and compare their outcomes to other recently-arrived refugee groups. Such research would be beneficial given the Iraqi refugees' interest in pursuing higher education, as they have the highest in-school enrollment rate of all refugee groups (ORR 2011). Longitudinal studies of Iraqi refugees will enable us to have a clearer picture of their integration process and identify the long-term career trajectory of recently-arrived refugees, addressing the "stickiness" of the first-job for professional refugees.

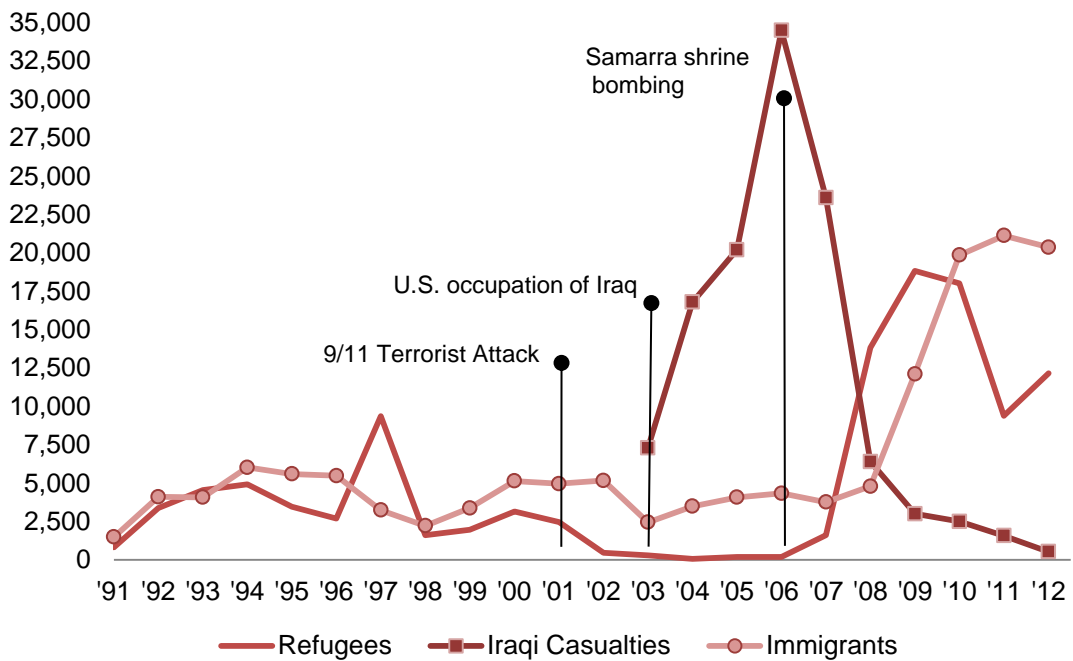
In conclusion, the Iraqi refugee group is experiencing a unique resettlement experience in the United States as a result of a combination of the following factors: strained political history with the host country, inter-ethnic conflict with co-refugee arrivals, gender and class norms concerning labor force participation, cultural and language differences from the mainstream U.S. population, and advanced education and professional experience that goes largely unrecognized in the U.S. labor market. Additional research is needed to gain a better understanding of the challenges facing Iraqi refugees and how these might vary by immigration status and settlement location.

Tables and Figures

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Interview Participants

Respondents	10
Female	60%
Average Age	33
Ethnicity	40% Chaldean, 40% Muslim, 10% Armenian, 10% Non-Muslim non-Chaldean.
Marital Status	60% married, 40% single, 10% married couple without children
Iraq Education	80% bachelor's degree 20% high school degree
Employment Status	50%, of the five unemployed,
Asylum Country	4 Turkey, 3 SIV, 2 Jordan, 1 Syria
Average Years in the U.S.	2 (range from 1-3 years)

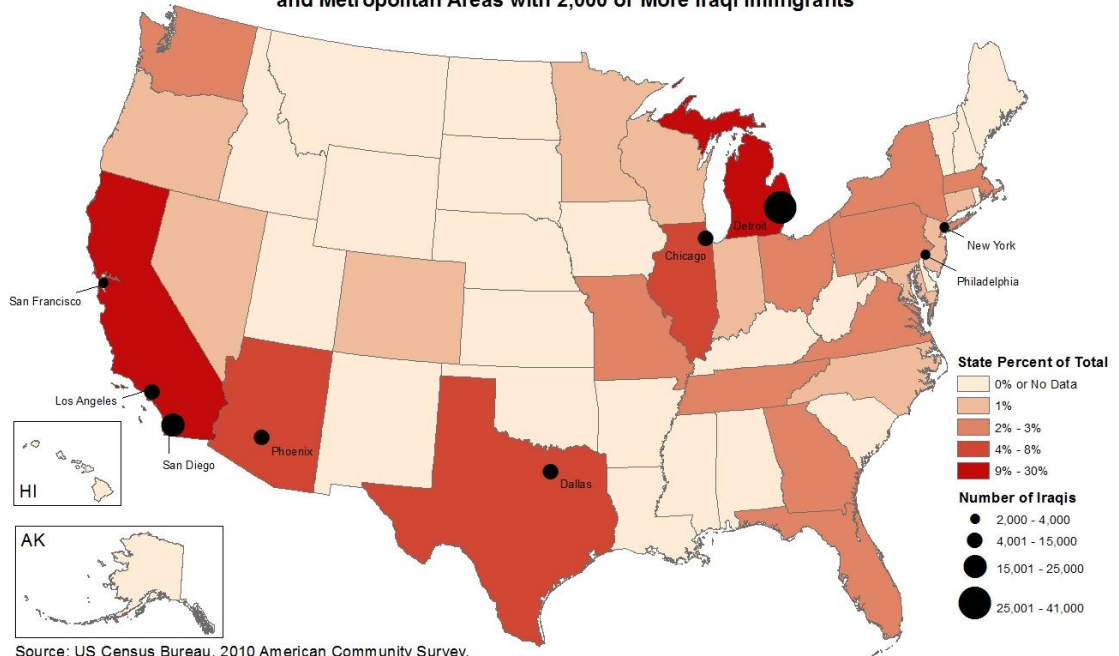
Figure 1a. U.S. Immigrant and Refugee Admissions from Iraq 1980-2012 Timeline



Source: WRAPS 2012. Refugee Processing Admissions and Arrivals Report; Department of Homeland Security. 2012. Immigration Yearbook; Brookings Institute. 2012. Iraqi Index

Figure 3. U.S. Map of Iraqi Immigrant Population Distribution and Primary Iraqi Settlement Areas

**2010 Iraqi Immigrant Population Distribution
and Metropolitan Areas with 2,000 or More Iraqi Immigrants**



CHAPTER 3

Iraqi Communities in the United States: Exploring the Interaction between Ethnicity and Gender in the Labor Market

Abstract

The dramatic growth in Iraqi refugee arrivals to the United States within the past ten years, calls for further research on the socio-economic status of this new cohort in the Iraqi community. In this article, I use a pooled data set from the 2005 to 2012 1-year weighted samples from the American Community Survey to conduct quantitative data analysis on the variation in employment rate and income for Iraqi immigrants in the United States. I use Ordinary Least Squares and logistic regression models to estimate the effects of gender, ethnicity, and residential location on the labor force participation and logged wages of Iraqi immigrants. The results indicate that there are significant ethnic and gendered socio-economic differences within the Iraqi immigrant community. Labor force participation among Iraqis continues to be low, with a significant gender disparity in employment activity that is not as sensitive to human capital investments. The findings suggest that Chaldean-Iraqis are more likely to participate in the labor market, and they experience a lower return on human capital in ethnic neighborhoods. These findings contribute to our understanding of immigrant incorporation by illuminating the interaction between ethnicity and gender in shaping labor force activity of Iraq immigrants and refugees.

Introduction

Iraqis, as part of the greater Arab community in the United States, participate in a different ethnic discourse from the historic race relations unique to the U.S. that shapes socio-economic outcomes for both immigrants and native-born individuals. As the vast majority of Arab immigrants identify as white, the interaction with the U.S. society is colored by ethnic, not racial, differences. Arabic names, language, and religious affiliation all influence how Arab immigrants are perceived and received in America. The establishment of Arab communities in Detroit, Chicago, and San Diego, for example, created opportunities in the local economy to reproduce cultural products, and provide employment in co-ethnic businesses where their shared language is an asset and English proficiency is not a requirement. The majority of newly arrived Iraqi immigrant and refugees have settled in existing communities in California, Michigan, and Illinois (See Figure 1). Living in cities and neighborhoods that have knowledge of the culture and have implemented programs and developed resources to assist the Iraqi immigrants in their integration

process arguably creates a feeling of inclusion and opens doors to the labor market and the higher education system.

