Displaced to a Place: Interventions for Refugee Integration in Cities

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, conflict and climate change around the world are not only displacing people at an unprecedented rate but also increasing the years of their displacement. With over 25.4 million refugees globally, the highest number in history, countries are forced to change how they respond to this crisis. In most cases, housing refugees in temporary camps is not sustainable over a long, and a majority of the global refugees end up living in urban areas. Since cities are starting to play an essential role in welcoming this new population, it is imperative for the planning field to understand how the built environment impacts refugee integration. Successful integration into host society is not the sole responsibility of a refugee but rather a process that involves both the refugee and the host community. This thesis investigates factors that affect refugee integration and examines how they play out spatially on a local scale through a case study of the Roxbury neighborhood in Boston, Massachusetts. The research analysis and case study affirm the influence of place in the refugee experience of community and belonging. Just as displacement is a place-based trauma, refugee resettlement must be approached as a place-based intervention. This thesis highlights the role of planners by outlining the spatial implications of successful integration in addition to introducing a multidisciplinary approach that can empower refugees to not only successfully integrate but to have agency in their new homes.

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

This thesis examines how integration unfolds on a neighborhood level based on a case study of Somali refugees in Roxbury, Boston, Massachusetts. Additionally, research on the refugee resettlement process and challenges facing communities trying to start a new life informed the understanding of successful integration in host society. This thesis looks at critical spatial factors on a local scale that urban planners can look at to better facilitate successful refugee resettlement. Since refugee displacement is a place-based trauma, the resettlement of refugees in foreign nations must also be a place-based solution taking spatial concerns into consideration.

Section 1 The Global Refugee Crisis

Forced migration is one of the most pressing international issues in recent history and affects almost every country whether it's by being the source of displacement, the recipient of the displaced population or a means of transit. The number of refugees at the end of 2017 was a record 25.4 million, over half of whom were under the age of 18 (Refugees, n.d.-a). With such a large population in need of humanitarian assistance, the response to the global refugee crisis has not been satisfactory. The wealthier nations especially are failing to do their part in protecting people fleeing their homes for safety resulting in greater responsibility unfairly falling on the lower and middle-income, often neighboring, countries to step up to the challenge. Developing nations host over 85 percent of the refugees globally. The world's top 10 refugee host countries include: Turkey (3.5M), Jordan (2.9M), Uganda (1.4M), Pakistan (1.4M), Lebanon (1.4M), Iran (979,400), Germany (970,400) and Bangladesh (932,200) ("Global facts and figures about refugees," 2017). Meanwhile, two-thirds of the refugees come from just five countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Somalia. As of 2018, the Rohingya refugee crisis due to violence in Myanmar is the fastest growing crisis in the world ("Refugee Statistics," 2018).

Despite this rapid increase in the number of refugees, instead of increasing their yearly quotas, wealthier nations are accepting fewer refugees than in the past. Many European nations have been significantly affected by the refugee crisis due to their proximity to countries displaced populations are fleeing and have had varied responses anywhere from accepting more refugees to closing their borders. There are three main ways for the international community to support refugees: financially, politically and physically. Financial support is through aid promised to countries accepting refugees or asylum seekers and donations made to international agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Political support could include changes in foreign policy that either addresses the causes for displacement or allows for easier exit from dangerous situations for those fleeing their homes by opening borders and welcoming asylum seekers as first asylum countries. Lastly, physical support means either accepting asylum seeker who cross international borders or accepting refugees through resettlement programs organized by the UNHCR to reduce pressures on the first asylum countries (Martin, 2016). The focus of this thesis is on this last physical support element of refugee response, explicitly looking at resettlement in the U.S. and the role of cities in refugee integration.

Section 2 Who is a Refugee?

Refugees are people who have had to leave their entire lives behind them in search of safety in another country. The first international definition of a refugee was codified in 1951 in a United Nations treaty known as the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, it limited the definition and international protection of refugee status to Europeans from before January 1, 1951, only because the UNHCR was initially created as a result of the aftermath of the Second World War and was meant to help the millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes.

However, the UN was soon forced to grapple with refugee crisis all over the world, not just Europe, due to the mass displacement of people due to conflicts such as the 1956 Hungarian Revolution or the decolonization of Africa in the 1960s. As a result, the UN 1967 Protocol

Relating to the Status of Refugees removed this time and geographical limit to include anyone seeking protection across international borders. The current international definition of a refugee is:

> *"owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."*

In the United States, the Refugee Act of 1980 similarly defined a refugee as:

> *"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."*

Every year the President, in consultation with Congress, determines the total limit, broken down by region, of admissions to the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program for that fiscal year. While there is no requirement to meet this limit, it is not possible to exceed it.

(a) Refugees vs. Immigrants

Refugees are a type of migrant but they differ from other immigrants to the U.S. in not only legal status and rights but in one fundamental way – choice. Immigrants choose to migrate to the U.S., whether it's for a job, new opportunities, family or a host of other reasons. They go through the process of applying for a visa or being sponsored by family and when accepted can choose to move anywhere within the U.S. Refugees on the other hand, while still an immigrant, did not want to leave their homes behind and were instead driven out by fear for their lives. Their journey to the U.S. and trying to make a home for themselves is very different; the full process of refugee resettlement in the U.S. is explained in Section 2.03. Referring to refugees as just immigrants implies that they can return to their home country if they so choose, even though that is not possible. Human rights and international

law protect them from being driven back to a place where they are likely to face persecution.

(b) Refugees vs. Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers are a different type of refugee; like refugees, they have also fled their home country and crossed international borders in search of safety due to a threat to their lives but have not been legally given refugee status yet. Most refugees enter asylum countries as asylees before applying for refugee status. Asylum status does not provide you with the protection of international law or make available resources and aid that refugees are afforded. For example, asylum seekers in the U.S. have limited rights and cannot fully integrate into society until their refugee application is accepted. Even globally, some asylum seekers are housed in refugee camps and completely isolated from the asylum country – only a few are ever given a chance at a new life in a different country. Annually a small number of refugees are selected by the UNHCR to be eligible for resettlement from their first asylum country, but they have no say in the country their case is assigned to unless they have existing family networks somewhere that could help them resettle. In 2017, there were 19.9 million refugees of concern to the UNHCR, but less than one percent of them were resettled to another country (UNHCR, n.d.-b).

Section 3 The Refugee Crisis is an Urban Issue

The incumbent UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, said in 2017 that due to the scale of recent refugees it was no longer reasonable to deal with refugees in physically isolated camps dependent on basic supplies and instead it was necessary to focus on their integration into cities (Damien McElroy, 2017). Refugee camps provide shelter and aid but are meant to deal with refugees as a temporary phenomenon who will eventually go back to their country of origin. However, in addition to an increasing number of refugees, the length of the displacement of individuals has significantly increased as well. While the average length of displacement used to be nine years in the 1990s, that number has jumped to twenty years now. Such long terms of displacement mean that refugees are no longer waiting out the time until

they can return home, but rather become part of the host society they resettle in. While returning to their home country is still the best course of action for refugees; for most, it is not a possibility. If refugees are staying in cities for more extended periods, it is not appropriate to view them as a migratory population that will eventually move on, and the approach to addressing the refugee crisis must shift from temporary housing to full integration in society.

There are at least three types of displaced refugees in cities around the world that warrant urban-focused research to address the issues they deal with daily. These include refugees living in camps in their first asylum country, those living in urban areas as refugees or asylum seekers in their first asylum country, and those permanently resettled in another country through a resettlement program, mostly coordinated by the UNHCR. Refugees are fleeing unlivable conditions in their home country proliferated by violence and climate change across the nearest or most accessible international border to their country of origin. They come to this first country as asylum seekers and apply for refugee status. Some countries' response to this influx of refugees is to house them in separate camps that are meant to be temporary shelters providing basic needs while other countries see these isolated camps as problematic and permit refugees to live in urban areas throughout the country (Sanyal, 2016).

The urban lens on refugee camps becomes relevant when over time these temporary housing sites start to evolve and shape into informal cities within the city. The prime example of this urbanization of a temporary site is the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan set up a few miles from the Syrian border that houses up to 80,000 Syrian refugees who fled the country amid the war in 2012 (Sanyal, 2016). The camp was appropriated by its residents by virtue of living there resulting in a robust urban environment with self-assigned neighborhoods, a black market economy with 3,500 new businesses and shops, and even issues of gentrification fueled by a shadow real estate market (Kimmelman, 2018). Such appropriation of place and its built environment poses problems that cannot be dealt with through humanitarian aid alone and require interventions informed by the study of urban systems.

"We design refugee camps; refugees build cities," - Kilian Kleinschmidt, the United Nations official in charge of Zaatari (Kimmelman, 2018)

Perhaps more directly, the refugees who live in cities instead of camps in their first country of asylum are part of the process and challenges of urbanization. Lebanon, for example, enforces a "no-camp policy", consequently 1.3 million Syrians moved into the urban areas of the country previously occupied by 4 million Lebanese citizens. Such a drastic increase in population over a short time resulted in more pressure on the city's infrastructure than it could handle affecting not only the physical built environment but also the country's governance (Sanyal, 2016). In addition to the housing market, this forced urban displacement of refugees affects the city's ability to provide services like healthcare, education, sanitation, and water among others. It also becomes challenging to target services for refugees alone because native residents of cities might even be living in similar conditions, or worse. Therefore, it becomes imperative that any response to such conditions is done by recognizing and accepting the interrelated nature of urban refugees and their host communities.

Lastly, a small percentage of the global refugee population is resettled in another country. In 2018, 55,700 refugees were resettled in 27 countries around the world by UNHCR (UNHCR, n.d.). This group of refugees enters their country of placement through immigration processes and are usually on a path to permanent residency or citizenship, depending on the country. The goal is to integrate them into the host society as soon as possible by addressing their needs such as housing, healthcare, education, skills training, and social services (J. Brandt & Katz, 2017). Since these needs go beyond providing a monthly stipend or aid, cities are better equipped to handle them on a local scale rather than government organizations on a national one. For successful integration, both the refugee and the host society must adapt to each other and this includes a physical adaption. This adaptation could consist of changes to the planning laws to allow for more flexible uses of space to support local economies or to relax regulations around housing requirements to permit the building of more affordable housing. Resettled refugees become a subpopulation of the host community, instead of a separate group, whom the city is responsible for – making the refugee crisis an urban crisis.

Section 4 Refugees and The Right to the City

The French sociologist Henri Lefebvre introduced "the Right to the City" in his 1968 book *Le droit à la ville,* which is the right of all people, regardless of socio-economic status, to the resources the city provides. Lefebvre's theory of inclusion was taken up by urban planners and has become one of the guiding principles of the planning field. If planners have accepted the right to the city as a right afforded to everyone – refugees cannot be left out of that equation. David Harvey adds another element to this debate of the right to the city; he says:

> *"The Right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights." (David Harvey, 2008).*

He suggests that the right to the city is not just something individualistic, but rather a communal right to change and shape the city to fit the needs of the community. The right to the city then means that the contributions and changes to a neighborhood that refugees bring should not be seen as an attack on the existing way of life, but rather an exercise of their human rights as fellow citizens. The fear of the "other" often leads to wanting the outgroup to assimilate to the American way of life with little to no regard for their cultures and lifestyles. Instead of forcing people, especially refugees who are victims of situations that they cannot control, to change and adapt to fit in – cities should be looking for ways to respond to them instead. After being forced out of their homes, host communities should not then force a different idea of home on them. Refugees living in the city have just as much right as anyone else to shape the city's form and function to meet their needs. The cities have to be prepared to adapt with their citizens instead of creating roadblocks for them in their journey towards integration.

Section 5 The Role of Planning

> *"Most people displaced by war or climate change, in other words, are not temporary guests in the countries and cities that receive them – they are, in effect, in their new homes, which should be built to last." (Besner, 2018)*

With so many refugees unable to return to their country of origin, depending on temporary solutions such as refugee camps is no longer sustainable. Governments and urban planners need to start looking at other solutions to the large expected numbers of displaced people due to conflict or climate change. One of the more permanent solutions applied to displaced people is refugee resettlement in other host countries. However, one of the challenges for this approach is that neither the refugees nor the community they resettle into is prepared for this placement. This is where an urban planning framework can be helpful. Stephen Castles says in his book *Integration: Mapping the Field:*

> *"Integration of newcomers to a society takes place at every level and in every sector of society. It involves a wide range of social players: public officials, political decision-makers, employers, trade union officials, fellow-workers, service providers, neighbours and so on." (Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2001)*

One of the roles of the Planner is of a facilitator who can bring all these entities and more together and think through multi-disciplinary measures to comprehensively plan for this integration of the arriving and host societies. Planners must understand the factors that impact refugee integration in the community to carry this responsibility successfully. Refugees have unique needs and challenges that must be addressed that go beyond diversity or cultural planning. The trauma of displacement and the conditions they escaped are inherently place-based, as is resettlement. The built environment has a direct impact on the integration of refugees in their host neighborhoods.

For successful planning, the first misconception that must be addressed about refugees in the U.S. is that they are a migratory population who are only here for a short amount of time. Refugee integration is explored in more detail in later chapters but one thing is clear: they strive to become part of their new communities. They learn the language, get a job and make

other efforts to establish themselves in their new homes. Based on the Office of Refugee Resettlement's 2016 Annual Report to Congress, 96.2 percent of all refugees, aged 18 and up, surveyed indicated that they had either already applied or intended to apply for permanent residency status taking a step towards citizenship (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018). Planners need to stop looking at refugees as a group that is merely making a pit stop in the city or community before moving on. While it is true that refugees may not stay in the city they are first resettled into; they only move elsewhere within the U.S. in search of a better life for themselves and their family like any other American would. If they are provided with all the tools necessary to succeed in their first place of resettlement, they will have no reason to move to another city and will continue to be a vital part of that community instead.

Section 6 Methodology and Research Question

(a) Methodology

This research was based on a case study of the Roxbury neighborhood in Boston, Massachusetts, because it has one of the largest concentrations of Somali refugees in the city. Qualitative research methods were utilized to answer the research question; this included a total of six interviews with key players in the refugee resettlement community in Roxbury, including three staff members at a local resettlement agency and three refugees. All interviews took place through collaboration with the Refugee and Immigration Assistance Center located on Roxbury Street. The three staff members interviewed included: an ESL teacher who had been teaching in the center for over ten years, a staff member of the counselling services team, a staff member of the Social Services and Refugee Resettlement team. Due to their diverse roles within the center, each of the staff members brought a different perspective to the interview. All three interviews took place privately in the center.

There are notable limitations to this study because of the lack of a diverse engagement with the Somali refugee community in Roxbury and small sample size. The three Somali refugee women recruited for participation were a result of convenience sampling without an element of randomization so their experience is less likely to be generalized to the larger

Somali refugee community in the neighborhood. They also represented a specific demographic of older Somali women so their experience does not represent the Somali refugees at large. The interview procedure also posed further limitation on the study. All three women felt more comfortable being interviewed in a group setting and spoke very little English. The language barrier meant a staff member at the center had to serve as translator for the duration of the interview, meaning certain things could be lost in translation. Another probable limitation was the group interview structure that could result in the interviewees not being as honest as they might have been in a private interview due to the possibility of altering their answer to give a more socially acceptable one.

Despite these limitations, these interviews were helpful in understanding Roxbury from a local refugee perspective. The theoretic framework for this thesis was constructed as a result of extensive research and literature review on refugee experiences in cities to understand integration.

(b) Research Question

This thesis explores the political, personal, and ethical implications of refugee integration in the United States on a national level and spatializes it on a neighborhood level. Ultimately, it is this neighborhood or city context that is most immediately responsible for the integration of refugees resettled in the U.S. This research asks, what does it mean for refugees to integrate into cities successfully and what is the role of Urban Planners in facilitating that process?

Chapter 2 introduces the political relationship between the U.S. and refugees to contextualize the role the country plays in the global refugee crisis, and how that relationship changes over time due to political forces instead of humanitarian ones. This chapter informs the reader of the resettlement process and explains the journey of the refugee from the international scale to their placement in a city or town in the U.S. The following section, Chapter 4, attempts to answer the question: what happens to refugees once they arrive in their assigned communities? How do they become part of the host

society and what affects their ability to integrate successfully? These questions are explored in a local context using Somali refugees in Roxbury, Boston, MA, as a case study. The elements of integration are spatialized in the Roxbury neighborhood to inform the urban planning field of the role they play in the lives of resettled refugees in cities. Chapter 5 provides recommendations for Roxbury based on the case study and further grounds this research from an urban planning perspective to strengthen the idea that refugee integration is a spatial issue that falls within the realm of the planning field. The research analysis for this thesis provides valuable lessons for Urban Planners and local governments on how to promote integration in their cities by establishing specific spatial, policy and community engagement recommendations. The lessons learned and resulting recommendations will hopefully inform better decision making to ensure refugees' 'right to the city' and create truly inclusive communities.

Chapter 2.

Refugees in the United States

Section 1 Historic Context

The U.S. has historically led the world in refugee resettlement, accepting 75 percent of all refugees resettled – three million of the four million resettled globally (Vinopal, 2018). The U.S. refugee resettlement program as it operates now started in the 1980s but previous refugee policies were motivated by foreign policy interests of the time. Susan Fratzke of the Migration Policy Institute described that "it was really driven by Cold War concerns, and a sense of wanting to provide refuge to people fleeing regimes that the U.S. opposed"(Vinopal, 2018). The first refugee legislation enacted by the U.S. congress was the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and it was meant to accept displaced Europeans after the Second World War. Amendments were later made to accept refugees from Cuba during the 1960s and Vietnam around 1975 because of the U.S. vested political interests in those countries at the time. Finally, the Refugee Act of 1980 was enacted and redefined the meaning of refugee to resemble the UN definition and remove geographic restrictions on accepted refugees. This act also created the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) as part of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and formalized the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program.

Section 2 Current Trends

For the first time in history since the 1980 Refugee Act, the U.S. resettled fewer refugees than the rest of the world in 2017 – about 33,000 refugees compared to the 69,000 resettled by the rest of the world (Connor & Krogstad, 2018) The number of refugees resettled in the U.S. fell from 84,994 in 2016 to only 53,715 in 2017. This dramatic drop of over sixty percent reflected the new administration change from President Barrack Obama to President Donald Trump, who ran and won on a platform of closing borders and lowering immigration. The Trump administration announced in 2018 that it plans to further limit the number of refugees accepted into the U.S. to only 30,000, which is a historic decrease from the previous years. It is

important to note that this is only the maximum possible number of admitted refugees and not the actual number accepted every year as that tends to be lower (Vinopal, 2018). For the 2018 fiscal year, the U.S. resettlement cap was 45,000, but only about half the quota was met with 22,491 refugees admitted into the U.S. Accepting a lot fewer refugees than the yearly cap is a prevailing trend of the program. The chart below shows the number of refugees admitted into the country over the last ten years and highlights not only this significant decline in refugee acceptance under the Trump administration, but also the reality that accepted totals are usually significantly lower than the capped ceiling. If the previous years' trend is any indication, with the total cap for 2019 set at 30,000 the U.S. can expect to accept only around 15,000 refugees. The number of refugees accepted in the resettlement program in 2019 could prove to be lower even than the historic low of 2002 after the 9/11 attacks when the total was capped at 70,000, and the U.S. accepted only 27,131 refugees. The total accepted in 2002 is notably still more than the 22,491 refugees approved in 2018 as shown in figure 1.

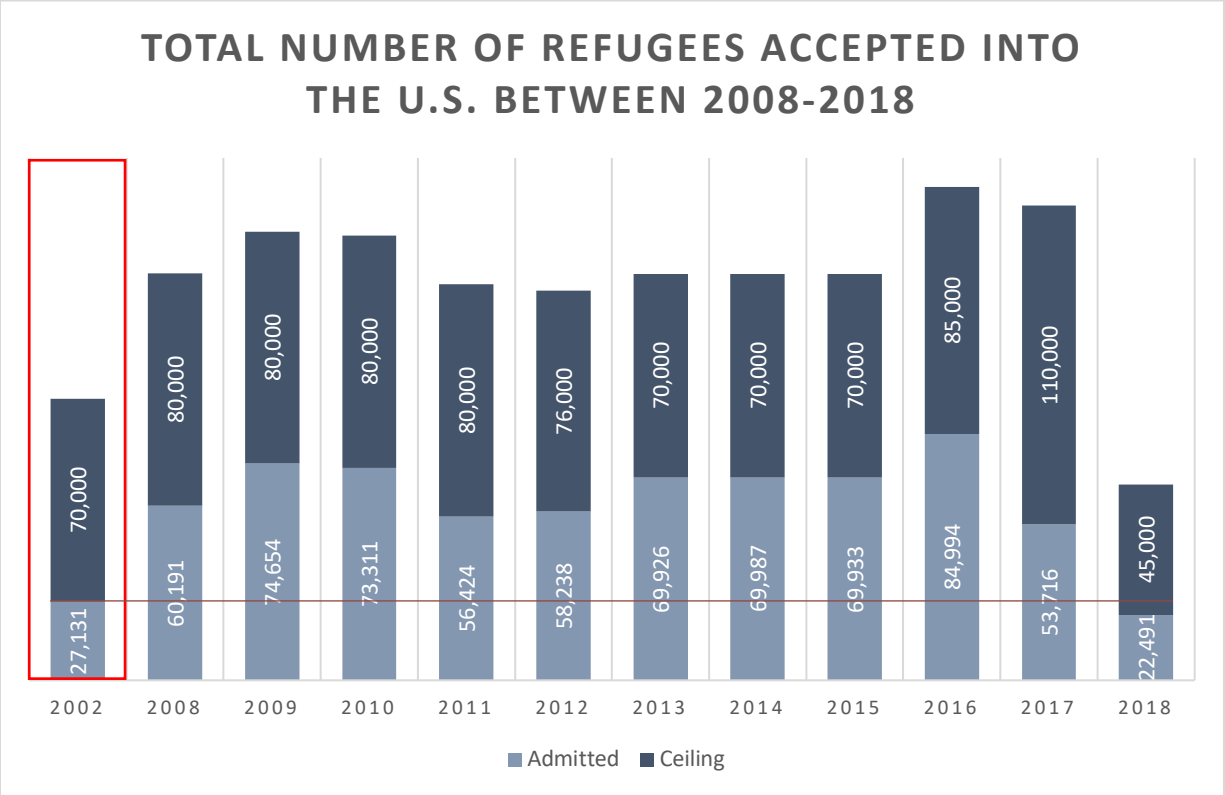


Figure 1: Number of Refugees Accepted by the U.S. in the last decade, compared to post-9/11 in 2002

Source: The Refugee Processing Center (RPC) operated by the U.S Department of State (DOS) Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). ("Refugee Processing Center > Interactive Reporting," n.d.)

Section 3 The Resettlement Process

The U.S. works with the UNHCR and other governmental and non-governmental agencies to resettle refugees in the country. UNHCR refers most of the refugees resettled in the U.S. through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. All received cases are thoroughly reviewed by the Department of Homeland Security, with the process taking up to two years of multiple background checks, security clearings, in-person interviews, and evaluations (Vinopal, 2018). Once the State Department decides to admit a refugee, their case is referred to one of the nine resettlement agencies that work with the U.S. government to place refugees in communities all over the country. These nine agencies, known as national voluntary agencies, or Volags, make the final placement decisions. All of these agencies, except one, are private; they include:

1. Church World Service
2. Ethiopian Community Development Council
3. Episcopal Migration Ministries
4. Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
5. International Rescue Committee
6. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
7. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
8. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops World Relief
9. The State of Iowa, Bureau of Refugee Services

Resettlement decisions are made based on a variety of reasons, including the needs of the refugee, housing availability and affordability, the presence of relatives in the community, and the capacity of the local resettlement agencies to accept the case. Volags depend on a vast network of local agencies, with 312 offices in 185 unique locations, to assist refugees transition into American life (Center for American Progress, 2016). These local agencies are responsible for receiving the refugees, setting them up with housing, and providing them employment and medical assistance for the first 90 days after arrival. Since the period of financial support for refugees is so limited, one of the main goals of the local agencies is to get the refugees

financially independent as soon as possible. After the 90 day period of assistance is over, refugees can apply for public assistance programs like any other legal resident of a state (K. L. Brandt, 2010). One of the positives of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program is that refugees are authorized to legally start working upon arrival to help them integrate as soon as possible. To further promote integration, they are required to apply for permanent residency within a year of being in the country and are eligible to apply for naturalized citizenship after five years in the country (Center for American Progress, 2016).

Chapter 3.

Refugee Integration

The opportunities for integration unfold on the streets of cities even if they are measured on paper, thus warranting a study of refugee integration from an urban planning and spatial perspective. This chapter will briefly explain integration while Chapter 6 goes into detail about the factors that influence integration and guided the qualitative and spatial analysis of Roxbury in Chapter 4. This thesis intends to provide a starting point for planners to create guidelines for their cities to better facilitate successful integration through policy, initiatives and land use interventions.

Section 1 Understanding Integration

Before Planners can start talking about and assessing the integration of refugees in their communities, they must understand what is meant by integration. Integration into host society is both a policy goal for countries with resettlement programs like the U.S. and a measure of success for most organizations working with refugees such as UNHCR. However, it is hard to define what is meant by integration as there is no concrete definition or understanding that can capture the experiences of such a multi-faceted group. Integration is uniquely defined by the individual experiences and sense of belonging of the refugees who have resettled in new communities.

Too often migrants, especially refugees, are faced with the burden of assimilation and expected to change who they are to lead successful lives in their new-found home, but that mentality goes against the core values of this country. For successful integration to happen, the U.S. must change its attitudes towards its newest members of society. As Stephen Castles says in his book:

> *"Integration is a two-way process: it requires adaptation on the part of the newcomer but also by the host society." (Castles et al., 2001)*

Rather than viewing them as outsiders, refugees must be seen as an integral part of society who have just as much right to live their lives as they see fit as promised and protected by the nation's constitutional laws. The promise of protection should not come at the price of changing who they are – that is simply another form of persecution. Refugees flee their homes because of threat against their lives based on their race, religion, nationality, social or political views, but when they are given a chance at a second life, it seems ironic that it is these core beliefs that come under attack in their new homes as well.

Castles also introduces another critical aspect of integration that must be kept in mind – integration into what? Refugees are a complex and dynamic group with multiple facets of identity, therefore answering the 'what' becomes integral to understanding integration. Integration happens on various scales such as the local community, a social group, place of worship, the labor force or academia – and can be at different levels for each of these scales (Castles et al., 2001). It is possible, for example, for a refugee to feel well integrated into their local social circle but not in the labor force. It then becomes essential to ask the question of 'what?', so a policy solution can be catered to that aspect of the refugee life that is lacking. Because of this multi-layered understanding of integration, it is not possible to have a simple yes or no answer to the question: do refugees successfully integrate after resettlement? It could be argued that even framing that question in that way, with the refugee doing the action of integration, is problematic in of itself. It perpetuates a host-society bias that falsely implies that the host society does not play a role in the process of integration.

Despite the complexity and individuality of the meaning of integration, there are widely accepted indicators of integration that are often used by governmental agencies to measure the success of their programs. There has also been extensive research done on the subject of refugee and immigrant integration. A leading study on the subject by Alastair Ager and Alison Strang provides an understanding of refugee integration by laying it out in a conceptual framework summarized by the authors in figure 2. Ager and Strang identified and grouped ten domains of integration into four themes: markers and means, social connection, facilitators and foundation (Ager & Strang, 2008). Even though the authors organized their study results in

these ten distinct domains to create the framework, the research supported and reinforced the idea that all these domains are interdependent. Language and cultural knowledge have a direct impact on refugee employment as does housing on safety and stability. Therefore, it is essential to look at refugee integration as a comprehensive issue that should be addressed through multi-disciplinary efforts.