The creation of Arab communities and by extension, Iraqi communities are of particular interest post 9-11 for the following reasons: (1) the increase in the admission of refugees and immigrants related to the ongoing U.S. military intervention in Iraq (See Figure 2) and (2) the increase in negative media attention and the perpetuation of Islamophobia. The increase of Iraqis in the U.S. at the same time of heightened negative media depiction of Arabs as terrorists runs the risk of engendering labor market discrimination by employers.

The experiences of recently-arrived Iraqi refugees also contribute valuable data for continued research on brain waste, and the obstacles facing professional immigrants in the U.S. labor market. The Iraqi refugees have high educational attainment, and many speak English fluently, some having utilized this skill-set in their work as interpreters for the U.S. military or nonprofit organizations in Iraq. Underemployment is a real experience for many Iraqi refugees given the barriers to entry for most professional fields, the high variability in requirements to practice and the high costs for licensing exams, credential verification, and enrollment in specialized courses.

The existing Arab communities within the United States could provide “ethnic enclave” benefits to recent Iraqi immigrants by serving as a buffer to mainstream employer discrimination and providing opportunities among co-ethnics for professional development. Ethnic-based social capital can be useful in obtaining the first job in the United States, even if it is not with a co-ethnic owned business, benefits from utilizing an ethnic network include employee submitted referrals on one’s behalf for comparable positions, or an acquaintance of a co-ethnic relative shares information about an upcoming job opportunity through the informal employment network. Previous research has generally focused the definition of an ethnic enclave on either the concentration of ethnic-owned businesses or ethnic residential composition (*ethnic firms*: Wilson and Portes 1980; Portes and Bach 1985; Light and Gold 2000; Logan et al 2003; Bonacich 1982;

ethnic residence: Sanders and Nee 1987; Edin et al 2003; both: Zhou and Logan 1989; Xie and Gough 2011; *language concentration*: Chiswick and Miller 2005).

The migration process experienced by recently-arrived Iraqi refugees differs from the majority of immigrants, as the U.S. Government facilitates the Iraqi refugees' resettlement. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), in conjunction with the nine resettlement service providers, ultimately decides the resettlement locations for refugees. Refugees are either resettled to the U.S. as a "free case" - an individual or family without a sponsor-, or with the aid of an "anchor"- normally a relative already residing in the U.S. who has agreed to serve as his or her sponsor during the initial resettlement process. When a refugee identifies a sponsor, effort is made to ensure that the refugee is resettled in the same area as the sponsor, oftentimes the sponsor agrees to provide the refugee with initial housing upon arrival. The free cases are resettled according to the resources of the nine resettlement service providers; which largely depends on the capacity to resettle additional refugees, presence of an existing refugee community, and cultural proficiency (particularly as it relates to language). The ratio of anchored cases to free cases is approximately 3 to 1. The institutional level influence on the migration decisions for the individual and household level of Iraqi immigrants has implications for the appropriateness of previous theories related to segmented assimilation and ethnic enclave effects. Institutional policies and services provided exclusively to refugees and asylees may arguably create different outcomes for Iraqi refugees and asylees during the incorporation process than are experienced by their non-refugee counterparts.

In this article, I explore residential communities of Iraqi immigrants. I analyze differences in labor force activity between Iraqis living in high-Iraqi population metropolitan areas and Iraqis living outside of these areas. Additionally, I compare the impact of residing in an Iraqi community by ethnicity, as sectarian violence along ethnic lines has long been a source of persecution for the Iraqis immigrating to the United States. In the next section, I provide an overview of the ethnic enclave literature to identify how previous findings provide insight into the experiences of Iraqi

immigrants. Following the review, I outline the data and methods used to analyze the labor market activity of Iraqis by residence in a co-ethnic community. Then, I discuss the results from the descriptive characteristics and regression models, and conclude with a discussion of the findings and suggestions for further research.

Ethnic Enclave Literature Review

Refugee status in the United States affects the immigrant's point of entry into the society, i.e., the labor force, institutions of higher education, as well as residential location. Barriers to entry into the labor force for refugees have received considerable attention among forced migration scholars, resettlement practitioners, and policymakers. Researchers have begun to explore migrants' different points of social contact in the host society as influential factors shaping their socio-economic outcomes. A new focus on the point of entry for migrants, spearheaded by research from Edna Bonacich (1973), Herbert Gans (1992), and Mary Waters (2000), lead to a quick revision of integration theory for contemporary immigration. Portes and Rumbaut's book, *Immigrant America*, joined the advent of research on contemporary immigration, and shifted the emphasis from micro-level interactions to studying the institutional level-structural factors that affect the individual migrant's socio-economic trajectory (1996).

The authors contend that, "For immigrants, the most relevant contexts of reception are defined by the policies of the receiving government, the conditions of the host labor market, and the characteristics of their own ethnic communities" (1996:84). They go on to describe twelve contexts of immigrant incorporation based on a combination of those three defining factors. Of particular relevance for refugees, Portes and Rumbaut identify three types of government policies that affect the context of reception for immigrants: exclusion, passive acceptance, and active encouragement. According to this typology, refugees would classify as "type 3" beneficiaries of active encouragement by the government during the resettlement process. The typology created by Portes and Rumbaut provides a framework for understanding the impact of government policies on refugee outcomes.

The government policy toward immigrants has moved away from the notion of assimilation- where immigrants embrace a homogenous American culture and completely turn away from their own native cultural practices- and has adopted a more contemporary perspective of immigrant adaptation. This view of adaptation leaves space for a dynamic multi-dimensional interaction between the different aspects of receiving society and the migrant's culture and beliefs. I base my analysis of integration activity on the assumption that "If the 'society' into which migrants are incorporated is itself fragmented and de-centered, then the incorporation process must also be fragmented." (Freeman 2007:124).

Ethnic enclaves, getting their start in the field after the research conducted by Bonacich (1972) on middleman minorities, have received increasing attention in the past several decades. Wilson and Portes (1980) advanced an "enclave-economy hypothesis" that is defined by research on Cubans in Miami that shows a significant economic advantage to those immigrants who work in co-ethnic businesses with regards to wages and opportunity for advancement over the immigrants who work in the mainstream economy (Wilson and Portes 1980, Portes and Bach 1985).

The enclave-economy hypothesis distinguishes itself from the assimilation theory because it posits that ethnic segregation provides more economic gains than integrating into the mainstream society. Sanders and Nee (1987) contend that the results provided by Wilson and Portes (1980) are to be dismissed due to the error in their definition of ethnic enclave, employers, and comparison groups. Sanders and Nee re-analyzed the Cubans in Miami, the ethnic enclave evaluated by Wilson and Portes, using a different set of definitions and they concluded that only the self-employed entrepreneurs working in the enclave obtained an economic advantage over their mainstream counterparts. Their results regarding the employees actually showed a negative effective on earnings compared to their mainstream counterparts, giving support to their co-ethnic exploitation argument. The effect of ethnic enclaves on labor force outcomes has varying results

depending on the particular immigrant group. Differences in outcomes by the immigrants' country of origin are overwhelmingly significant.

Recent research has revisited the impact of ethnic enclaves on an immigrant's economic outcomes. Xie and Gough (2011) use the New Immigrant Survey to explore whether defining an ethnic enclave by the presence of ethnic firms or by ethnic residence creates significantly different effects on the earnings of immigrants. Chiswick and Miller (2005) posit an additional hypothesis regarding the influence of ethnic enclaves on immigrant earnings based on the demand of "ethnic goods". Their findings demonstrated a negative correlation between earnings and linguistic concentration among newcomers.

Immigrant settlement patterns have historically concentrated in urban areas. New flows of immigrants are concentrated in pre-existing immigrant communities, primarily due to chain migration (Alba and Nee 1997; Massey 1985; Massey and Denton 1987; Pedraza 1991; Logan et al. 2003; Chiswick and Miller 2005; Read and Cohen 2007; Damm and Rosholm 2010; Logan and Drew 2011). Iraqis initially concentrated in and around Detroit, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois, and then later established large communities in San Diego and Los Angeles, California. An interesting phenomenon regarding the residential patterns of Iraqis in particular and immigrants in general is their recent proclivity to settle in the suburbs upon initial arrival in the United States.