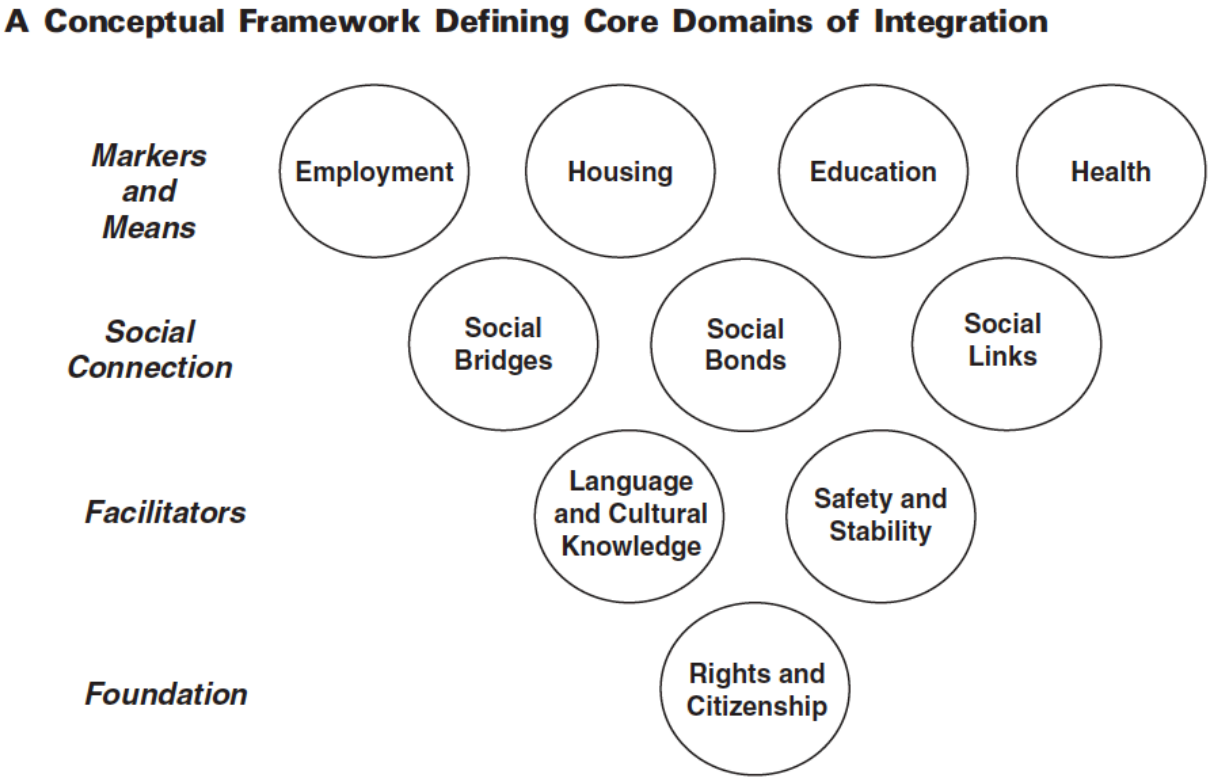


Figure 2: A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration

One aspect of refugee integration that is explicitly missing from this framework but is a crucial component of the process is the impact of place. The characteristics of the city or region refugees are placed in directly determine their level of integration. Once in a new city, refugees depend on the physical resources of that place as a means for integration. Their children attend local schools, they gather in public spaces and local parks, shop at the local stores, find employment in the existing industries and depend on the public transportation and other mobility infrastructures (OECD, 2018).. All of these physical elements of the city that serve other residents will also serve the refugees, however, their use of these amenities might differ

because the challenges they face are so different. The local and regional economies and the prevailing industries all have a direct influence on the economic outcomes of refugees but they have to deal with discrimination and barriers for entry to local labor markets. Local housing markets determine who lives where and the conditions they are living in. There are a multitude of factors that determine how a specific groups of refugee interacts with the built environment and they almost always differ depending on the makeup of a city or region and the group of refugees who call it home. A holistic local approach to the refugee crisis is thus imperative, and local government and city planners can play a crucial role in refugee resettlement.

Chapter 4.

The Roxbury Case Study - Somali Refugees in Boston, MA

Section 1 State Context

The Massachusetts Office of Refugee Resettlement was created in 1985 to be responsible for refugee affairs in the state until the state legislature established the Office of Refugee and Immigrants (ORI) in 1992. As mandated by the Refugee Act of 1980 and state law, the ORI Executive Director serves as the State Refugee Coordinator ("Office for Refugees and Immigrants," n.d.). The ORI is primarily funded through the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and coordinates with local organizations to provide services and programs for refugees and immigrants. Between 2009 and 2016, Massachusetts's refugee acceptance rate has fluctuated between 1,400 and 1,900 refugees annually with a total of 16,116 refugees settled in the state (Vance, 2017). While refugees are placed throughout the state, a majority of them are in the Greater Boston area as shown in figure 3.

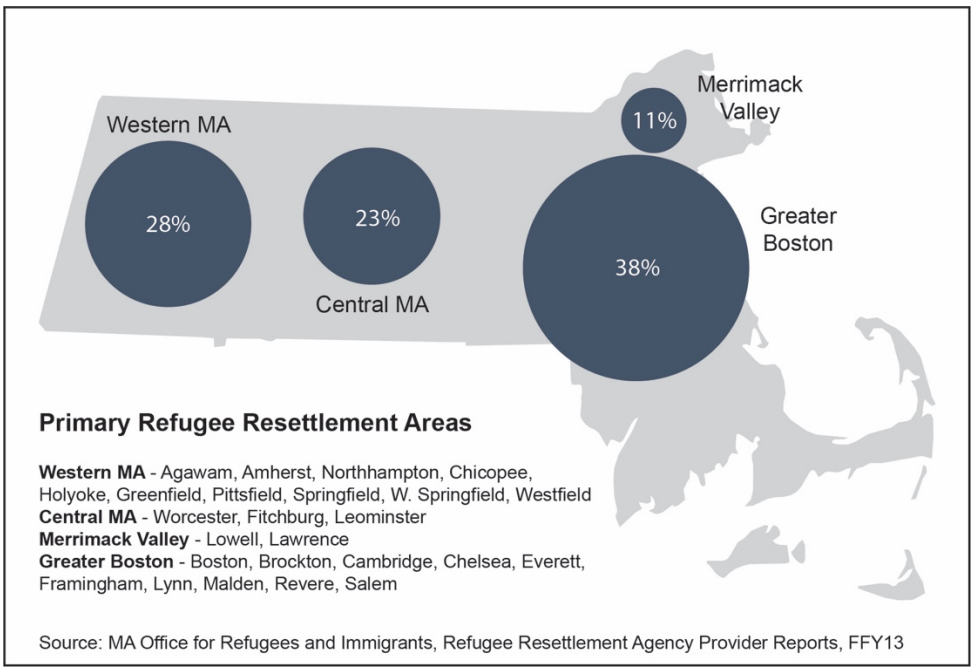
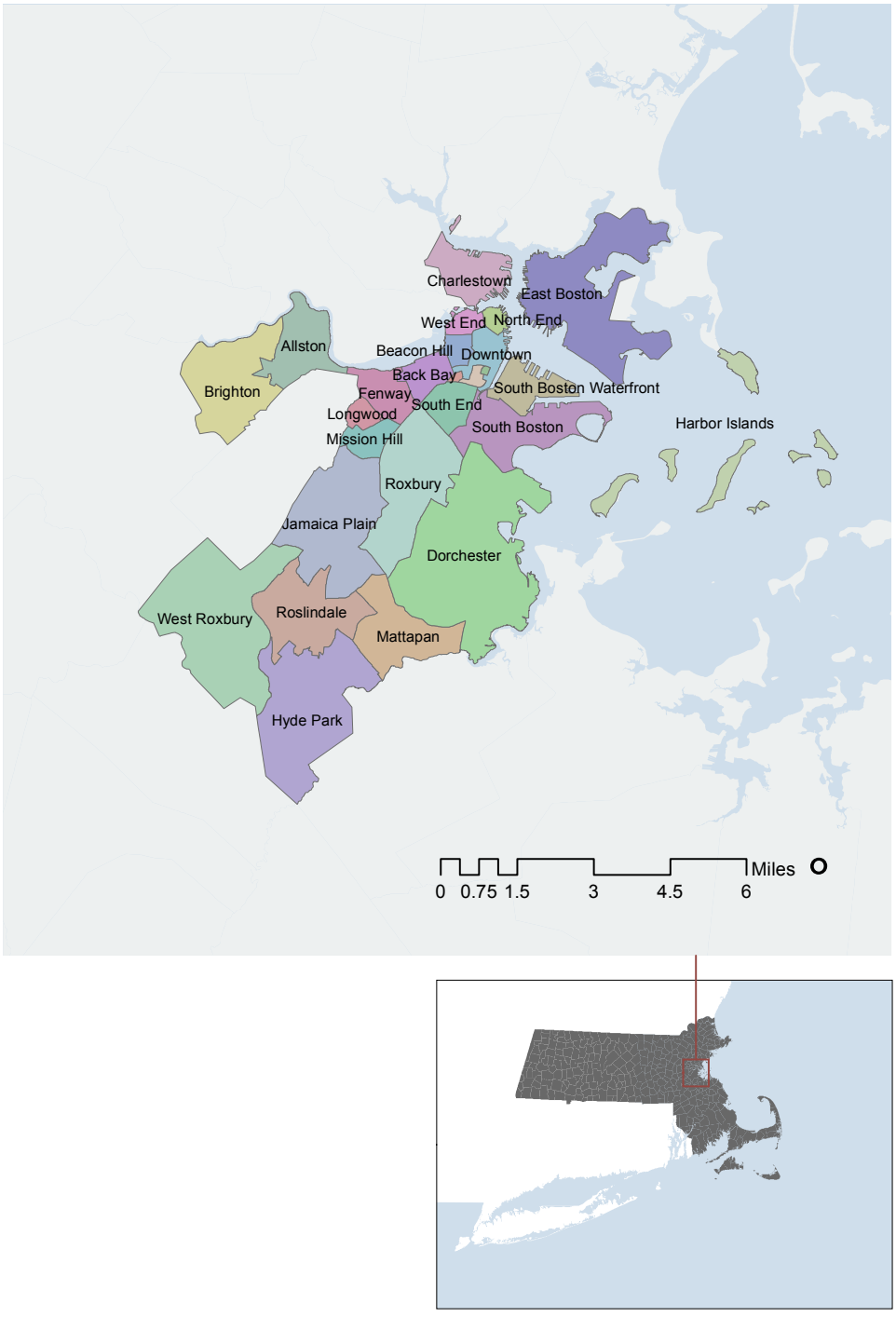


Figure 3: Primary Location of Refugee Resettlement in Massachusetts

Section 2 Introduction to Roxbury

Boston has a total of 26 neighborhoods, each with their own unique culture and way of life. Roxbury is centrally located in the heart of the city. It is bound by Dorchester, Jamaica Plan, Mission Hill, Fenway, South End and South Boston on all sides.



(a) Roxbury and its Immigrant Roots

The town of Roxbury was a booming railroad town and was annexed by Boston in 1868. Its history of immigration and providing refuge dates as far back as the mid-1800s when the Irish displaced by the famine came to live in the neighborhood. By the turn of the 20th century, they had made a place for themselves and transformed blocks along Dudley Street into a cultural enclave with dance halls and venues like Hibernian Hall, which still exists in Dudley Square today as a protected historic landmark. A diverse group of immigrants from Europe and the Americas, such as the Irish, German, Jews, Scandinavians, Italians, Latvians, and Maritime Canadians, found home in Roxbury by 1900.

Image 1: Corner of Dudley and Warren Streets (Dudley Square) in 1856, as Irish and other immigrants were first moving into this emerging streetcar suburb. Courtesy of the Trustees of the Boston Public Library.

After the Irish, the Jewish population became the dominant presence, and the neighborhood began to reflect this change as more synagogues, and kosher food suppliers became commonplace. The area once again saw a population change starting in the 1930s as native-born African Americans began to move into the neighborhood stirred by redlining, white flight, and blockbusting by real estate groups until Roxbury was primarily known as a Black

neighborhood by 1970. Simultaneously the Latino presence in the community was growing in the 1950s and 1960s due to political instability in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Since the 1990s, foreign-born Africans from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, and Somalia have also made the neighborhood their home and contributed to the vibrant community by opening businesses, restaurants, and new churches and mosques (Samuel Davis, n.d.). This thesis will look at the last group, the Somali refugee, and the impact they have had on the neighborhood.

(b) Roxbury's Residential Demographics

The following data is based on the U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey, and the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) Research Division Analysis (BPDA Research Division, 2019). It provides the reader with a snapshot of the neighborhood and its residents.

Age

	Total Population	Median Age	0-9 years	10-19 years	20-34 years	35-54 years	55-64 years	65 + years
Roxbury	52,944	32	6,988	7,911	13,886	12,885	5,742	5,532
			13.2%	*14.9%*	*26.2%*	*24.3%*	*10.8%*	*10.4%*
Boston	669,158	32	63,428	76,451	231,255	157,768	66,662	73,594
			9.5%	*11.4%*	*34.6%*	*23.6%*	*10.0%*	*11.09%*

Table 1: Age of Roxbury's Population as compared to Boston's Population

Similarly to Boston overall, the median age for Roxbury's residents is 32 years and most are between the ages of 20-54 with senior citizens 65 year and older as the smallest group.

Housing Tenure

	Total Housing Units	Total Occupied	% of Total Units	Owner Occupied	% of Occupied Units	Renter Occupied	% of Occupied Units
Roxbury	21,136	19,406	*91.8%*	3,980	*20.5%*	15,426	*79.5%*
Boston	285,660	263,229	*92.1%*	93,046	*35.3%*	170,183	*64.7%*

Table 2: Housing Tenure of Roxbury's Population as compared to Boston's Population

Roxbury residents are predominantly renters instead of owners as are a majority of Somali refugees in the U.S. (Dyssegaard Kallick & Mathema, 2016).

Race and Ethnicity

	Total Population	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black/African American	Hispanic or Latino	Non-Hispanic Asian	Other Raves or multiple races
Roxbury	52,944	5,574	27,246	15,897	1,941	2,286
		10.5%	*51.5%*	*30.0%*	*3.7%*	*4.3%*
Boston	669,158	300,491	152,011	129,520	62,956	24,180
		44.9%	*22.7%*	*19.4%*	*9.4%*	*3.6%*

Table 3: Race and Ethnicity of Roxbury's Population as compared to Boston's Population

Roxbury's racial population distribution is very different than Boston's. While non-Hispanic Whites are the majority in the city, the neighborhood is mostly Black/African American. The second highest population in Roxbury is Hispanic or Latino. However, it is important to note that most African countries do not have color-based communities but rather tribe or clan-based identities. It is difficult for refugees from these countries to come to the U.S. and be classified as 'African-American' or 'Black' because they do not feel the narrative associated with those classifications represents them or their challenges (Omar, 2016) (Kusow, 2006). This data only describes 51.5% of the population as non-Hispanic Black/African American so it is unclear how many of those individuals are native residents and how many are foreign-born migrants or refugees.

Educational Attainment

	Total Population 25 years and over	Less than High School	High School Graduate	Some College	Bachelor's Degree or more
Roxbury	32,063	7,783	9,394	7,758	7,128
		24.3%	*29.3%*	*24.2%*	*22.2%*
Boston	457,113	63,725	95,687	81,074	216,627
		13.9%	*20.9%*	*17.7%*	*47.4%*

Table 4: Education Attainment of Roxbury's Population as compared to Boston's Population

Compared to Boston, Roxbury resident's educational attainment is a lot lower. While a majority of the city residents have at least a bachelor's degree, a majority of residents in Roxbury are

either High School graduates or don't have a High School diploma. This is also true for refugees, specifically Somali refugees, who seldom have a high school diploma (Dyssegaard Kallick & Mathema, 2016).

Section 3 Somali Refugees in the U.S.

Somalia is located in the Horn of Africa and is bordered by Ethiopia and Kenya. The Somali displacement started as a result of violent clashes between clans, and a severe drought further exacerbated the situation. An estimated 250,000 Somalis lost their lives between 1992 and 1993 and forced others to flee the country to escape the chaos. It is estimated that in 1992 up to 800,000 Somalis fled to neighboring Kenya and Ethiopia in search of safety and nearly 2 million people were displaced internally. Even today more than 1.5 million Somalis out of a total population of 10 million live outside the country in what is known as 'near' and 'far' diasporas (Hammond, 2013). The U.S. is one of the geographic locations of the 'far' Somali diaspora, and the peak of Somali refugees coming to the U.S. was in 2004. Even as recently as 2016, eleven percent of all refugees admitted to the U.S. were Somali even though that number has significantly decreased under the Trump administration to the Muslim travel ban (Igielnik & Krogstad, 2017).

(a) The Somali Refugee Profile

Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) in partnership with the Center for American Progress (CAP) published a comprehensive report on the status of Somali refugees in the U.S. in their report *Refugee Integration in the United States.* Since data on refugees alone is hard to obtain, the primary source for this report is the 2014 5-year data sample of Somali refugee communities, defined as refugees or asylees and includes some spouses, children, and other family members who might not have entered the U.S. as refugees themselves. This data is only meant to be a representative sample of Somali refugees in the U.S. since ACS is known to undercount refugees and asylees. Based on the UNHCR data, as of April 2016, 121,985 Somali refugees have resettled in the U.S. since 1982, which is comparable to the FPI estimate of 120,703 based on ACS data. The UNHCR, however, only counts the refugees by the arrivals and does not keep track of what happens to them after resettlement, so the data does not account for any changes to the population due to death or refugees moving to another country. The UNHCR data also does not provide insight regarding their integration in the U.S. The report's findings based on ACS are summarized below and offer an inside look at Somali refugee communities in the U.S (Dyssegaard Kallick & Mathema, 2016).

(i) Somali refugees are among the top 10 refugee groups in the U.S.

Estimates based on ACS data indicated that by 2000, only 39,000 Somali refugees were living in the U.S. and by 2014, that number had jumped to 121,000. Most Somalis practice Sunni Islam, and the languages they speak include Somali, Swahili, Arabic, Italian, and English. Within the U.S., the largest community of Somali refugees can be found in Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, followed by Columbus, Ohio and Seattle, Washington.

(ii) Integration in the labor force increases over time.

Somali men start with strong participation in the labor force and generally see an increase in wages the longer they have been in the country. This increase in wage can be

contributed to the fact that as the number of years they have been in the U.S. increases, their English improves, they expand their networks, get familiarized with the labor market, and gain experience leading to better economic opportunities. The percentage of Somali men in the labor force at 84 percent is even slightly higher than the 81 percent of U.S.-born men as seen in figure 4. Somali women, on the other hand, have a lower average rate of labor participation, at 64 percent compared to the 73 percent of U.S.-born women, but it increases over time. The labor force participation rate for Somali women who have been in the U.S. less than ten years is 56 percent, but that number rises to 71 percent for those who have been in the country for over ten years and is comparable to the U.S.-born women's rate of 73 percent.

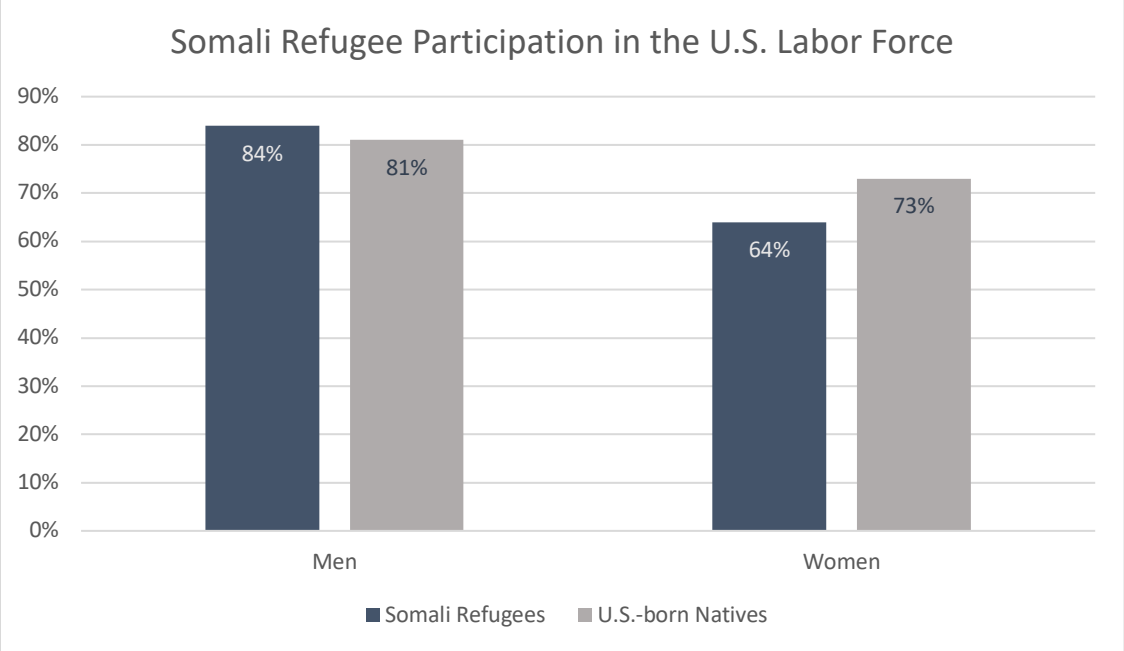


Figure 4: Somali Refugee Participation in the Labor Force (FPI analysis of 2014 American Community Survey)

(iii) They have lower educational attainment rates compared to other groups.

After being in the U.S. for more than ten years, 86 percent of Somali refugees reported speaking English at least "well" and 61 percent either speak "very well or "only English" at home. Somalis also tend to have lower education attainment rates with only 15 percent of Somali adult men and 7 percent of the Somali adult women arriving in the U.S. with bachelor's degrees. This percentage for Somali men does not change

significantly even when the refugee arrived in the U.S. as a child, increasing to about 17 percent as opposed to 19 percent of Somali women.

(iv) There is a significant wage gap.

The Somali refugee wage gap becomes glaringly apparent when median wages of Somali men and women are compared to U.S.-born white men's median wage. Somali men make only 60 percent, and women make 51 percent of what U.S. born native would make, for high school graduates. The gap decreases for college graduates at men making 76 percent and women making 68 percent of the U.S. born whit men's median wage.

(v) They tend to have lower homeownership rates.

Somali refugees have one of the lowest rates of home ownership among all immigrants. Only 6 percent of the Somali refugees who have been in the U.S. for ten years or less own a home as compared to 34 percent of all immigrants. For those who have been in the country for ten years or longer, the ownership rate jumps to 21 percent among Somali refugees but is till significantly lower than 62 percent among all immigrants.

(vi) They are on the path towards citizenship.

An important aspect of integration is the successful completion of citizenship by refugees. Somali refugees have a high rate of obtaining citizenship over time, with 77 percent becoming citizens between 11 and 20 years of being in the country.

(b) Somali Refugees and Immigrants in Boston

Somali refugees are one of the groups of refugees who have found a home in Boston and constitute one of the largest new population of African immigrants. While an actual number is hard to get, it is estimated that about 8,000 Somalis live in the Greater Boston area with an additional 2,000 across the state of Massachusetts (Camacho, Dirshe, Hiray, & Farah, 2014). They account for the third largest ethnicity of refugees relocated to Massachusetts

after Burmese and Iraqis (Vance, 2017). The largest concentration of Somali refugees can be found in Roxbury and Charlestown with smaller communities in Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, and East Boston. This community faces many challenges that hinder their ability to integrate into their new homes such as language barriers, low education attainment, lack of employment opportunities, cultural and religious differences, and mental health concerns among others (Camacho et al., n.d.). The following section will be focusing on the Somali refugee experience in Roxbury, Boston, MA.

Section 4 Evaluating Integration in Roxbury

Despite being a smaller population of immigrants in the city overall, Somalis have formed a strong sense of community in Boston. The following map shows the social networks in Roxbury that empower this community. As the map below shows, the Somali community has made a niche for themselves in a corner of Lower Roxbury around the Roxbury Crossing stop on the Orange line. This total area is walkable within anywhere from 15 to 20 minutes. Outside the home, this area has become the social nexus of Somali co-ethnic interaction in Boston. The main anchor institutions that have rooted the community here are labeled on the map while other businesses are simply called out.

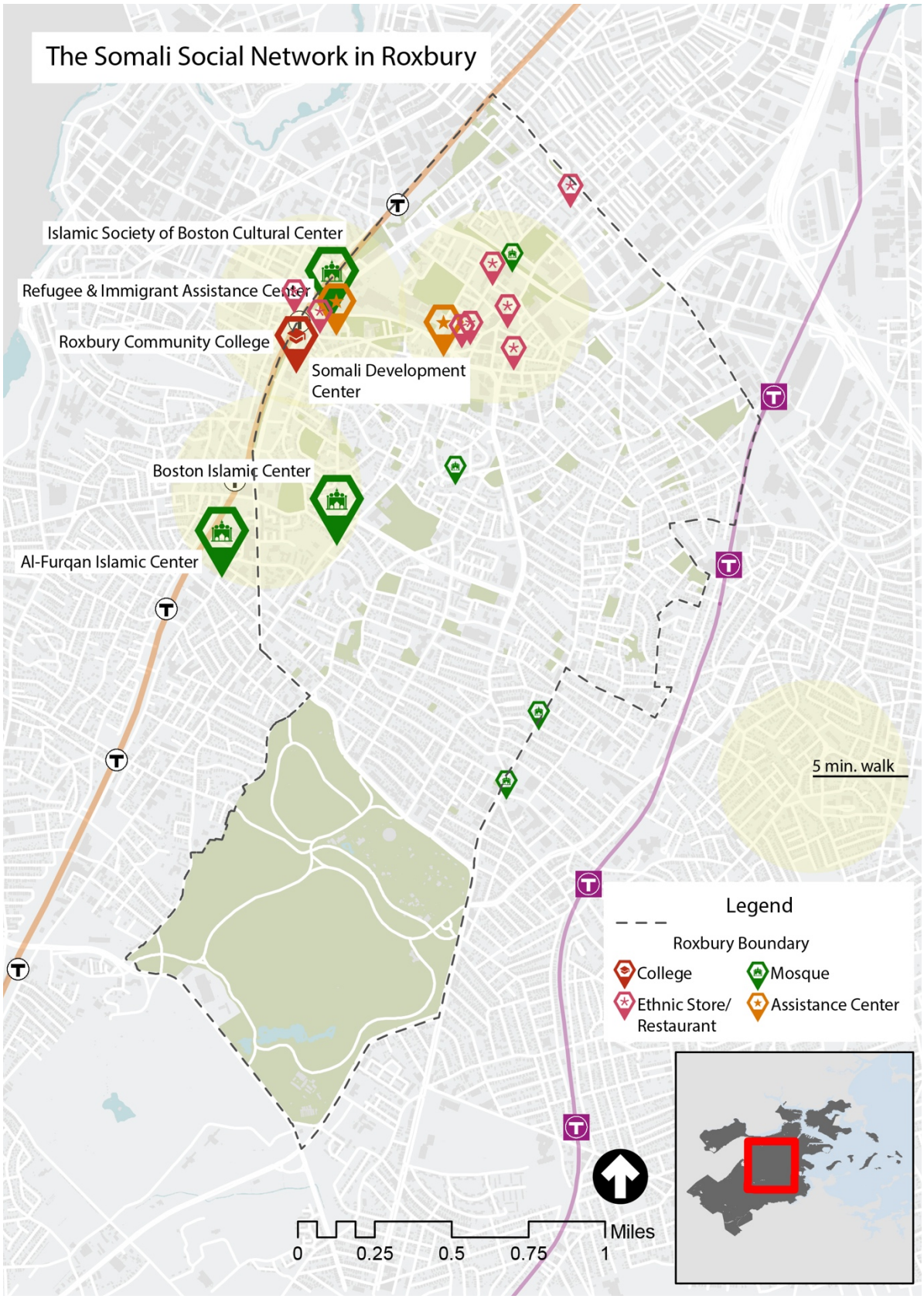


Figure 5: Somali Social Network in Roxbury

(a) Placement, Housing, and Community

Once placement decisions about refugees are made on a national level, local resettlement agencies have to get ready for the new arrivals and arrange everything for them including airport pick up, finding housing, enrolling kids in school, finding jobs, signing up for English language lessons, etc. The Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center (RIAC) located on Roxbury Street is one of the local resettlement agencies where Volags assign placement cases. Interviews with the staff at this center revealed that in the past it was easier to find housing for new refugees in or around Roxbury, but that has proven to be more difficult in recent years because of affordability. A lot of the new refugees coming to Boston are often housed in neighborhoods further away from Roxbury or neighboring cities like Lynn and Lowell. This further placement can become an issue for Somali refugees if all the services and the social nexus of the community is based in Roxbury.

Due to their dependence on public transportation, especially the newly arrived refugees, the Orange line stop in Roxbury is a huge asset to the community. As seen in figure 5, the transportation network in Roxbury is varied with the Orange line stops on one side and the commuter rail along the other side of the neighborhood boundary. With the Dudley Bus Station located in Roxbury, the neighborhood is also well serviced by a number of bus lines including the Silver Line: 15, 19, 22, 23, 25, 28, 42, 44, 45, 66, 1, 8, 10, 14, 15, 19, 23, 28, 41, 42, 44, 45, 47, 66, 170, and 171. Despite this, some refugees have two-hour commutes just to come to the center for resources they depend on. Another mode of transportation is carpool, according to the staff and a group interview with three Somali refugee women. Since the community is so close-knit, it is easy for them to set up carpools among each other to get a ride. Some have relatives who drop them off, but a lot of them depend on the bus and the train. While both bus and train are well serviced in the neighborhood, they might not be in the points of origin of their journey if the refugees live further in the suburbs.