Data from the 2011 American Community Survey reveal that the immigrants who arrived within the past ten years have already acquired suburban residence, over 57 percent of Iraqis reside in the suburbs and 52 percent of all foreign-born, which is an increase from 48 percent of foreign-born in the 2000 Census. Indeed, there is growing evidence that many immigrants are moving directly to the suburbs, bypassing central cities entirely, and sometimes even forming "ethnoburbs" in outlying areas (Alba et al. 1999; Singer et al. 2009; Li 1998). This trend is in direct contrast to the pattern maintained by the European immigrant groups of the first great wave of migration (Massey 1995).

Determinants of immigrant Incorporation

The process of defining factors to measure assimilation is contentious among immigration scholars, due to the complex and dynamic pathways that immigrants navigate in the host country. Assimilation or socio-economic incorporation of an immigrant group is generally measured by socio-economic status, English language acquisition, settlement patterns, and rates of intermarriage. The proxies of socio-economic status that are commonly viewed as objective measures are income, educational attainment, and occupational status. Parity with native-born groups has been referenced as a primary indicator of integration in the economic dimension among immigration scholars (Borjas 1994; Chiswick 1978). Most research evaluates socio-economic progress on the individual level by years spent in the U.S. while analysis on the group-level frequently uses generational cohorts (Borjas 1985; Borjas 1995; Chiswick 1978; Chiswick 1986; Xie and Gough 2011; Chiswick and Miller 2005). Thus far, experiences related to residential location have focused primarily on individual factors within the total foreign-born population. However, resettlement decisions are not made on the individual level for all immigrant groups, refugees in particular are directed in certain locations depending on the institutional level factors within the federal government and nonprofit organizations.

Moving from research on overall outcomes for the entire foreign-born population to exploring the role of institutional level influences on a particular immigrant group provides more information related to the impact of policy and social assistance on labor force activity. Brown, Mott, and Malecki (2007) examined the relationship between the geographic location of refugee resettlement agencies (volags) and refugee spatial concentration. The authors argued that the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, administered by the ORR, is responsible for altering the geographic settlement patterns of previous migration flows. The influence of the ORR on residential location of Iraqi refugees that directs flows to non-traditional Iraqi communities may have negative consequences on the refugees' ability to obtain immediate employment and change their opportunities for advancement. Conversely, residing outside of an Iraqi community

might have the effect of increasing the refugees' reliance on the ORR resources and labor market networks, which could improve their earnings, as studies have shown that social ties with the majority racial/ethnic group can result in referrals and procurement of higher paying jobs (Mamgain and Collins 2003).

Experiences in the local labor market in an Iraqi community are not uniform by gender and ethnicity. Gender differences in the local economy can be exacerbated due to greater social support for adherence to traditional gender roles. Iraq has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates in the world, and this disparity is evident among the U.S. immigrant population. Iraqi immigrant women are much less likely to be in the labor force than immigrant women overall and compared to other refugee groups (Eastern Europe and East Asia (Read and Cohen 2007; Logan and Drew 2011)). Due to Iraq's political history as a relatively-new nation state that was carved out of neighboring societies, the ethnic diversity within the country's boundary lines led to ethnic-based competition for political and economic power. Sectarian violence and the persecution of ethnic and religious minorities have shaped the immigrant flows to the United States.

The majority of Iraqis in the United States are Arabs, Kurds, and Chaldeans (Shryock and Nabell 2000). After 2003, Chaldean-Christians were persecuted for their religious affiliation resulting in many seeking asylum in neighboring countries, with Turkey receiving the most Chaldean refugees. Refugee and immigrant flows following the 2003 U.S. intervention has changed the Iraqi community composition. Chaldeans and Arabs are both migrating to these existing communities but they are having mixed results due to the history between the two groups. While many work side-by side with Chaldeans in Iraq, many others were persecuted by Arabs, and the social hierarchy in Iraq favored Arabs over Chaldeans. Most of the wealth and power in Iraq were in the hands of Arabs since the rise of the Ba'ath party (Sassoon 2009). Resettling in communities with a controversial past can lead to inter-ethnic conflict within the greater Iraqi community resulting in local labor market discrimination among Iraqis.

Previous research has laid the groundwork for understanding the process of immigrant incorporation and has presented significant arguments for the role of the co-ethnic community in facilitating socio-economic mobility. Studies on the experiences of Arabs in the United States have identified the ethnic group as having significantly higher levels of education compared to the overall foreign-born population, and markedly lower levels of women's labor force participation for women. However, there has been limited research that studies the interaction between institutional policies, ethnicity, and gender in shaping the process of incorporation for immigrants. The research reviewed in this section has emphasized a need for examining this interaction, specifically as it can contribute to the debate regarding the influence of ethnic enclaves on economic outcomes.

In this article, I address the following research questions to explore the effect of resettlement location on labor force outcomes for Iraqi immigrants and refugees: How does the context of reception, in this case the presence of a co-ethnic community, influence labor market outcomes? Furthermore, how are these outcomes stratified by gender and ethnicity? The results from this research will enhance our understanding of the influence of institutional decision-making on individual labor market outcomes, and identify the impact of gender and ethnicity on the economic activity of Iraqis, thus expanding the literature on immigrant integration and determinants of socio-economic status and providing much-needed research on the status of Iraqis in the United States.

Data & Methods

Comparable models of earnings and labor force participation for Iraqi immigrants are estimated by Iraqi immigrant composition in metropolitan areas. Descriptive results are included to compare the general socio-demographic profiles of Iraqis by gender and ethnicity. The analyses reported below include logistic regression models of labor force participation by gender and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model of logged wages by gender. The regression

models are analyzed to determine the effects of ethnicity and Iraq-residential composition on logged wages and labor force participation.

The regression model used here expresses the earnings of Iraqi immigrants as a function of human capital, household characteristics, and local ethnic composition.

$$\ln(Y_i) = \alpha + \beta x_i + \dots \beta_{m_x m_1} + \varepsilon_i,$$

In this model, the dependent variable (Y) is the logged wage; x is a vector of control variables; the subscript i is to refer to the individual factor while m refers to the PUMA level factor. The model is estimated separately by gender. The logistic regression models estimate the labor force participation and self-employment among Iraqi immigrants by gender. The logistic regression models are reported in odds ratios for ease of interpretation.

Data for the empirical analysis were obtained from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) pooled 2005 to 2012 1-year samples of the American Community Survey (ACS) data set (Ruggles et al. 2010). The ACS samples were selected for this study because the ACS is one of the few nationally representative surveys of the U.S. population that includes an Iraqi subsample large enough for statistical analysis. The weighted analytical sample is restricted to all adults ages 18 to 65 who were born in Iraq to non-U.S. citizens. The sample excludes individuals who reside in group quarters. The adult is the unit of analysis. Iraqis are identified as those respondents who selected Iraq in response to the ACS question regarding “place of birth”. The total number of observations from the pooled data sets is 6,218, which provides an estimated population size of 805,222. The 2012 ACS reports 177,028 Iraqi immigrants currently live in the United States, among a foreign-born population of approximately 40,824,658 immigrants (U.S. Census 2012).

Ethnicity Variables

The Iraqi sample was then categorized by ethnicity, due to significant differences by ethnic group in educational attainment, marital status, and English-speaking ability. A categorical variable for *ethnicity* was created of the three most prevalent ethnic groups identified by Iraqis,

which are Chaldean, Arab, Kurd, in addition to an “Other” category to account for the remaining respondents. The ethnicity variable is a categorical variable derived from two ACS variables, language spoken in the household, and the first ancestry response in the ACS. All individuals who identified that they spoke Chaldean/Syriac were coded as Chaldean in addition to individuals who indicated having Chaldean ancestry. Respondents who indicated that they were of Kurdish ancestry and/or spoke Kurdish were coded as Kurds. Individuals who selected Arabic or Iraqi ancestry and indicated that they spoke Arabic were coded as Arabic. Respondents that selected any other ancestry were coded as Other Iraqi. Most of the Other Iraqi respondents identified themselves as being of Armenian or Turkish ancestry. A detailed distribution of the language spoken and ancestry responses is included in Tables 2a and 2b. Due to the large sample size of the Chaldean respondents, a dummy variable was also created for these individuals for use in the regression models as opposed to the ethnic categorical variable as it was the most consistent and significant influence on labor force outcomes within the Iraqi male immigrants.