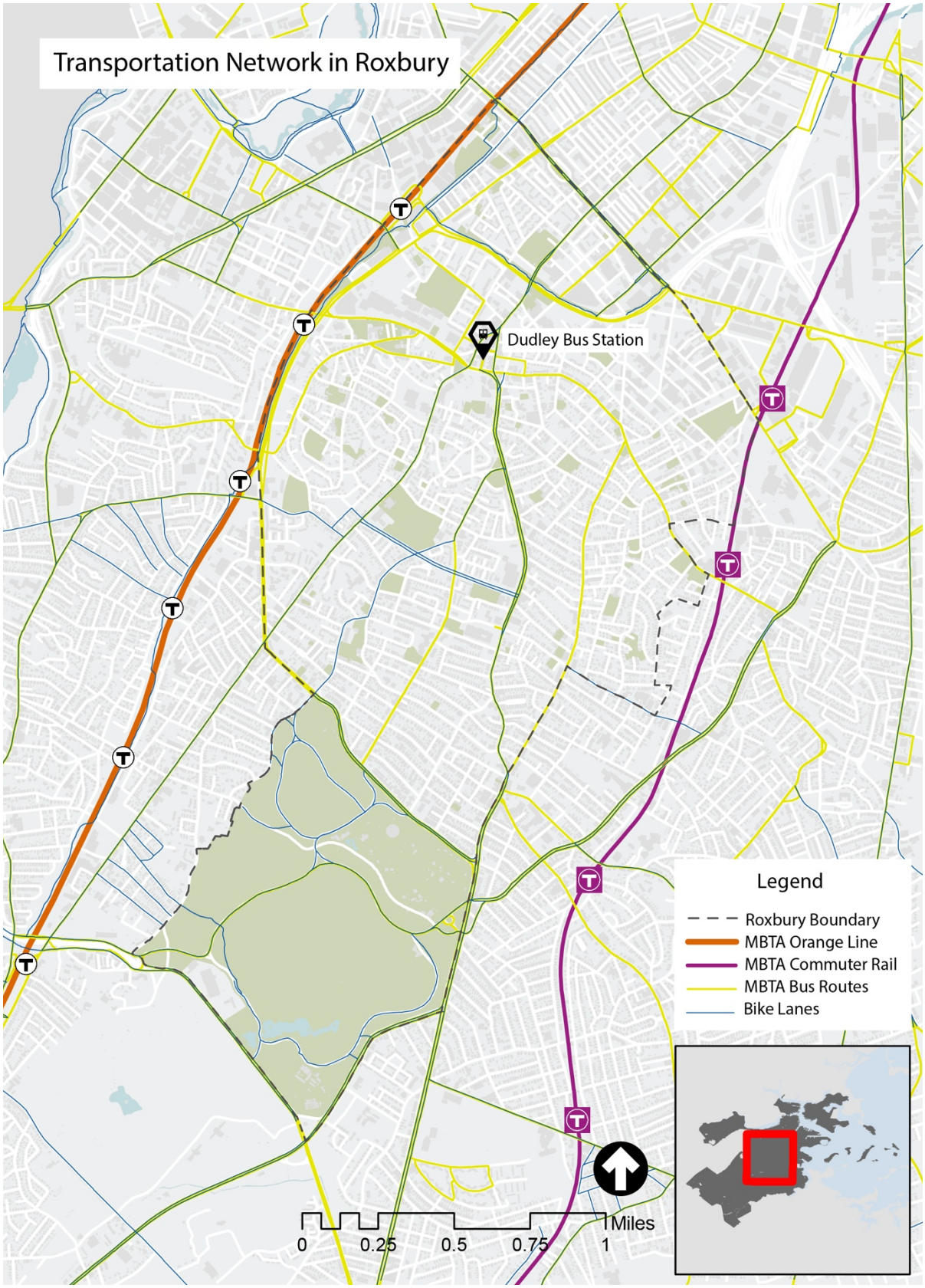
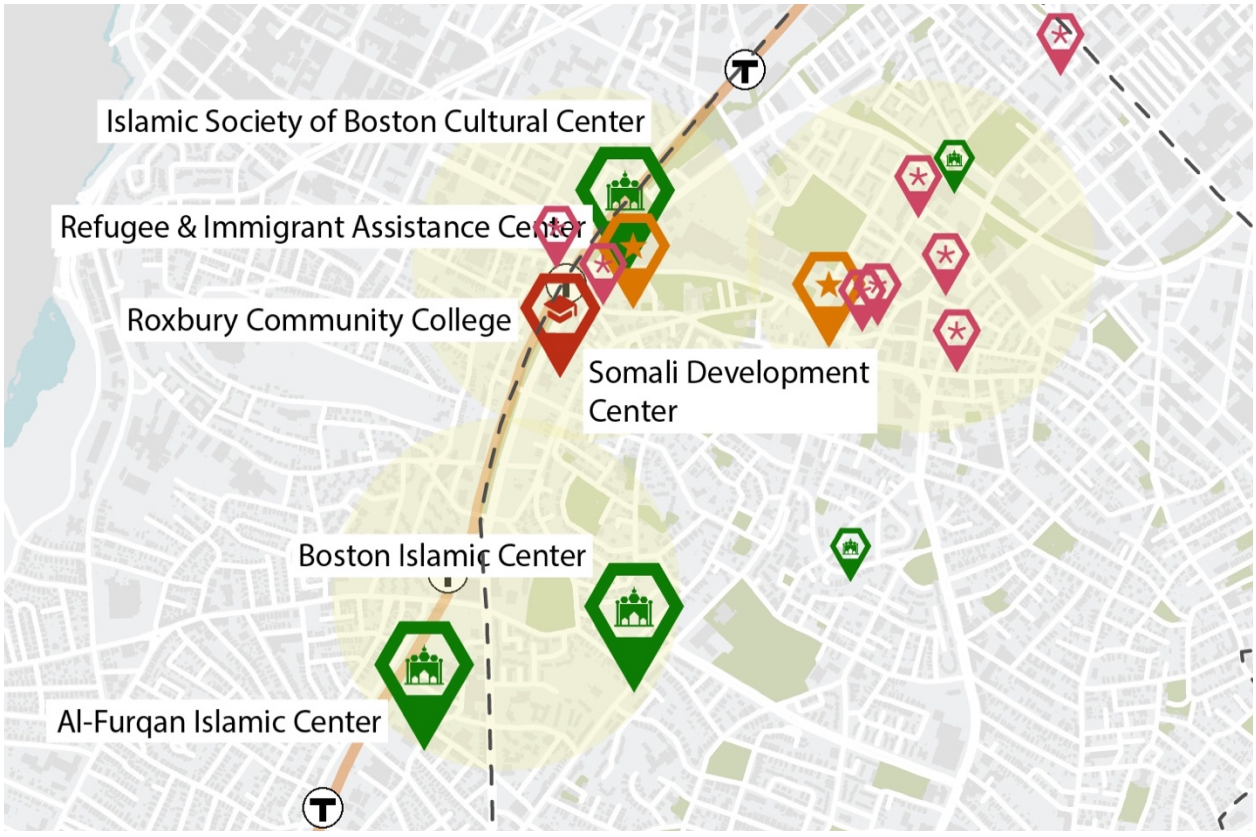


Figure 6: Transportation Networks in Roxbury

The three women interviewed lived in three different parts of Boston – Roxbury, Brighton, and East Boston, and two of them took the train or bus to get to Roxbury while the third was often dropped off by her relatives. When asked how often and why they came to Roxbury, all three said multiple times a week because this is where everything happens. They come for the mosque, the community college, to take ESL classes, attend Quranic classes at Al-Furqan Islamic Center, and take part in the senior jobs program. They believed one of the most important landmarks that brought them all together in Roxbury is the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center because that is where they met many of their friends while one of the women also commented that they did not need the mosque to maintain their community. She insisted that their social circles are what keeps the community together – their primary location of meeting up usually being in each other's homes hosting dinner parties. Through these conversations, a dichotomy of internal and external spaces emerged. The home was perceived as the gathering space for the Somali community instead of other more public spaces.



When asked about their perceived safety of living in and around Boston, they were dismissive of the question and said they felt completely safe and comfortable as long as they went places together. They usually socialized and even went out as groups instead of individuals. This group behavior might be due to a number of reasons beyond just perceived safety: lack of confidence in ability to converse in English if alone, the community and tribal nature of the Somali way of life resulting in more group behavior, or even the co-dependence of transportation.

Finally, when asked if there were any types of spaces that these women wished existed in Roxbury, they all said there was nothing they could think of and repeated that they had each other's homes and that was enough for them. This insistence of not needing spaces beyond their homes was not reflected in their behavior, however, because they regularly utilized the mosque and RIAC as a meeting place and seemed more like an insistence on their resilience than the use of the built environment. Another observation could be made that the refusal to change the neighborhood to fit their needs may be indicative of their lack of perceived agency. They were happy with utilizing their homes for social gatherings instead even though due to housing affordability they did not live close to each other. Their idea of community was not governed by physical proximity but rather social ties that bound them together. The only suggestions to how the neighborhood could be different or what it was missing came from the staff members at the center. Multiple staff members repeatedly mentioned the need for more affordable housing close to Roxbury while another also suggested a community center where refugees, especially senior women who don't work as much, could spend their days. A few women used RIAC in a similar way to a community center, spending their time at the center reading Quran or socializing in between their daily schedules.

(b) Somali Identity and the Mosque

One of the most pronounced aspects of the Somali refugee identity is based on religion. To Somalis, being Somali is synonymous to being Muslim. The Muslim identity provides them

with a sense of safety and belonging to an international Muslim community (Omar, 2016). Roxbury serves as the perfect location in Boston for a relationship with this identity. There are two main mosques in the neighborhood, Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC) on Malcolm X Boulevard and the Boston Islamic Center (BIC) on Washington Street. ISBCC, the larger of the two, is the major mosque for Muslim events and community in Boston. It is also easily accessible via public transportation, located across the street from the Roxbury Crossing stop on the Orange line and bus stops for the following lines: 15, 19, 22, 23, 28, 29, 44, 45, and 66. The Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center in Roxbury is also located behind the mosque. One of the staff members interviewed at the center revealed that "because the mosque is there, [refugees] feel safe coming [to Roxbury] and the center." This association of neighborhood safety with the presence of a place of worship that contributes to their sense of identity is interesting because it implies that a physical building structure can create trust in a community that otherwise would not exist.

The second important element of the Somali identity is based on their heritage and the inherited culture of community and clan. Somalis in Somalia knew each other by the clan they belonged to and this belonging gave them a way to understand each other (Omar, 2016). While the clan identity is still prevalent in older generations, the younger generations are more likely to associate themselves with Somalia as a nation rather than individual clans (Omar, 2016). This solidarity with Somalis as one is still not divorced from their identity as a Muslim. The second mosque in the neighborhood combines these two identities because it predominantly serves the Somali community in both the language spoken and the focus on Somali issues. The importance of these two buildings in the lives of Somali refugees living in Boston cannot be underestimated. They are equivalent to landmarks in the built environment that lend to ideas of forming identity and wayfinding for a sense of belonging.

However, since identity is not one-dimensional it is also important for Somali refugees to not be isolated in cultural enclaves and this is not the case in Roxbury due to its location and extensive transportation network. The neighborhood is well connected to the rest of the city and contains other anchor institutions, like the Roxbury Community College, ensuring that

the Somalis in the neighborhood have access to networks beyond their ethnic and religious communities.

(c) Economic Outcomes

> *"People have so much potential, but it's all lost." – an ESL teacher in Roxbury*

Employment data for only Somali refugees in Boston is not available, so this thesis looked at the data for immigrants, and African immigrants, living in Boston to lend to the discussion of Somali refugees who are a subpopulation of that group. Research data compiled by the Boston Planning and Development Agency Research Division revealed that while African immigrants in Boston had a slightly higher labor force participation and employment rates than native-born citizens, their median earnings, at $37,523, tended to be lower and they were less likely to hold managerial or professional positions (2018). There is also a significant wage gap between immigrants and native-born employees of all educational levels. The annual median income for foreign-born Boston resident workers is $40,961 compared to $57,346 for native-born workers. This wage gap becomes even more significant when comparing workers with bachelor degrees – with immigrants earning $45,000 vs. $60,000 for native-born residents ("Immigrants in the Massachusetts Economy," 2018).

Immigrants and refugees also face systemic barriers in the labor market such as a lack of knowledge about the labor market, restricted access to employment, smaller networks, racial and religious discrimination, and a lack of transference of qualifications and certificates from international schools (Boston Planning & Development Agency Research Division, 2018). The Roxbury Community College and refugee assistance centers like Refugee and Immigration Assistance Center on Roxbury Street and Somali Development Center on Malcolm X Boulevard are anchor institutions for education and language classes in Roxbury that try to fill these gaps. The centers are dedicated to the development of necessary job skills for refugees to help them find and keep employment but their capacity alone is limited. Roxbury also has a number of public schools, three community centers and

two public libraries that can serve as places of learning. While the older generation of Somalis mostly socialize among themselves, the younger generation benefits from having other amenities in the neighborhood that would allow them to integrate better with others around their age.

Image 2: Roxbury Community College, as seen in spring of 2016. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

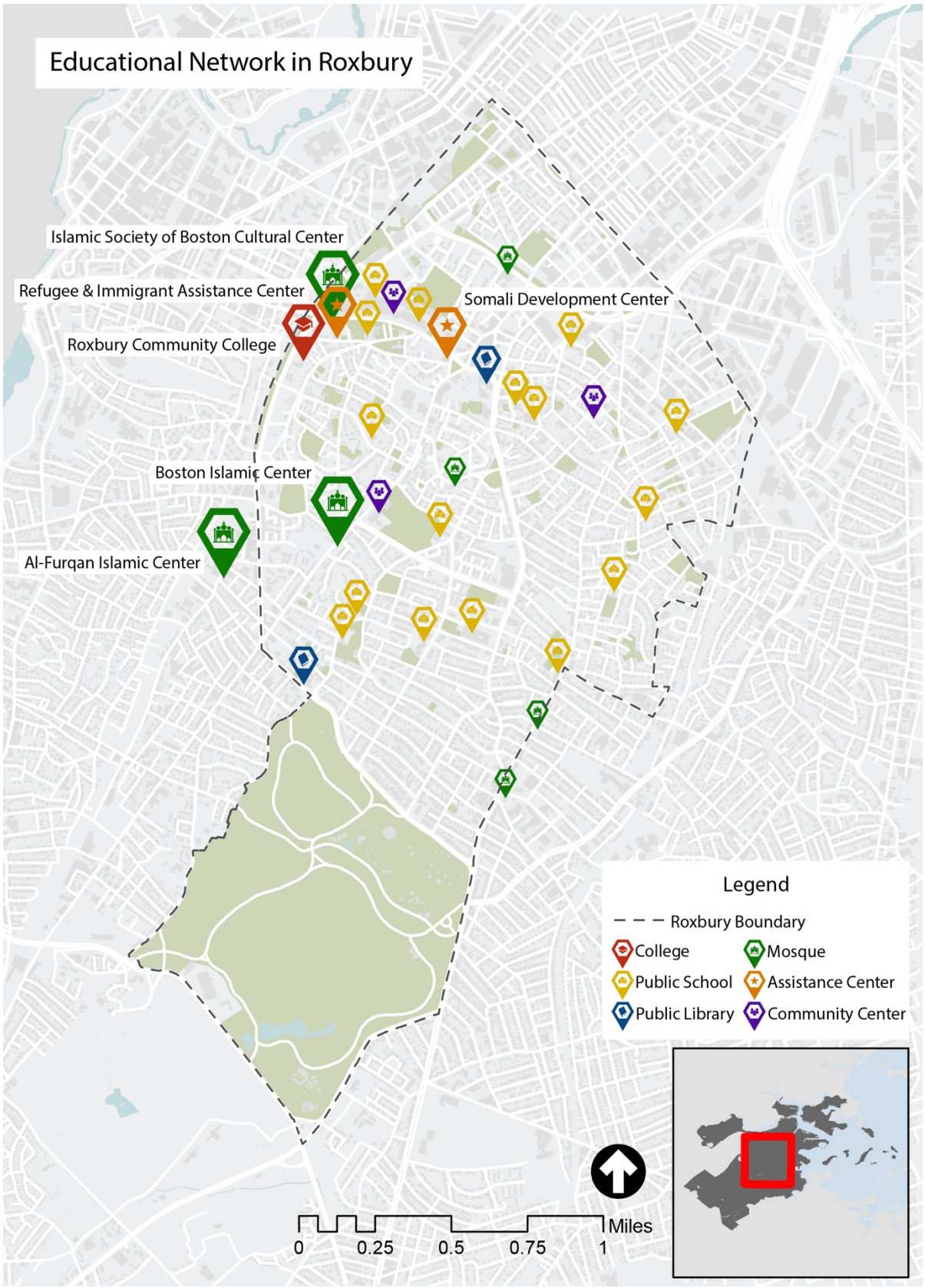


Figure 7: Education Network in Roxbury

Immigrants are more likely than native-born citizens to start businesses; one in five entrepreneurs in Massachusetts is foreign-born even though they only make up 16.5% of the population. Immigrants also play a major role in "Main Street" economies across Massachusetts with Boston alone home to about 8,800 immigrant-owned businesses that generate almost $3.7 billion in annual sales (“Immigrants in the Massachusetts Economy,” 2018). Somalis own about 24 small businesses in Boston located in mostly minority communities that contribute to the local economy (Camacho et al., 2014). These businesses also become avenues for some refugees to find employment, but the ethnic enclave of Somalis in Boston is not big enough to provide a wide variety of jobs and are mostly limited to blue-collar jobs. Some of these businesses are located in Roxbury including restaurants, a clothing store, and a grocery store (Camacho et al., 2014).