In order to estimate the effects of Iraqi residential composition on individual labor market outcomes, a variable was created to calculate the proportion of Iraqis residing in each Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA), which is the smallest geographical area designated by the Census available in the American Community Survey that contains country of birth data. The PUMAs are intrastate non-overlapping partitions that segment each state into areas that contain at least 100,000 individuals. The denominator in the proportion is the estimated total number of Iraqis in the United States; the numerator is the estimated total number of Iraqis in the PUMA. Earlier studies have also estimated ethnic concentration using a number of different Census geographical variables, Chowdhury and Pedace (2007) and Logan and Drew (2011) used Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), while Borjas (1985) and Alba and Nee (1997) used Census tracts. As tract-level data is not available for a country-group as small as the Iraqis, the PUMA level geographical variable is a sufficient alternative, as it includes data on smaller geographical segments than MSAs, and thus provides more insight into the ethnic distribution

within a city, an important factor, given the overall concentration of Iraqis within only a handful of cities.

Control Variables

Within each regression model, demographic, household, and socio-economic factors are included as control variables. *Age* and *years lived in the United States* are included in the models in order to incorporate the effects of experience and exposure to U.S. culture, social network, and the labor market process. The interval variable *number of children in household under the age of 5* and a dummy variable for marital status *married* (married with spouse present and married with spouse absent equals 1, all others are 0) were included in the models to account for potential constraints on household resources and familial obligations on the individual, particularly for the women in the sample. Human capital measures of educational attainment and English-speaking ability were included to capture the effects of education and language skills on labor force outcomes, which several studies have shown to be primary factors in immigrant economic outcomes (Chiswick and Miller 1995). I recoded the education variable by collapsing the original educational attainment variable into three categories. I selected (1) less than high school, (2) high school diploma or its equivalent, and (3) bachelor's degree or higher, as the three categories. English-speaking ability was recoded into a dummy variable. The respondents who indicated they spoke English well, very well, or only English, were given the value "1", while all others were labeled as "0". As variability in employment throughout the year has a direct impact on total annual earnings, I included variables for *usual hours worked per week*, *usual weeks worked per year* for the logged wage regression models to account for the effect of the employment schedule on earnings.

Dependent Variables

Regression models were estimated to evaluate the employment and earnings of Iraqis by gender. The dependent variables are *labor force participation status* and *logged annual wages*. The labor force participation status variable is a dummy variable that reports the employment

activity of respondents from the previous year. Individuals who reported that they were employed or unemployed were given the value of “1” while those who reported that they were not in the labor force were given a value of “0”. The *logged annual wages* variable was calculated by taking the natural log of the *annual income from wages* variable reported by all individuals who indicated they were employed last year and made at least \$100 in wages (the wages were inflation adjusted to 2012 dollars). The log of the income variable was used in the regression model to create a more normal distribution of wages. The OLS regression model of logged annual wages and the logistic regression model of labor force participation were estimated separately by gender.

Results

Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics for the primary independent and dependent variables used in the regression models are displayed in Table 1 by gender. The most prevalent categories for each dummy variable serve as the reference groups. Relative to women, the Iraqi men are slightly older, more likely to be single, have an advanced degree, and speak English well. The arrival flows are slightly skewed toward male Iraqi immigrants before the year 2000, but since then, women have begun to compose the majority of the immigration flows. There is a substantial gender disparity in labor force participation (47 percent of women compared to 78 percent of males employed at the time of survey). While twenty percent of the men are out of the labor force, over half of the women are out of the labor force. Iraqi men make significantly more money each year and work more hours, although the prestige of their occupations is slightly lower than that of their female counterparts. The results indicate significant variation by gender for average wage, labor force participation, and English speaking proficiency. The findings for Iraqi immigrants show support for a relationship between gender disparity in labor force activity and earnings as discussed for other immigrant groups in the integration literature.

Results by Ethnicity

There are significant socio-economic differences among Iraqis by ethnic identity. The ethnic distribution was roughly the same by gender. Approximately half of the sample identified as Arab or Iraqi, about 30 percent identified as Chaldean, eight percent as Kurds, and approximately 3 percent as Armenian. The marriage rate for Iraqi immigrants varies significantly by ethnicity. A slightly greater proportion of Chaldeans is married compared to the other ethnic groups, as approximately 69 percent of Chaldeans are married, compared to 63 percent of Arabs. The Kurds also reported a significantly higher number of children than the other ethnic groups. Chaldeans have lived in the U.S. approximately 6 years longer than the Arabs have, 5 years longer on average than the Kurds have. This trend is consistent with the differences in arrival wave, as Chaldean-Christians were persecuted in Iraq in the 1990s, followed by the arrival of Kurds and Arabs who fled Iraq after the Kuwait war and subsequent U.S. military interventions.

Human capital, as measured by educational attainment and English speaking proficiency, also varies significantly by ethnicity. Among the respondents over the age of 24, Chaldeans have the lowest reported educational attainment and Iraqis have the lowest English-speaking proficiency. Arabs have the highest educational attainment while they reported the lowest average level of English-speaking proficiency. The Armenians reported the highest average level of English, which is expected if most of these respondents reside outside of ethnic enclaves. Iraqis are significantly more likely to live in poverty and to utilize food stamps than any other ethnic group, while the Kurds are the least likely to use food stamps. The proportion of Chaldeans living in poverty is significantly less than the Arabs, and Kurds, which is an interesting pattern given the Chaldeans' low level of educational attainment, but as they are one of the oldest communities in the U.S. access to a stronger co-ethnic labor market might explain their comparative economic success to the Kurds or Arabs.

Regression Results

The descriptive results suggest there are differences in socio-economic status by gender, ethnicity, and residential location. OLS regression and logistic regression models were analyzed to identify the influence of these factors on labor force participation, earnings, and occupational standing, by gender. The factors of particular interest for the regression analysis are human capital characteristics (educational attainment and English proficiency), ethnic affiliation, and residential ethnic composition.

Labor Force Participation Results

As displayed in Table 3, the reported odds ratios from the Iraqi male's logistic regression model reveal the expected positive relationships for age, years lived in the United States, and marital status for Iraqi men. Educational attainment is a significant positive influence on the labor force activity of highly educated male Iraqis. Respondents with an undergraduate degree or greater are more than twice as likely to be in the labor force compared to those with less than a high school degree, and individuals with a high school diploma are more than 1.5 times more likely to be in the labor force compared to the same referent group.

English-speaking proficiency is a significant determinant of labor force participation for males. Those with English-speaking proficiency (speaks English well, very well, or fluently) are almost twice as likely to be in the labor force as those who have limited English proficiency.

One of the most striking results is that the Iraqi community variable is not a significant factor in the labor force participation outcomes for Iraqi males after controlling for human capital characteristics. In models that excluded human capital characteristics, the Iraqi community coefficient is negative and significant at the .05 level. The ethnic identity of the respondents does have a significant positive effect on Iraqi males' labor force activity. Chaldean men are 1.3 times more likely to be in the labor force compared to all other Iraqis.

The female model has similar results for age and years lived in the United States as males, and as suggested from previous literature, marriage and the number of children under 5

years old present in the household both have significant negative effects on the odds of female's labor force activity (about .5 times less likely to be in the labor force). Marriage has opposite effects for males and females; for the men, it increases the likelihood of labor force participation, while for females it decreases the prospect of economic activity, which is consistent with previous findings (Pedraza 1991; Duleep and Sanders 1994; Read 2004; Budig and England 2001). The number of children present in the household is only significant for the female model, as expected based on previous research regarding the gendered division of household labor.

While English-speaking proficiency and education are significant factors for both males and females, we see that the odds ratios for the human capital variables are greater for females. English proficiency has a positive effect of increasing the likelihood of labor force activity of women by twice as much compared to respondents who have limited English-speaking proficiency. The regression models indicate that education has a strong effect on labor force outcomes; the female model results show that women with a bachelor's degree or greater are more than three times as likely to be in the labor force compared to respondents without a high school diploma, and high school graduates are twice as likely to be in the labor force compared to the same referent group. These results suggest that the labor force activity of women is sensitive to the extreme levels of educational attainment.

Importantly, we see a similar ethnic influence on labor force participation for both men and women. Comparable to the Iraqi males, we see that ethnicity has positive significant effects on the women's labor force participation. Chaldean women are almost 1.5 times more likely to be in the labor force than are non-Chaldean women. The Iraqi community is not a significant factor in the regression model, indicating that there may not be a substantial effect of Iraqi residential composition on the labor force activity of Iraqi women.

Logged Wage Results

The results from the logged wage regression models are displayed in Table 4 by gender. Both the male and female models show the expected positive effects of age and years lived in the

United States on earned wages. The newer immigrant cohorts receive lower wages than those who have lived in the U.S. longer. The work-related variables, *usual hours worked* and *weeks worked in the year*, increase the earned wages significantly. Among the household characteristics for the male model, marital status has a positive effect on earned wages, while the number of children in the household is not significant, which supports previous findings related to the overall foreign-born population (Logan and Drew 2011). The female model indicates that marriage and number of children are not significant, after controlling for hours worked per week and weeks worked in the last year.

The human capital characteristics of educational attainment and English-speaking proficiency are significant predictors of logged wages for both the male and female models. Education has the expected positive impact on wages with significant advantages for both individuals with bachelor's degree and for those with advanced degrees. English proficiency has a weaker impact on the logged wage for Iraqis compared to education and U.S. arrival period. This relationship suggests that the Iraqis are able to obtain a greater return on invest in the labor market for type of job they obtain in the labor market for their educational attainment compared to their English-speaking skills, perhaps due to differences in the employee skill-set needed for the occupation.

The Chaldean ethnic identification variable does not have significant effects on earnings for either Iraqi men or women. The Iraqi community variable does not have a significant effect on the earnings of Iraqi males. However, it does have a significant negative effect on the earnings for Iraqi women. In fact, residing in an area with a relatively high Iraqi population has a greater impact on wages for women than does their English speaking skills. These results suggest that living among co-ethnics is a more important factor in labor market outcomes than some human capital characteristics, particularly those used as measures of acculturation.

Conclusion

In agreement with theoretical perspectives that emphasize the importance of the context of reception in shaping immigrant outcomes, my findings suggest the type of employment and earnings of Iraqi immigrants and refugees are significantly affected according to the degree of Iraqi residential composition. The empirical results indicate that this effect of Iraqis on socio-economic status varies by ethnicity and gender. The ethnic enclave benefits vary distinctively by gender, as women have lower labor force participation rates, the women who do work, earn less and work fewer hours a week than do their male counterparts. The women also have much lower English-speaking proficiency, are more likely to be married, and have higher educational attainment. Gender differences in labor force activity and earnings are significant as expected.

Local labor market activity and ethnic composition affect the existence and type of employment for Iraqis. There is a varying effect between Iraqi density and employment rates for Iraqi immigrants. The positive effect of Chaldean ethnic identification on labor force participation is particularly significant for both men and women. While residing in an Iraqi community does not have a significant effect for either women or men. The job placement obtained by women in these ethnic enclaves pays significantly less and is of lower prestige than positions held by their counterparts in low-Iraqi population communities.

Limitations

Limitations of this study are primarily related to the relatively small sample size available by the ACS, particularly for disaggregating the Iraqi population by ancestry and language. Additionally, the PUMA geographical variable, which is the smallest area provided by the U.S. census with birthplace data available, severely limits the generalizability of the results, as the influence of ethnic communities is more likely to have a greater effect on smaller geographical areas, such as neighborhoods. I expect any effect apparent on the PUMA level would be magnified within smaller communities, and so the ethnic variation in labor market activity are likely underestimated. Examining labor market activity within ethnic enclaves would be improved

with the addition of employer-level data, particularly as it relates to ethnic identification, which is not included in the ACS, but is available in other surveys.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies on Iraqi immigrants should include a mixed method approach to explore the relationship between social capital and employment, in particular, the effect of co-ethnic networks compared to host country majority community networks on labor market activity and occupational concentration. Qualitative studies of co-ethnic workplaces compared to mainstream employment will provide a richer context to explore the factors that shape employment, occupational concentration, and earnings by gender. Longitudinal studies of employment by gender will provide us with a better understanding of how children, English skills, and marital status shape the labor force activity over time for women residing in co-ethnic communities compared to those who live elsewhere. Additionally, longitudinal studies will capture differences in labor force activity among individuals who move in and out of ethnic communities over time. Lastly, future research should include measures for policy and program changes related to resettlement program assistance, and state-based assistance for higher education (e.g., financial aid), in addition to local economic measures such as average rent, employment rate, and pro-immigration legislation, to explore meso and macro level factors that shape individual-level decision-making related to residential location, employment and education.

These findings contribute to the discussion on the influence of ethnic enclaves in immigrant employment outcomes by challenging the expected cultural influence on gendered economic activities. Previous research suggests that residence in an ethnic enclave has a negative effect on labor force participation, particularly for women. This relationship is theorized to be due to the increase in Iraqis, which leads to an increase in conformity to traditional gender roles, and cultural expectations for behavior, resulting in low levels of women's labor force participation that mirror those found in contemporary Iraq (Read 2004). However, the results

presented in this article demonstrate that ethnicity and nationality have a dynamic effect on socio-economic outcomes that varies not only by country of birth but also by ethnicity.

Tables and Figures

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of Iraqis in the United States, ACS 2005-2012

Predictors	Male	Female
Female	52.7%	47.3%
Age	41.4	41.1
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
Arab Other	25.5%	22.5%
Chaldean	31.5%	36.9%
Kurds	7.3%	7.7%
Iraqi	32.2%	29.2%
Armenian	3.5%	3.7%
<i>Household resources and constraints</i>		
<i>Marital status</i>		
Never married	30.9%	20.2%
Divorced, widowed or separated	7.4%	15.1%
Married	62.0%	64.7%
Number of children	1.20	1.46
Length of time in U.S.	14.9	12.2
<i>U.S. Arrival Period</i>		
2006-2012	25.0%	23.9%
2000-2005	12.2%	17.1%
1990 to 1999	33.4%	31.2%
1980 to 1989	12.9%	11.7%
1979 or earlier	16.6%	16.0%
Citizenship	53.0%	56.3%
<i>Education</i>		
Less than high school	22.9%	27.6%
High school graduate	49.0%	47.6%
Bachelor's degree or higher	28.1%	24.8%
Speaks English well, very well or only	83.1%	70.0%
Limited English Proficiency	16.9%	30.0%
<i>Labor market characteristics</i>		
<i>Labor force participation</i>		
Employed	78.1%	47.2%
Unemployed	66.2%	39.8%
Not in labor force	11.9%	7.5%
Not in labor force	21.9%	52.7%
<i>Labor market outcomes</i>		
Yearly wage	\$45,169	\$31,188
Yearly logged wage	10.2	9.8
Yearly wage (Full time)	\$53,640	\$43,238
Usual hours worked	41.1	34.6
Occupational prestige	45.4	43.3
Occupational prestige (full time)	45.7	49.4
N	3,232	2,986

Significance Level Indicated: *p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

Table 2a. Distribution of Ancestry Response among Iraqi Immigrants by Gender, ACS 2005-2012

Ancestry	Male			Female		
	Obs	Prop	SE	Obs	Prop	SE
Iraqi	1188	39.8%	0.011	1045	37.6%	0.011
Assyrian/Chaldean/Syriac	766	24.0%	0.009	794	27.9%	0.010
Arab	469	14.1%	0.007	377	12.5%	0.007
Kurdish	189	5.2%	0.004	183	5.0%	0.004
Armenian	169	4.1%	0.004	166	4.5%	0.004
Middle Eastern	137	3.6%	0.004	140	3.9%	0.004
Not Reported	112	3.4%	0.004	129	3.9%	0.004
Iranian	29	1.7%	0.004	16	0.7%	0.002
Uncodable	36	0.8%	0.002	30	0.8%	0.002
Israeli	18	0.4%	0.001	7	0.2%	0.001
White/Caucasian	19	0.4%	0.001	16	0.4%	0.001
Asian	12	0.3%	0.001	13	0.3%	0.001
Syrian	10	0.3%	0.001	8	0.3%	0.001
All Others	78			62		
N=6,218	3,232			2,986		

Source: Calculations from IPUMS American Community Surveys 2005-2012

Table 2b. Distribution of Language Spoken at Home among Iraqi Immigrants by Gender, ACS 2005-2012

Language, detailed	Male			Female		
	Obs	Prop	SE	Obs	Prop	SE
Arabic	1685	53.7%	0.011	1518	52.0%	0.011
Syriac, Aramaic, Chaldean	780	24.5%	0.009	828	28.4%	0.010
Kurdish	236	6.5%	0.005	239	7.0%	0.005
English	255	7.6%	0.006	172	6.0%	0.005
Armenian	147	3.6%	0.003	146	3.8%	0.004
Hebrew, Israeli	33	0.8%	0.002	17	0.5%	0.001
Persian, Iranian Farsi	25	1.1%	0.003	9	0.4%	0.001
Turkish	15	0.5%	0.002	8	0.3%	0.001
Dutch	2	0.1%	0.001	5	0.3%	0.001
Spanish	18	0.5%	0.001	5	0.2%	0.001
French	7	0.1%	0.001	8	0.2%	0.001
All Others	29	1.1%		31	0.9%	
N=6,218	3,232			2,986		