Image 3: Saido Farah (L) and Deeqo Jibril (R) inside Farah's business, Roots Halal Meat Market. Credit: Talia Whyte/IPS

There is also a mini-mall made up of eight small businesses operated by women located in a repurposed warehouse building on Harrison Avenue. This mall was the result of an initiative by a Somali refugee woman in Roxbury, Deeqo Jibril who is a co-landlord of the building and subleases the spaces inside to other African and West Indies women entrepreneurs (Whyte, n.d.). Another small business in Roxbury, Mabruuk Fashion, is also owned by a Somali woman. Dudley Square has a history of culturally diverse entrepreneurship through the years, and now Somali women are leaving their mark in that history.

On the other end of the spectrum, Boston immigrants are part of the economy as consumers as well. Their spending power from after-tax earnings totals up to $3.6 billion annually. In addition to their spending power within the city, refugees also boost international economies by sending home remittance payments. This is another reason why economic security is so important to Somali refugees – because of the dependence of friends and family living outside the U.S., in or closer to Somalia in what is known as the "near" diaspora, on the remittance they receive from Somalis abroad in the “far” diaspora. Global remittances to the refugees in the near diaspora are estimated at $1.3 billion to 2 billion a year and are received by approximately forty percent of the population living in Somalia (Hammond, 2013). These households depend on these payments for necessary expenses like food, education, and healthcare, and one-third of the recipients even reported that they would face food insecurity without it. This responsibility of taking care of family members split across the world further highlights the transnational identity aspect of the Somali refugee. These international networks of support are imperative for not only those who live in the U.S. to feel connected with their family and country of origin but also the population that depends on this financial support in one way or another.

(d) Mental Health and Wellbeing

Most Somali refugees have fled horrible conditions in their home country and have been subjected to or witnessed things like torture, rape, and violence leading to an increased risk of mental health issues that could prevent them from successfully integrating into the host

society. Providing access to mental health resources is therefore of utmost importance for this vulnerable population, but there are barriers to this access that must be overcome first. Somali culture emphasizes group-behavior, so when looking for help, they tend to search within the community, to elders or faith-based leaders, for advice and support. They also put their trust in religion and faith for healing over seeking medical help. Another obstacle to the provision of adequate mental health is the lack of information. Somalis are not aware of signs of mental health issues like depression and consider the symptoms to be part of life. This lack of knowledge about mental health and the resources available to them is a significant barrier to accessing mental health care (Piwowarczyk, Bishop, Yusuf, Mudymba, & Raj, 2014). Understanding this aspect of the cultural stigma and lack of awareness around mental health is helpful for mental health care providers and refugee organizations because it gives them an idea of which relationships to leverage when thinking about providing adequate mental health care. It is not enough to have clinics and mental health facilities in a neighborhood for them to be fully accessible to the Somali population. It is essential for these facilities and refugee resettlement organizations to partner with local mosques and community centers to reach their target audience. Somali refugees who are not familiar with western medicine and the health care systems will be too intimidated to go against the cultural norm to talk with professionals whom they consider 'outsiders' about their problems. However, if these organizations have the support of the local religious and cultural community, they will be perceived more positively instead.

Besides a culturally sensitive approach to mental health care, the co-location of health care facilities with other refugee-friendly uses is also of importance. One interview with a counseling service provider in Roxbury revealed that clients, especially new refugee arrivals, are very busy trying to get accustomed to their new life. They have a checklist of things to do, anywhere from finding a job to enrolling their kids in schools, that they are unable to make time to go out of their way for self-care. Due to this busy lifestyle, it is helpful to have institutions close by in Roxbury such as the ISBCC and Roxbury Community College, both are frequented by refugees often enough that stopping by the refugee center or health clinic is not out of the way. The interviewee also mentioned that most of the clients that came to the

center came through word-of-mouth and the mosque played a big role in spreading the word. As mentioned earlier, Somali refugees tend to tell others within the community of their problems, and because of the center's proximity to the mosque, their friends are easily able to recommend the refugee center to those struggling with an issue.

(e) Receiving Society

Due to the history of Somali refugees in Boston, new refugees are accepted and welcomed by their ethnic communities making the transition to life in the U.S. smoother, but that was not always the case. The first arrivals of Somali refugees probably faced challenges in integration but later paved the path for the active community that exists today. Somali refugees in the U.S. are subjected to discrimination on two fronts – the color of their skin and their religion. It is especially hard for refugees to grapple with such discrimination because they inherit the American history of racism without being from America. Interviews with the RIAC staff revealed that outward incidents of racism are less prevalent in Boston when compared to the neighboring suburbs where a woman dressed in full traditional Islamic clothing would be a culture shock and bound to raise eyebrows.

On the local government side, there has been effort by City Hall to cater to the needs of its immigrant population, but it is limited in scope. Mayor Walsh rebranded the previous Office of New Bostonians into the Office for Immigrant Advancement in 2016 intending to provide information and resources for the city's immigrant residents. One of the projects launched by the Office of Immigrant Advancement is the Immigrant Information Corners with the goal of making resources and services easily accessible to immigrants by locating information corners in the Boston Public Library's Central Library in Copley Square and 24 neighborhood branches throughout the city. Programs like this that use the city's existing infrastructure to improve the lives of immigrants and make them a more visible part of city life are a step in the right direction for building trust and promoting immigrant integration. Boston does not, however, have a dedicated office for refugee integration and should be something that the city considers. A refugee integration coordinator can partner with local refugee resettlement agencies to reach out and have a more comprehensive and powerful impact on refugee life

in the city across all sectors like education and health care. In addition to the new office, Mayor Walsh has also attempted to reach out to the Muslim community in Boston which is relevant for Somali refugees because of the strong association they have with their faith. The city hosted its fourth annual City Hall Interfaith Iftar on May 13, 2019, in Government Square with an open invitation for all. Community engagement strategies such as this event not only highlight the importance of the Muslim community in the city but also brings different communities together to disperse misconceptions about each other. It also shows solidarity with a marginalized community that is facing increased discrimination in the current political environment (Kishi, 2017).

(f) Refugees' Agency in Roxbury

Despite the Somali community being a smaller population in Roxbury when compared to other groups like African Americans and Latinos, their presence is visibly evident in the neighborhood. Beyond the mosque and cultural ties connecting them to Roxbury, they have established a robust community of residents and non-residents alike catered by Somali businesses and restaurants that leave a mark on the built environment. The Somali community has come a long way in the last two decades or so with there being no Somali businesses in Boston even as recently as 1996 ("Somali nonprofit struggles to meet immigrant community needs in Boston," 2014). Below is a profile of some of the businesses that have significantly contributed to the everyday life of the Somali community in Roxbury.

Image 4: Source - Google Street View

International Halal Market on Tremont Street among other stores that carry halal meat and products are essential for not just the Somali residents of Roxbury but Muslims all over Boston. Somalis who follow the dietary requirements of Islam consume halal meat meaning it is butchered according to specific rules based on Islamic tradition. Living in a non-Muslim country can make accessing halal meat difficult for Muslims if there isn't a Muslim community close by that creates demand for halal meat stores. Having multiple halal meat stores located within the neighborhood is indicative of the presence of the Muslim community in Roxbury. This presence is important for Somali refugees because it is one of the aspects of their identity they most closely associate with (Omar, 2016). The adjustment for Muslim refugees coming to the U.S. from predominantly Muslim countries can pose to be especially challenging because of the limited access to things based on religion like food – including both grocery stores and halal restaurants, place of worship, and other specialty items. This is why Roxbury is such an essential part of the Muslim Somalis' lives in Boston and surrounding areas.

Image 5: Photo by Korsha Wilson for Eater Boston

Ashur Restaurant on Roxbury Street is a halal neighborhood Somali restaurant with a laid-back vibe that is welcoming and homey. Local immigrants from all over Boston, not just Roxbury, flock to the restaurant for not only the food but also the atmosphere. In an interview with Easter Boston, the owner's brother Ali Ashur, who also works at the restaurant, said that only about twenty percent of the customers are Somali while others represent a multitude of countries of origin such as Kuwait, China, India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (Wilson, 2016). The restaurant's unassuming atmosphere and location close to the mosque and the community college makes it an ideal place to meet with friends or stop by on a busy day. Spaces like this restaurant that are welcoming to people who have a hard time finding a place for themselves in a city are so important. It's a place where immigrants in Boston from all over the world can come together and find solace in their diversity rather than shy away from it. As Ali is quoted saying in the article, "even if you just come here to drink the tea, you can come in and speak your own language and no one will bother you" (Wilson, 2016). Restaurants like this serve as a community building asset, enabling people to meet each other and expand their network, which is especially important for refugees. Other such restaurants that play a similar role in Roxbury include Dayib Café on Shawmut Avenue, Deria Express Café on Harrison Avenue, and Butterfly Falafel on Tremont Street.

Image 6: Source - Shamso Hair Studio website

Shamso Hair Salon and Spa on Washington Street is a women's only hair salon designed specifically with Muslim women who wear hijab, a religious head covering, in mind. It is owned by a Somali woman, Shamso Ahmed, who came to the U.S. as a refugee when she was 10 years old. Her motivation for opening this salon was a result of a lack of space for Muslim women to relax and get pampered without having to worry about someone not understanding their needs ("Massachusetts Gets Its First Hair Salon Designed For Muslim Women," 2019). Privacy is a big issue for Muslim women trying to do something as simple as getting a haircut. Often they have to rely on friends or family or ask salons if they have a back room that could be used for services. Having a space in the neighborhood that they know is designed with their needs in mind will heighten their sense of belonging to that community because their presence there will be validated by such spaces. This validation and right to occupy space can be incredibly empowering for minority groups who feel the pressure to amend their cultural or religious ways to have the same agency in the city as other citizens.

Image 7: Source - Google Street View

Mabruuk Fashions on Roxbury Street offers a variety of traditional Somali and Muslim clothing and other items. The store was awarded a Boston Magazine Best of Boston 2015 Best Neighborhood Shopping, Roxbury award. By simply walking around Roxbury, the presence of the Somali community in the neighborhood becomes evident. This visual evidence is present on the storefronts, the numerous halal restaurants, the two mosques in the area, and most notably in the clothing attire of both men and women walking around. This visual representation of heritage via clothing is especially heightened on Jumu'ah, the Friday midday prayer when Muslims from all over Boston gather in the mosques in their best clothes to offer prayer. Mabruuk Fashion is the only Muslim clothing store in Roxbury that serves the needs of this community. Even if it's not the only store Somali shop at, especially now with the proliferation of e-commerce, it is still a built monument adding to the Somali sense of belonging in Roxbury.

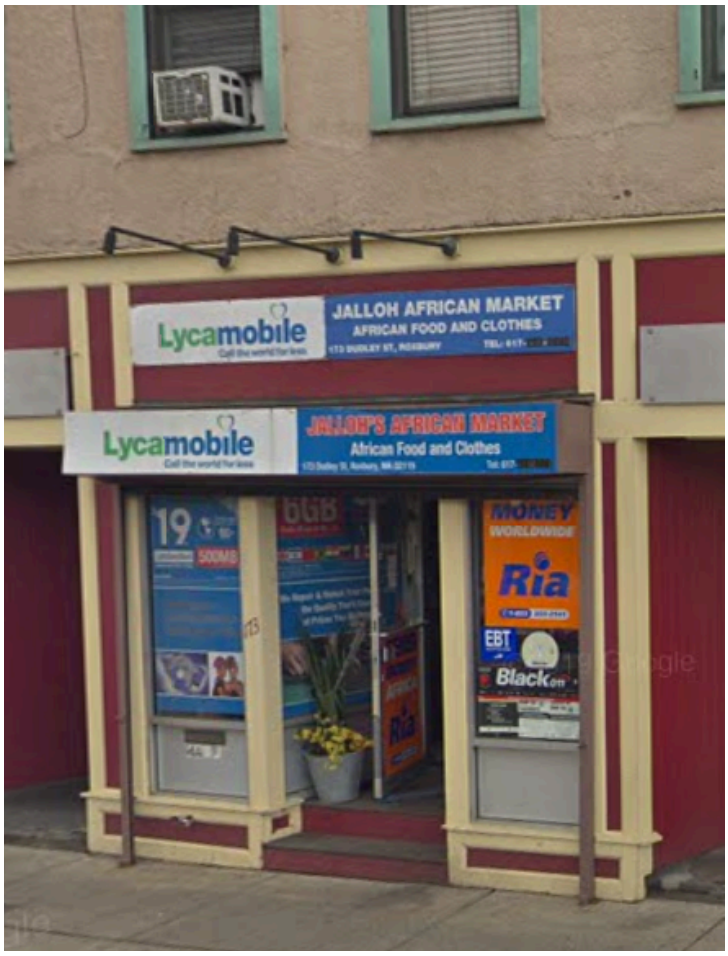


Image 8: Source - Google Street View

Jalloh's African Market on Dudley Street and **Kabba African Market** on Roxbury Street and any other store selling African specialty items are also essential for Somali refugees. Roxbury is also home to a large population of African American and other African immigrant communities, and while these communities have separate traditions, customs, and needs, their co-location can make access to specific amenities and specialty items easier by creating a demand for businesses that carry a variety of things from Africa. There are multiple stores in Roxbury and surrounding neighborhoods that cater to this demand and stock items from all over Africa. This type of co-location is possible in cities as opposed to suburban or rural parts of the country, providing another reason why urban areas make a good placement location for refugees.