Source: Calculations from IPUMS American Community Surveys 2005-2012

Table 3. Logistic Regression of U.S. Labor Force Participation for Iraqi Immigrants, ACS 2005-2012

Predictors	Male		Female	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
<i>Demographic Variables:</i>				
Age	1.183	0.035 ***	1.178	0.033 ***
Age Squared	0.998	0.000 ***	0.998	0.000 ***
Arrival to U.S.-1980s	1.134	0.251	0.931	0.169
Arrival to U.S.-1990s	0.547	0.103 ***	0.707	0.110 **
Arrival to U.S.-2000-05	0.627	0.146 **	0.447	0.085 ***
Arrival to U.S.-2006+	0.504	0.110 ***	0.511	0.093 ***
<i>(Ref. Category-Arrival to U.S.-Pre-1980)</i>				
Married	2.172	0.329 ***	0.541	0.064 ***
Number of Children Under 5 yrs	0.878	0.113	0.488	0.054 ***
<i>Human Capital Variables:</i>				
12th Grade or HS Diploma	1.653	0.228 ***	2.248	0.299 ***
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	2.395	0.405 ***	3.382	0.516 ***
<i>(Ref. Category-Less than HS Diploma)</i>				
Speaks English-Well or better	1.932	0.304 ***	2.286	0.302 ***
<i>(Ref. Category-Does not speak English well or at all)</i>				
<i>Ethnic Factors:</i>				
Chaldean	1.325	0.172 **	1.508	0.170 ***
Proportion of Iraqis in PUMA	0.864	0.118	0.903	0.108
Observations	3,232		2,986	

Significance Level Indicated: *p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

Table 4. OLS Regression of U.S. Logged Wage for Iraqi Immigrants, ACS 2005 to 2012

Predictors	Male		Female			
	Coeff	SE	Coeff	SE		
<i>Demographic Variables</i>						
Age	0.050	-0.015	***	0.031	-0.014	**
Age Squared	-0.001	0.000	***	0.000	0.000	**
Arrival to U.S.-1980s	0.056	-0.068		0.075	-0.077	
Arrival to U.S.-1990s	-0.186	-0.062	***	-0.234	-0.068	***
Arrival to U.S.-2000-05	-0.323	-0.077	***	-0.273	-0.081	***
Arrival to U.S.-2006+	-0.487	-0.092	***	-0.549	-0.097	***
<i>(Ref. Category-Arrival to U.S.-Pre-1980)</i>						
Married	0.120	-0.060	**	0.044	-0.055	
Number of Children Under 5 Yrs	-0.020	-0.039		0.026	-0.055	
<i>Human Capital:</i>						
12th Grade or HS Diploma	0.180	-0.060	***	0.031	-0.066	
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	0.547	-0.064	***	0.549	-0.073	***
<i>(Ref. Category-Less than HS Diploma)</i>						
Speaks English-Well or better	0.141	-0.082	*	0.144	-0.071	**
<i>(Ref. Category-Does not speak English well or at all)</i>						
<i>Ethnic Factors:</i>						
Chaldean	-0.042	-0.053		0.051	-0.048	
Proportion of Iraqis in PUMA	-0.050	-0.054		-0.156	-0.059	***
Usual Hours Worked per Week Last Year	0.022	-0.002	***	0.036	-0.003	***
Weeks Worked Last Year	0.298	-0.021	***	0.316	-0.020	***
Intercept	6.329	-0.384	***	6.214	-0.284	***
Observations	2,029			1,169		
R-squared	0.530			0.676		

Significance Level Indicated: *p<.10 **p<.05 ***p<.01

Figure 1. U.S. Map of Iraqi Immigrant Population Distribution and Primary Iraqi Settlement Areas

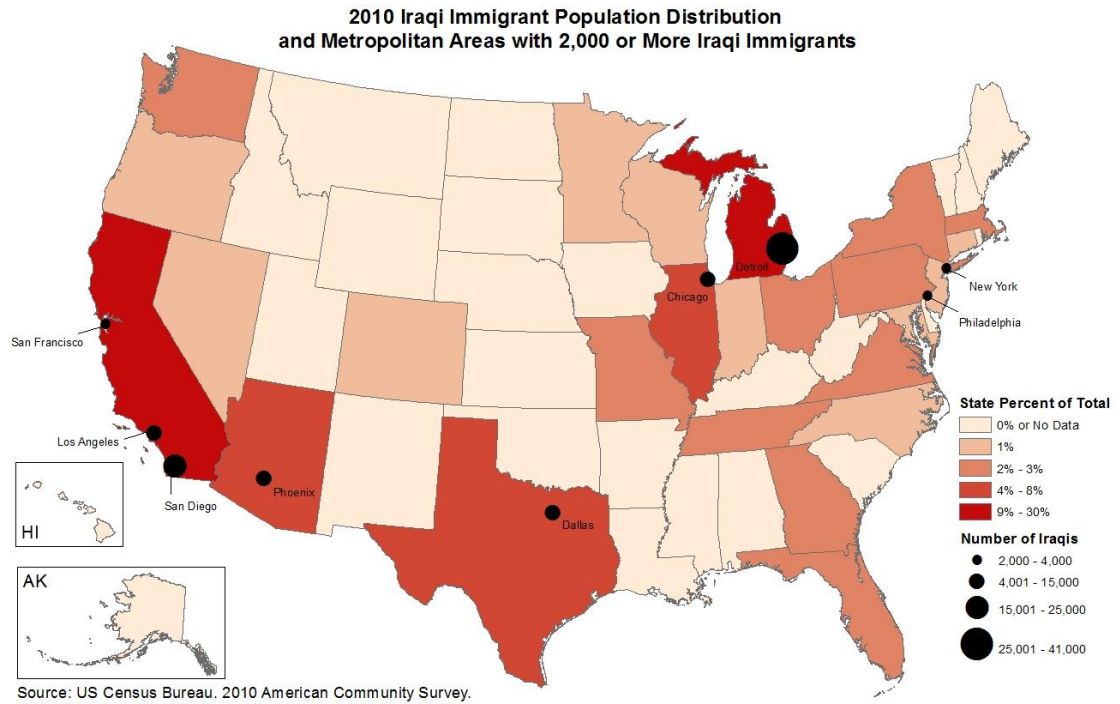
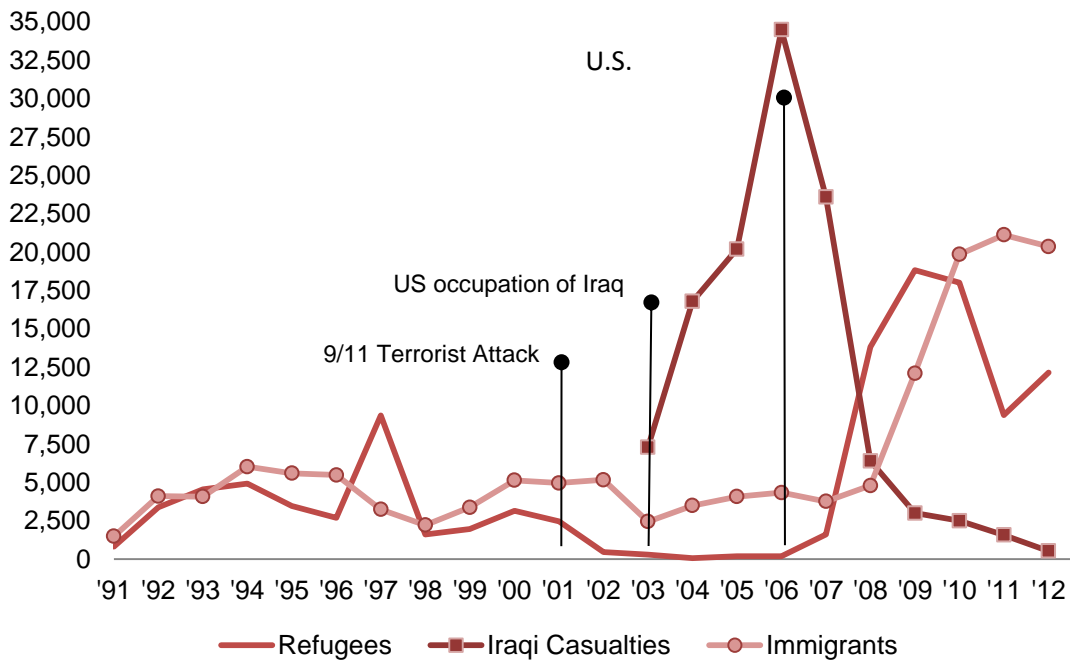


Figure 2. U.S. Immigrant and Refugee Admissions from Iraq 1980-2012 Timeline



Source: WRAPS 2012. Refugee Processing Admissions and Arrivals Report; Department of Homeland Security. 2012. Immigration Yearbook; Brookings Institute. 2012. Iraqi Index.

CONCLUSION

Iraqi refugees have encountered significant challenges during their resettlement in the United States. Given their unique relationship to the United States, their socio-economic background, and their politicized resettlement patterns, the Iraqi refugee experience provides the field of sociology insight regarding the effect of class on immigrant integration process. In the first article, I conducted an analysis of the refugee resettlement process, examining refugees' access and utilization of resettlement agency services, and the policies and procedures that influence residential location, English-language learning resources, enrollment in higher education, and labor force activity. I used data collected from face-to-face interviews with service providers from three resettlement agencies, and multi-site observational data of resettlement agency policies, practices, and service provider-client interaction.

In the second article, I analyzed qualitative data regarding the labor force activity of Iraqi refugees. I examined class, ethnic, and gender differences in resettlement experiences, perceptions of the U.S., educational aspirations, and occupational preferences. I identified the major challenges to employment and professional development for Iraqi refugees using data gathered from face-to-face interviews with recently resettled Iraqi refugees on the West Coast of the United States.

In the third article, I documented a profile of Iraqi refugees in the United States. Using pooled data sets from the 2005-12 American Community Surveys, I used Ordinary Least Squares and logistic regression to analyze the determinants of labor force participation and earnings by gender. I examined the effect of ethnicity, gender, and residing in an Iraqi community on the immigrants' employment rate and earnings.

The results from both the qualitative and quantitative research are limited in their representativeness due to small sample sizes. While the aim of qualitative results is not to be statistically representative, the interviews and observations were limited to English-speaking, educated, Iraqi refugees who were actively involved with the national resettlement program. The

resettlement location, the social class, and experiences with other Iraqis in Iraq and in the United States, arguably informed the perspectives of the interview respondents. The refugee experiences are limited to a non-representative sample of Iraqi refugees; the conclusions are not generalizable to the greater refugee population. However, their experiences do provide significant insight into the resettlement process and create a narrative for the recently-arrived Iraqi refugee, which will be able to inform our understanding of the context of their reception, and better prepare us in the provision of resettlement services, gauging refugee community needs, and modifying policies in advance of new flows from the region.

Policy Recommendations

My findings have implications for the national refugee resettlement program as well as local social service programs. The results suggest a greater sensitivity to in-group conflict is needed during the resettlement process for particular refugee groups. Iraqis could benefit from workshops and seminars aimed at addressing inter-ethnic tension and reconciling misinformation regarding expectations for life in the United States for those who arrived as SIVs. Additionally, Iraqis could be provided with customized information related to pathways to enter the labor force. Many recently-arrived Iraqis have valuable professional experience, especially in the areas of international development, engineering, and security, which can be transferred to the U.S. labor market if they are provided with accurate information related to the investment of time and resources to obtain necessary testing, credentials, and certificates. Increased transparency and oversight of the reporting practices at the local level is needed to ensure equitable treatment of refugees related to gender, ethnicity, and class, in addition to preventing the development of ethnic-based recruitment practices that can lead to protracted downward mobility for arriving refugee groups.

My results indicate a need for greater emphasis on professional licensing and the utilization of transferable skills for highly educated refugee groups like the Iraqis. The

consideration of prior occupation should be incorporated in the resettlement location decision-making process, as secondary migration is directly correlated to professional license policies and ease of skill-matched employment. Additionally, making English language classes and chat sessions available, convenient, and affordable for women is critical to increasing their labor force participation. Child-care expenses are prohibitive to workforce development activities for women, especially for those with children and/or a husband.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should focus on exploring how the interactions between global politics, bureaucratic processes, and individual characteristics shape the resettlement experience for refugees and asylees in the United States. Examining how the integration process differs by immigration status is a key area in migration research that is underdeveloped. Potential studies should focus on obtaining qualitative data by Visa status that explores the ways in which cultural capital is utilized during the resettlement process not just for labor force outcomes, but also for educational pursuits, health care, and housing decision-making. The variation by Visa status, for refugees, asylees, and other immigrants has only begun to be explored. Obtaining larger sample sizes of Iraqis and other immigrant groups from the Middle East will enable us to conduct research on the interaction between ethnic groups, nationalities, in addition to gender and class that have meaningful implications for a number of social issues related to socio-economic status. The political nature of the refugee in the United States, especially those from ongoing conflict regions should be incorporated into the analysis through a macro-level approach of examining the role of the government, international bodies, and institutions on creating policies and procedures that shape the migration and integration process for Iraqi immigrants and refugees differently by class, gender, and ethnicity. Future research should incorporate mixed-methods and geospatial analysis to conduct studies that explore the socio-economic differences between refugees and asylees, the role of nonprofit organizations in immigrant integration, and immigrant utilization of social services, particularly as it relates to race and migrant health disparities.

In this dissertation, I have illuminated the relationship between resettlement service providers, first-resident location, and probability of employment among Iraqi refugees. I evaluated the obstacles to employment as articulated by recently-arrived Iraqi refugees and described their resettlement experiences, giving an analysis of their decision-making process. Lastly, I used Census data to explore these experiences identified through my qualitative research on the national level. I examined the determinants of labor force participation and earnings for Iraqi immigrants and compared them by gender to explore the interaction of gender, nationality, and human capital in the labor market. I included an analysis of the differences in labor market outcomes by Iraqi residential composition and ethnic identification to determine if the resettlement location of Iraqis had significant impact on their labor market activity. The findings lend support to the importance of the context of reception during the immigrant incorporation process, and they provide compelling evidence for disaggregating immigrant groups by gender and ethnicity when exploring “ethnic enclave” effects on immigrant labor market outcomes.

APPENDIX

Refugee Interview Guide

Interview Guide for Refugees

DATE: _____

RESPONDENT: _____

INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is Alicia Lee. I'm a graduate student in the Sociology Department at the University of Pennsylvania. I am conducting research for my dissertation on refugee resettlement. This interview is only for academic research. You will not be identified and your responses will be kept confidential.

OBJECTIVES

- to understand how the resettlement program is experienced differently by gender and country of origin of the refugees
- to determine how the resettlement program shapes the socio-economic trajectory of refugees, and how this might differ by gender, ethnicity, and country of origin
- to explore the resettlement process of refugees
- to understand how service providers incorporate cultural sensitivity into the resettlement program

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your age?
2. Which gender best describes you? Man or Woman?
3. When did you first arrive to the United States?
4. How long have you lived in the United States?
5. What is your Visa/immigration status?
6. What is the name of the country where you were born?
7. What is the name of the last country you visited before arriving in the United States?
8. What is the name of your mother's place of birth?
9. What is the name of your father's place of birth?
10. What languages do you speak?
11. What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?
12. How well do you speak English?
13. How many years of schooling did you complete in your country of birth?
14. What is the highest degree you have obtained?
15. What is your marital status? Married, divorced, separated, widowed, single-never married, or living with someone in a marriage-like relationship?
 - a. If you're married, does your wife/husband live with you?
16. Do you have any children?

- a. If yes, how many?
 - b. How old are they?
 - c. Where were they born?
 - d. Do they live with you?
17. Do you live in a house or apartment?
 18. How long have you lived in your current home?
 19. Do you rent or own?
 20. How much is the rent or mortgage per month?
 21. Who is/are responsible for paying the rent/mortgage?
 22. How many people live in your household with you?
 23. What is his(her/their/) relationship to you?
 24. Do you have any relatives in the United States who do not live with you?
 - a. If yes, where do they live?
 - b. What is their relationship to you?
 25. How many people did you live with before you moved to the U.S.?
 - a. Describe their relationship to you.
 26. How long do you plan to live in your current home?
 27. Describe the process of moving and settling into your home
 28. Are you satisfied with your current housing situation?
 29. Describe the neighborhood where you live
 30. Have you lived anywhere else in the U.S.?
 31. Do you plan to move somewhere else in the U.S.?
 - a. If so, why?