Chapter 5.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Roxbury

Section 1 Placement is Place-based

Just as displacement is inherently place-based, so is resettlement. Having such a multi-faceted and complex identity means that when planning for refugees it is important to realize that they should not be siloed into enclaves nor be broken apart from each other to be forced into western ideals of integration. The integration will happen by their choice and on their terms, so the most important thing is access rather than forced groupings.

(a) Co-ethnic Neighborhoods are Crucial

Refugees will depend on the resources available in both the host society as well as the cultural, ethnic, or religious community of their country of origin. The diversity and access to immigrant neighborhoods that is possible in cities is another reason why urban regions are ideal placements for refugees. It is not enough to be diverse though, specifically it is co-ethnic density in a neighborhood that enhances community belonging. A study on neighborhood belonging by Nissa Finney and Stephen Jivraj found that the overall proportion of ethnic minorities in an area does not have a statistically significant relationship with very strong neighborhood belonging but as the ratio of co-ethnic people living in a neighborhood increases so does the likelihood of them feeling a very strong sense of belonging (Finney & Jivraj, 2013).

> *Papadopoulos, (2002) and Eisenbruch, (1991) emphasized that what is more common among refugees than the experience of trauma from pre-migration events is the loss of a sense of home. This includes not only the loss of a physical place or space but also of the routines, cultural or religious practices, places of worship, rituals and social networks that shaped their daily lives before migration. Eisenbruch labeled this pervasive loss as "cultural bereavement" (St. Arnault & Merali, 2019).*

The refugee's affinity to co-ethnic neighborhoods reinforces the social connections Ager and Strang introduced in their integration framework study. While such networks are essential, there is a difference between creating immigrant enclaves versus ghettos. Enclaves can help refugees find a community they belong to and simultaneously keep ties with the larger society since both are imperative for their integration. Residing in ethnic enclaves can be beneficial in the short-run, but it can negatively impact immigrants in the long-run. Initially, you have access to networks that can help with employment opportunities, group-specific activities, commercial enterprises and community institutions which are all necessary for integration. However, in the long run, it might be difficult to expand beyond these networks for greater economic and cultural integration in the host society. This isolation can also be problematic when considering that most of these enclaves are usually located in older, more impoverished neighborhoods where public goods, such as the school system and infrastructure, don't see the same level of investment as other parts of the city. Since the people in their network are also in a similar situation, it is harder for them to escape that reality (Cutler, Glaeser, & Vigdor, 2007). Urban planners must be aware that these conditions along with immigrant segregation can turn enclaves into ghettos and become part of the problem. It is not helpful if people from similar cultural backgrounds are in the same geographic area if they are all stuck in cycles of poverty, poor living conditions, and low opportunities. Cities should celebrate their diversity and invest in these neighborhoods to ensure equity among the most vulnerable population while making efforts to connect them with the rest of the city.

Recommendations for Roxbury:

1. *Allow for flexibility and adaptability in permitted land-uses in ethnic neighborhoods.*

   It can be a challenge for ethnic neighborhoods to thrive when zoning requirements get too prescriptive. Oftentimes one building is serving multiple purposes and it does not fit into codified definitions of uses triggering the need for variances and complicating the process. An example of this would be a place of worship like ISBCC in Roxbury. While it is a place of worship, the building also has a school, a café, a small shop selling specialty items, and a community

center. Such combination of uses would be considered separately as retail or education facility and might not be permitted in the same zone as a place of worship preventing the mosque from being built.

2. *Encourage more refugees to open small businesses through culturally sensitive methods.*

   Refugees are unaware of how to navigate American bureaucracy so they need to be guided through the process of opening a new business in partnership with local economic development corporations. However, this process may be influenced by cultural or religious practices that must be researched beforehand. In the case of Somali Muslim refugees, securing funding is a barrier to starting a business made especially complicated because of Islam's forbiddance of the use of credit and interest. Since American society works solely on interest, alternatives for borrowing and lending money need to be considered for Somalis. Some Muslims have employed the practice of using credit cards but paying off the monthly bill in full instead of acquiring interest but that requires them to have enough money to cover their monthly expenses (Camacho et al., 2014). There are some Muslim organizations that finance interest-free loans, and a lot of Muslims choose to borrow from friends and family, making the existence of strong community networks even more important. This is not to say that all Muslims forgo the use of interest; it is so imbedded in all aspects of American life and financial stability making it very difficult to avoid.

3. *Ensure adequate public transit access to and from these co-ethnic neighborhoods to the rest of the city.*

   Roxbury is different in that unlike other ethnic enclaves around Boston, like Chinatown or East Boston, the Somali population that interacts with it on a nearly daily basis does not necessarily live there as well. Roxbury is located in the heart of Boston and is connected with not just the rest of the city through public transportation but also beyond through the commuter rail. This form of

integration ensures access for refugees even if they are unable to afford to live in the immediate vicinity of the neighborhood.

4. *Create affordable housing policy and incentivize developments targeting refugees with their needs in mind.*

   Since refugees are only given federal assistance for ninety days and are expected to be financially independent within that time, there are a lot of burdens put on them. These financial burdens prevent them from seeking further education, finding adequate housing, and making time for mental healthcare among other things. Cities should introduce a new co-housing model meant for refugees, allowing them to live at subsidized costs from six months to up to a year in a community-centered living environment. This would work especially well for Somali refugees because of the culture's emphasis on community. This housing model would help new arrivals to enter existing networks to help them navigate their new life. It would also prevent social isolation and resulting depression that can occur in a foreign country. Childcare is a pressing issue for refugees and is one of the reasons why women are unable to enter the labor force at the same rate as men. A co-housing model could also help with childcare needs through communal efforts. Research on existing housing typologies and a needs assessment is necessary to develop this co-housing model, but that is beyond the scope of this thesis and should be considered as a topic for further research. The mosque and other such uses have cemented the Muslim identity in the neighborhood, empowering Somali refugees and making them feel safe in the area.

(b) Co-Location of Services

One important factor that came to light as a result of this thesis was the importance of co-location of services refugees want with services they need. The two mosques, Al-Furqan Islamic Center and Roxbury Community Center played a major role in bringing Somali refugees to RIAC. Some heard about the services provided by the center because of the

mosque while other were able to stop by for counseling sessions because they were studying at the nearby Roxbury Community College. This co-location made it easy for refugees who are often too busy to make time for mental health care to get the help they need. Some refugees who are not able to come to Roxbury often because they live far away are still able to come once a week because of the weekly Friday prayer that brings them to the mosque. Co-locating these anchor institutions also helped to naturally co-locate ethnic restaurants and stores around the area, increasing the physical presence of the Somali community in the neighborhood.

Recommendation for Roxbury:

1. *Build partnerships through this co-location.*

   Roxbury can be seen as an example of integration through co-location of vital services but the neighborhood can further strengthen that integration through strategic partnerships. The resettlement agencies and healthcare providers should partner with the mosques and other religious organizations in the area to reach more people and work together to be strategic in their approaches. An exchange of information would help all organizations involved to better serve the refugee populations. Roxbury Community College is another important potential partner to cater more towards the education needs of the refugee population whether it is through programs to further your education or a way to transfer credits for education received overseas to prevent potential loss.

Section 2 Community Engagement

"Visibility can lead to familiarity. This can be conceived as moving from a reading of difference as "other" to a "commonplace diversity" in which multiculture of population is an unconsidered norm" (Wessendorf, 2013)

Residing in a city or neighborhood is not enough to feel like you belong to that community. This sense of belonging can stem from many different things, and one of those is safety and

acceptance. It is possible that minority groups do not feel the same level of recognition from the rest of society, hence making them more likely to have a strong sense of community among their ethnic group (Savage, 2010) (Devadason, 2010). To foster a community across a diverse group of people, creating an environment that promotes an understanding of each other is essential. Beyond just place-based approaches, investments need to be made in community engagement with the goal of different parts of the community coming together to demystify and refute misconceptions and foster cultural understanding. It is imperative to improve both the host society's and the refugee's sense of belonging to create a truly cohesive community.

(a) Celebrate Cultural Diversity

Resettled refugees bring with them beautiful cultures and practices from all over the world. This cultural diversity is an asset to any community that must be celebrated and shared. Cultural exchange programs and events can bring all this diversity to the surface to be enjoyed by all members of the community – old and new.

Recommendation for Roxbury:

1. *City-sponsored Cultural Exchange Programs*

   The Boston Mayor's office has made it a point to show solidarity with the city's Muslim population through the Mayor's presence at ISBCC on important days and by hosting events like the Mayor's annual Iftar at government center. However, there have not been a lot of focus on refugees specifically. It would be good for the Mayor to acknowledge the contributions of the city's refugee population to the city to foster trust and community belonging among refugees. The Mayor's efforts in regard to the Muslim population has also been limited in that the interaction happens within the Muslim community so there is no opportunity for promoting cross-cultural understanding. An example event for cultural exchange could be a cooking competition for refugees of different ethnicities in the neighborhood with the residents tasting and voting on the best dish. It would introduce people to tastes of different cultures and create an environment for people to meet and get to know each other.

(b) Facilitate Citizenship

Due to the trauma of displacement often at the hands of their own government, refugees have great distrust for government authorities. This distrust along with lack of awareness about American political participation procedures means that refugee concerns are often not brought to the attention of the local government. They are often unaware of their rights as residents and the different ways they can shape the environment around them through participation in planning procedures. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the planner to ensure refugee voices are heard.

Recommendation for Roxbury:

1. Go to the people instead of expecting them to come to you.

   As one of the groups living on the margins, refugees have great insights about their neighborhoods that will make them more equitable. Unfortunately, refugees are unaware of planning processes that exist in the U.S. and thus do not participate. Besides awareness about participatory planning, they are also living busy lifestyles that do not afford them the luxury of attending planning meetings and workshops. In order create more inclusive cites, planners must ensure their process is more inclusive. These workshops and meetings should be designed in ways that not only enable participation but also makes it easy. One example of reaching out to refugee community would be by creating an interactive participatory activity outside the mosque post Friday prayer.

Section 3 Planning Challenges

Despite the planner's best efforts, there are still some challenges that exist and make refugee integration difficult. There is very little accessible data on refugees making planning for them hard. Data is a powerful tool that can be used to reveal a number of things about a population but without data planners are left to make educated assumptions. Another set of challenges lies in the process that determines refugee placement. There is very little coordination among local resettlement agencies. They all are protective over their information because of the way

funding is tied to the number of refugees they resettle, creating competition instead of collaboration. It is also important to note that not all refugees are the same and therefore require careful study in each context. Last, but not least, one of the most crucial challenge for planners is that of conflict that can arise between the refugees and the host society. If the two populations do not get along and refugees feel like they are not welcome in their new home, no strategies for integration can be successful. A positive attitude of the host society towards refugees is of utmost importance.

Chapter 6.

Factors Influencing Integration

This section will look at and identify elements that impact the refugee's integration into the host society. These factors include identity and its related social challenges, placement and housing, economic opportunities, mental health and wellbeing, the receiving community, and the agency afforded to refugees in a community.

(a) The Identity Challenge

There are multiple components to a refugee's sense of self. For most refugees, their status as a refugee is not what defines them – their idea of belonging is centered around other contributors such as faith, culture, gender, sexual orientation, language, education, and work. Refugees from all over the world do not have one universal experience and instead face their unique challenges and come to terms with their identity on different levels. Sometimes this identity is found within a cultural enclave or a place of worship and sometimes it is found at local organizations in the community. Nonetheless, this concept of identity is a crucial aspect of refugee integration because it lends itself to the refugee's idea of community and belonging. Finding community means being with others they can rely on and creating a network of support that is essential for their integration.

(i) The Cultural/Ethnic/Religious Identity

One of the essential forms of identity to refugees is the national identity of their country of displacement. Since refugees are removed from their homes because of circumstances beyond their control, they have a strong connection with the religion and culture of their country of origin, which informs how they view themselves and their place in the host society. Ethnic communities therefore play an active role in the identity formation of refugees by providing them with emotional, relational, sociocultural and political anchoring (Kinefuchi, 2010). The contemporary migrants are fluid – they transverse across international, cultural, ethnic or religious borders. Many empirical

case studies[1] have documented this characteristic of simultaneous participation of migrants in both points of origin and destination in a variety of scopes and scales. Migrants can identify with and have allegiance to multiple communities across national borders (Ehrkamp & Leitner, 2006). Technological advances further facilitate the increasingly connected global community (Nelson & Hiemstra, 2008). This transnational identity does not make them any less of a citizen of their new communities – it is just a part of who they are. The expectation for refugees to discard their identity or water it down in the name of nationalism and narrow ideals of citizenship is unfair and discriminatory. Policies and political discourse that encourages the idea of singular citizenship and assimilation over integration are racist and have a strong host-society bias, putting the expectations of change on the migrant rather than welcoming them and allowing their struggles and experiences to create a better community together (Ehrkamp & Leitner, 2006).

(ii) The Marginal Identity

The self-assertion of identity is especially important for refugees who are members of marginalized subpopulations, such as LGBTIQ+, who do not get the same type of support elsewhere and rely on organizations beyond their ethnic or religious identity. It is often this aspect of their identity that is most relevant to not only their integration but also their protection (Rosenberg, 2016).

(iii) The Multi-Generational Identity

The needs of the youth are very different from those of the adults as are their experiences. Children of refugees who moved to the U.S. at a young age or those who were born here have different perceptions of their identity than their adult parents. They feel stuck between the culture of their parent's home country and the American culture they grew up in. Often these children cannot fully identify with either and have

[1] (Ehrkamp & Leitner, 2003); (Ehrkamp, 2005); (Ehrkamp & Leitner, 2006); (Nagel & Staeheli, 2004); (Staeheli & Nagel, 2006); (Preston, Kobayashi, & Man, 2006); (Leitner & Ehrkamp, 2006)

to come to terms with a sense of self that is neither here nor there. With a large number of refugees resettled in the U.S. being children, their challenges and place in the city cannot be ignored (Greenberg, n.d.)

(iv) The U.S. Race Stratification and Perceived Identity

The U.S. heavily depends on race stratification to understand groups of people. Populations are sorted into race categories based on arbitrary measures such as skin color and heritage. This race classification allows people to make certain assumptions about a group of people, but it is important to note that refugees seldom identify with such groups. The idea of a race-based identification is new to people from countries where such practice does not exist. They might recognize their identity along religious or national lines but being in the U.S. burdens them with the responsibility of being aware of and operate within their perceived identity by American society. This divergence of identity is especially relevant for urban planners who make broad assumptions about the needs of a neighborhood based on demographic data which might not be truly representative of the population.