EMPLOYMENT

32. What was your primary job in your country of origin?
33. Do you currently have a job?
34. If yes, what is the job title?
35. Do you work part-time or full-time?
36. How many hours do you work in a typical week?
37. How much do you get paid per hour? Or, if salaried, how much do you get paid a year?
38. How do you typically get to work?
39. How long have you worked this particular job?
40. How did you hear about the job opening? Friends, family, resettlement agency, public advertisement, or another source?
41. How much time does it take you to travel from your home to your job?
42. How many people living in the household have a job not including you?
43. What was your job in your country of origin?
44. Describe your experience searching for a job
45. How many people do you work with?
 - a. Of these people, how many are men and how many are women?
46. Describe your relationship with your co-workers
47. Describe your relationship with your boss
48. Are you satisfied with your current job?
49. Are you looking for another job?
50. Have you taken any job-related training classes or programs?
 - a. If yes, for how long?
 - i. Where did you take the courses?
 - ii. How did you hear about it?
 - iii. When will you stop/Why did you stop?

- iv. Describe your experience in the class/program
 - b. If no, why not?
- 51. Since you arrived in the U.S., have you taken any ESL courses?
 - a. If yes, for how long?
 - i. Where did you take the courses?
 - ii. How did you hear about it?
 - iii. When will you stop/Why did you stop?
 - iv. Describe your experience in the course
 - b. If no, why not?
- 52. Do you receive any income outside of your job? If so, from where?
- 53. Do you have enough money to meet your needs?
- 54. Do you receive government assistance?
 - a. If yes, what kind?
 - b. If yes, for how long?
 - c. If yes, how much do you receive a month?

ADJUSTMENT PROCESS

- 55. How would you describe the community where you live?
- 56. How much do you interact with your neighbors?
- 57. Are you happy living in your community? Explain.
- 58. Do you have a relationship with other co-ethnics in the area?
- 59. Do you visit an ethnic community or cultural center?
 - a. If so, describe your experiences there
- 60. What were the most important relationships you had before you arrived to the U.S.?
 - a. When you first arrived to the U.S.?
 - b. Currently the most important relationships you have?
- 61. Who or what has helped you the most since your arrival to the U.S.?
- 62. What are some things you found surprising or different in the U.S. compared to your native country?
- 63. In your opinion, how do the general roles of women and men in the U.S. compare to the expectations of men and women in your native country?
 - a. Especially with regards to family life.
 - b. What are some of the biggest changes you have had to make as a woman/man living in the U.S.?
- 64. What are some of the challenges you faced after you arrived in the U.S.?
- 65. Describe some of the most positive experiences you've had since you arrived in the U.S.
- 66. Describe some of the most negative experiences you've had since you arrived in the U.S.
- 67. Do you think you have experienced any mistreatment because of where you are from?
- 68. Do you think you have experienced any mistreatment because of your ethnicity, religion, or gender?
- 69. Describe the interaction between refugees and other groups.
- 70. Describe the interaction between male/female refugees and other groups.
- 71. Describe your interaction with other refugees.
- 72. Do you notice any tension between yourself and a certain social group in the U.S., a racial/ethnic/religious group, for example?
- 73. How does the knowledge and expectations of life in the U.S. compare to how it actually is here?
- 74. Describe your resettlement process.
 - a. Compare your expectations to the actual experience.

RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM EXPERIENCES

75. Describe your experiences with the resettlement program.
76. How long have you received services from this particular agency?
 - a. Which services did you use?
77. Describe your relationship with your case manager
78. Describe your experiences with the ESL teacher (if applicable)
79. What are some challenges you experienced as a client of _____?
80. What are some of the things you enjoyed as a client of _____?
81. Have you visited other immigrant or cultural organizations in Philadelphia?
 - a. If yes, which ones?
 - i. What was the reason for the visit?
 - ii. Which services did you use?
 - iii. How did you hear about it?
 - iv. How does it compare to this organization?
 - v. As a woman/man describe your experiences with the resettlement agency
82. Have you had particular experiences due to your ethnic group, gender, or religion?
83. What are some ways integrating into the U.S. could be made easier?
84. What are some ways the resettlement program could be improved?

WRAP UP

85. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience in the U.S.?
86. Do you have any questions for me?

Key Informant Interview Guide:

Interview Guide for Refugee Resettlement Program Affiliates (Service providers, volunteers, lawyers)

DATE: _____

RESPONDENT: _____

INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is Alicia Lee. I'm a graduate student in the Sociology Department at the University of Pennsylvania. I am conducting research for my dissertation on refugee resettlement. This interview is only for academic research. You will not be identified and your responses will be kept confidential.

OBJECTIVES

- to understand how the resettlement program is experienced differently by gender and country of origin of the refugees
- to determine how the resettlement program shapes the socio-economic trajectory of refugees, and how this might differ by gender, ethnicity, and country of origin
- to explore the resettlement process of refugees
- to understand how service providers incorporate cultural sensitivity into the resettlement program

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

87. What is your age?
88. Which gender best describes you? Man or Woman?
89. Are you a U.S. citizen?
 - a. If yes, in what state were you born?
 - b. If no, in what country were you born?
 - i. When did you first arrive to the United States?
 - ii. How long have you lived in the United States?
 - iii. What is your Visa/immigration status?
90. What is the name of your mother's place of birth?
91. What is the name of your father's place of birth?
92. What languages do you speak?
93. What is your ancestry or ethnic origin?
94. How well do you speak English?
95. How many years of schooling have you completed?
96. What is the highest degree you have obtained?
 - a. What field did you study?
97. Why did you choose to work in the area of refugee resettlement?
98. Describe your previous experience with the refugee resettlement program or immigrant services.

- a. What is your current position?
- b. What are your primary responsibilities?
- c. How long have you worked here?
- d. Describe a typical work-day.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

- 99. Which government program does this agency implement?
- 100. What services are provided by this agency?
- 101. How many refugees have you worked with this year?
- 102. How many people are working in the resettlement program?
 - a. Full-time, part-time, voluntary
- 103. Describe the Race/ethnicity of staff members
- 104. Are translators on staff? Which languages do they speak?
- 105. How many people will each refugee have contact with?
- 106. Does the agency have target populations?
- 107. How long are refugees in the program?
 - a. Is the program modified for the individual refugee by country of origin, gender, religious affiliation?
- 108. Are the refugees included in the program decision-making process? How so?
- 109. How is information obtained regarding service utilization and client satisfaction?
 - a. Does the agency maintain a tracking or evaluation program of resettled refugees?
- 110. Does the agency have any information on secondary migration?
 - a. Or 1yr follow-up?
 - b. If so, how common is it for a refugee to move to another city/state after receiving initial resettlement services?
 - c. Where are the most popular places they move to?

EVALUATION

- 111. Describe your experience with the refugee resettlement program.
- 112. What are some of the strengths of the program?
- 113. What are some of the weaknesses of the program?
- 114. What are some ways the program could improve?
- 115. How does the execution of the program differ by agency?
 - a. Describe the interaction between the program service providers and the refugees.
- 116. What are some strengths of the relationship?
- 117. What are some weaknesses of the relationship?
- 118. What are some ways the relationship could be improved?
 - a. On average, how long do refugees utilize the services provided at the resettlement agency?
 - b. In your opinion, what are the most important services offered by the resettlement agency?

REFUGEE INTEGRATION

119. Describe your interaction with other refugees.
 - a. Do you think refugee clients experience any discrimination because of their ethnicity, religion, or gender?
 - b. Describe the interaction between refugees from different ethnic groups or nationalities.
 - c. Is it the same for women and for men?
 - d. Do you notice any tension between refugees and a certain social group in the U.S., a racial/ethnic/religious group, for example?

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT NETWORK

120. Describe the refugee resettlement network in Philadelphia.
 - a. In Pennsylvania
 - b. Describe the relationship among the various resettlement agencies in Philadelphia.
121. How much interaction and collaboration do they have with other agencies?
122. What are some of the strengths of their relationships?
123. What are some of the weaknesses of their relationships?
124. How can the relationship among the resettlement agencies be improved?
125. Describe the relationship between this agency and national government offices
126. Describe the local employment relationships maintained by the agency.
127. What are the challenges with employment faced by resettlement agencies?
 - a. Have there been issues of discrimination by the employers regarding refugee status, country of origin or gender?
128. Describe the local housing relationships maintained by the agency.
129. What are some the challenges with housing faced by resettlement agencies?
 - a. Have there been issues of discrimination by landlords regarding refugee status, country of origin, or gender?
130. How are refugee housing locations chosen by the agency?
 - a. How are employment opportunities and training programs chosen by the agency?

WRAP UP

131. What are some of the major challenges facing refugees in Philadelphia?
132. What are some ways their resettlement here could be improved?

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