(b) Placement and Housing

One of the most critical aspects of refugee integration is the physical location of their resettlement. As mentioned in Section 2.03 refugee placement decisions are made at the national level by Volags who place refugees in localities by considering housing, employment opportunities, local resettlement agency's capacity, and the presence of the particular refugee's ethnic community (Center for American Progress, 2016). One of the biggest challenges for local resettlement agencies responsible for all the logistics of placement is finding suitable housing for refugees. Often these agencies are informed of the new incoming refugees on short notice and have to race against the clock to get all the details squared away before they arrive (K. L. Brandt, 2010). This section highlights the location-based challenges of placement and housing.

"Housing is the first and most immediate need for newcomers and therefore provides the foundation upon which other aspects of settlement are built." (Francis & Hiebert, 2014)

Some things that are important to refugees when searching of housing are similar to those that would be important in any other person's housing decision; these include affordability, transportation access, safe neighborhoods, good schools and availability of services. However, due to the funding and time constraints on the local resettlement agencies, they are often unable to find adequate housing in time (K. L. Brandt, 2010). One of their main goals is to get the refugees to be self-sufficient as soon as possible because their government-sponsored aid ends in ninety days and they will have to be financially independent. Therefore, in the decisions for finding housing, affordability tends to outweigh any other determinant. Unfortunately, affordability also means that the location of the housing is less than ideal – it is often separated from the rest of the city's residents and inhibits any meaningful claims of place and belonging (Nelson & Hiemstra, 2008). Studies[2] have found that refugees are also more likely than other immigrant groups to face problems with housing, such as discrimination, overcrowding, poor living conditions, or conflicts with neighbors/landlords. Some of these difficulties stem from lack of language proficiency, references, credit rating and limited understanding of the local housing market, but there is also discrimination based on race, culture, or religion that prevents refugees from accessing rental properties[3]. Multiple studies[4] on refugee housing have also found that while affordability is something refugees want, they also need safety, a robust community to escape social isolation, economic opportunities, and access to education, health care, services, and facilities. The availability and access to these resources and much more all depend on the housing location and condition.

[2] (Andersen, Turner, & Søholt, 2013); (Carter, Polevychok, & Osborne, 2009); (Francis & Hiebert, 2014); (Sherrell, D'Addario, & Hiebert, 2007)
[3] (Aalbers, 2002); (Landau, 2006); (Ondrich, Stricker, & Yinger, 1999); (Teixeira, 2008); (St. Arnault & Merali, 2019)
[4] (Netto, 2011); (Phillips, 2006)

An attempt to investigate housing typologies to see what type of housing refugees tend to live in or would prefer to live in was thwarted due to the little data available on the U.S. refugees' experience. Refugee housing typology in the U.S. would be an important subject for further research that would provide great insight into the living conditions of refugees in major cities in the U.S. to inform decisions for form-based standards of refugee housing. This thesis does not look at the spatial implications of refugee housing alone and should be a topic of a separate paper. It is known, however, that a majority of refugees are renters, not homeowners. As seen in figure 9, the number of refugees who own their home or apartment steadily goes up as the number of years they have been in the U.S. increases, but a significant percentage of the relatively new population still rents their home. Another study on refugee homeownership found that an average of 57 percent of all refugees in the U.S. owns a home (Bernstein & DuBois, 2018).

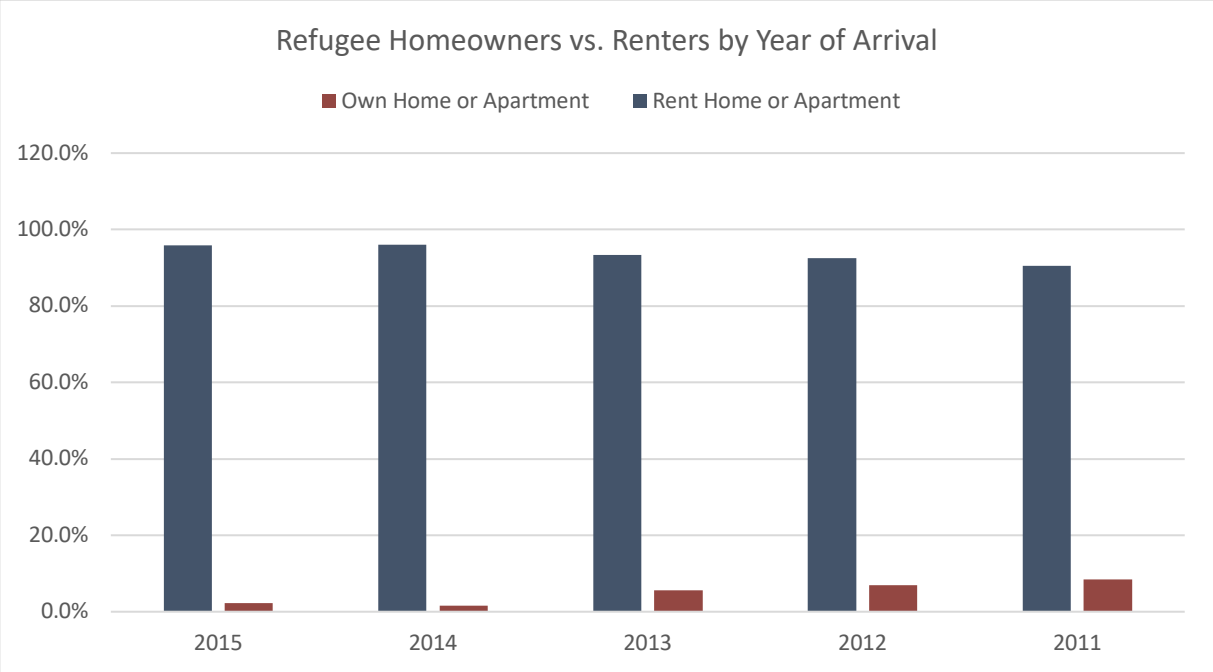


Figure 8: Annual Survey of Refugees, Home Ownership by Year of Arrival, 2015

Source: 2016 ORR Annual Survey of Refugees. Data refers to refugee households in the five-year population consisting of all refugees who arrived in the United States between October 1, 2010, and September 30, 2015. (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018)

(c) Economic Outcomes

Economic outcomes are one of the leading indicators of integration and the one most relied on by governments and organizations in determining the success of refugee integration in their host countries. For refugees, these outcomes are tied to three interrelated things: language proficiency, employment, and education. This section identifies how these three things affect refugees' economic opportunities and make a case for why they should be considered from a spatial perspective. Since so much of the literature around integration emphasizes financial independence as a marker of integration, it should be prefaced that economic integration alone does not necessarily mean successful integration – it is a part of a larger picture. Bernstein and Dubois (2018) said it best in their report *Bringing Evidence to the Refugee Integration Debate*: "Given the humanitarian nature of their admission, it is inappropriate to judge refugees' progress based solely on their economic outcomes."

(i) Language

As Ager and Strang's framework of integration describes, language is an essential facilitator of integration. Without learning English, refugees are limited in how much they can interact and be part of the host society. Along with getting a job, language competency is one of the first things refugee resettlement agencies try to accelerate and are somewhat successful in doing. As the chart in figure 10 shows, English proficiency dramatically increases for refugees after they have been in the country for as little as two to five years when compared to proficiency level at arrival.

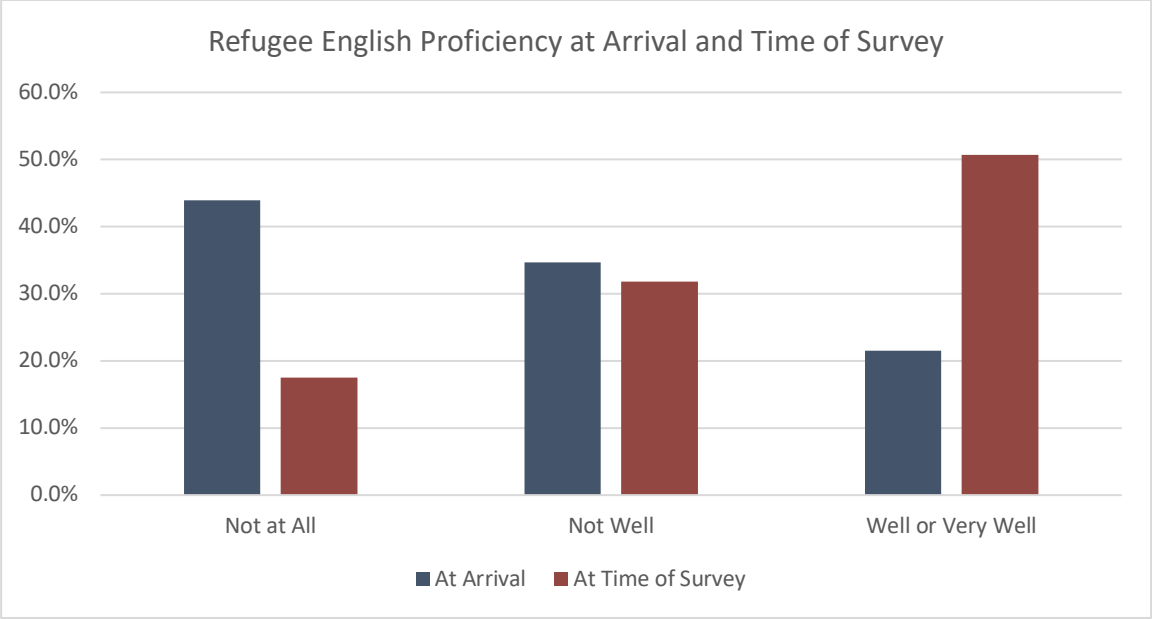


Figure 9: Change in English Proficiency of Refugees at Arrival vs. Time of Survey (1.5-6.5 years after arrival)

Source: 2016 ORR Annual Survey of Refugees. Data refers to individuals aged 18 and up in the five-year population consisting of all refugees who arrived in the United States between October 1, 2010, and September 30, 2015. (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018)

Language is such an essential aspect of refugee integration because it has an impact on all aspects of a refugee's life such as employment, housing, and social connections. Studies have found that households where no member of the household aged 14 and above spoke English "very well" tend to be more improvised, less educated, and experience more difficulties accessing health, social and other necessary services when compared to households with fluent English speakers (Hooper, Zong, Capps, & Fix, 2016). Even language has a spatial element to it; it may be taught in class, but it is learned in the city streets. It is not enough to know the rules; language is learned through immersion and interaction with native speakers (Pinar, 2016). It is crucial for refugees not to be physically isolated in cultural enclaves that protect them from the pressures of learning English. Upon arrival, it is easier for refugees to get jobs in ethnic stores and restaurants due to a lack of language proficiency and is another reason why cultural diversity is essential in cities. However, it is important to ensure that these refugees do not get stuck in these low-paying jobs with no chance at upward mobility. These networks of co-ethnic communities are essential, but the native community must

also be accessible for refugees to expand their network. Better language skills will empower them and provide them with better opportunities in so many aspects of their lives. This is not to say that refugees should lose their native language in favor of learning English, but instead that they should use language as an asset to propel them towards successful integration.

(ii) Employment

One of the good things about the U.S. resettlement program is that it authorizes all admitted refugees to start working upon arrival. Employment is seen as this benchmark of success because it has a causal relationship with many other aspects of refugee integration such as housing affordability, language proficiency, and healthcare. Data on refugee employment shows that refugees have a relatively high Labor Force Participation (LFP) despite the challenges they face. As shown in figure 11, the overall LFP rate for working-age refugees, aged 16-64, was 67.1 percent which is only slightly lower than for all working-age U.S. adults at 73.7 percent; and of those in the labor force, 88.4 percent of refugees are employed versus 91.6 percent of all U.S. individuals (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018).

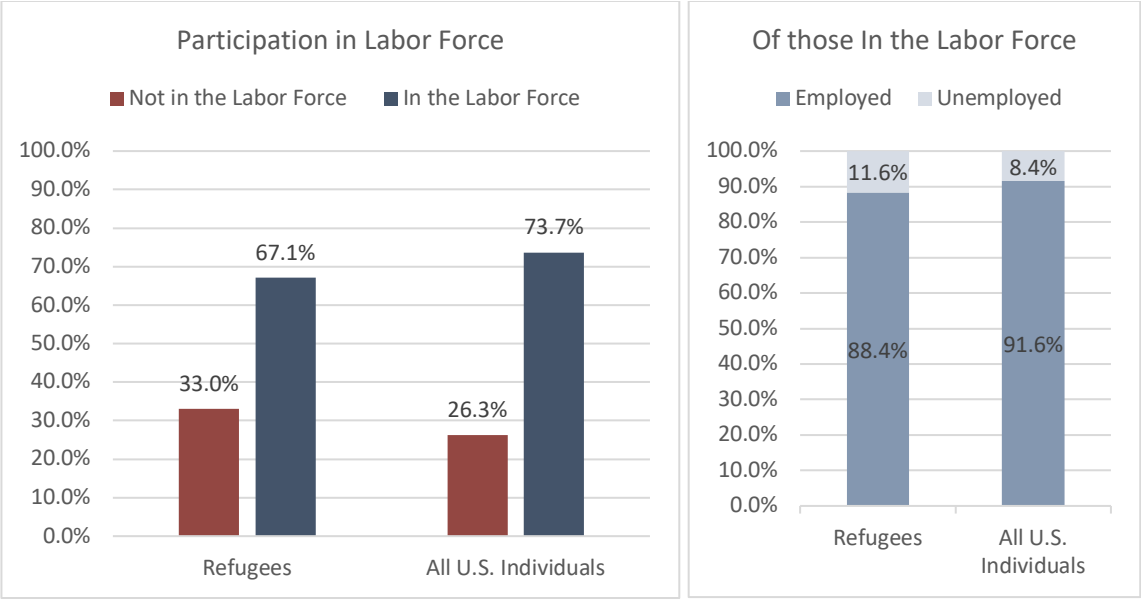


Figure 10: Labor Force Status for Working-Age Refugees and U.S. Individuals, 2016 Survey

Source: 2016 ORR Annual Survey of Refugees. Data refers to individuals aged 16-64 in refugee households in the five-year population consisting of all refugees who arrived in the United States between October 1, 2010, and September 30, 2015. The national comparison is derived from the American Community Survey 2011-2015 5-year sample for individuals aged 16-64 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018)

This data only depicts a part of the story though, because it only compares labor force participation and does not mention the types of jobs or industries refugees are employed in as compared to native-born individuals with similar education and work experience. The 2016 ORR Annual Survey of Refugees also reported the mean hourly wage of currently employed working-age refugees. As the number of years a refugee has been in the country increases, so does their mean hourly wage as depicted in figure 12. The mean hourly wage of all refugees surveyed was $11.80 in 2016 which is more than fifty percent lower than $23.86, the mean hourly rate of all U.S. employed individuals in 2016 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018) ("Occupational Employment Statistics," 2016). The comparison between the two populations portrays the difference in economic opportunity for refugees. However, the economic opportunity seems to grow over time as the number of years spent in the country increase for refugees as is evident in the refugee data across the years.

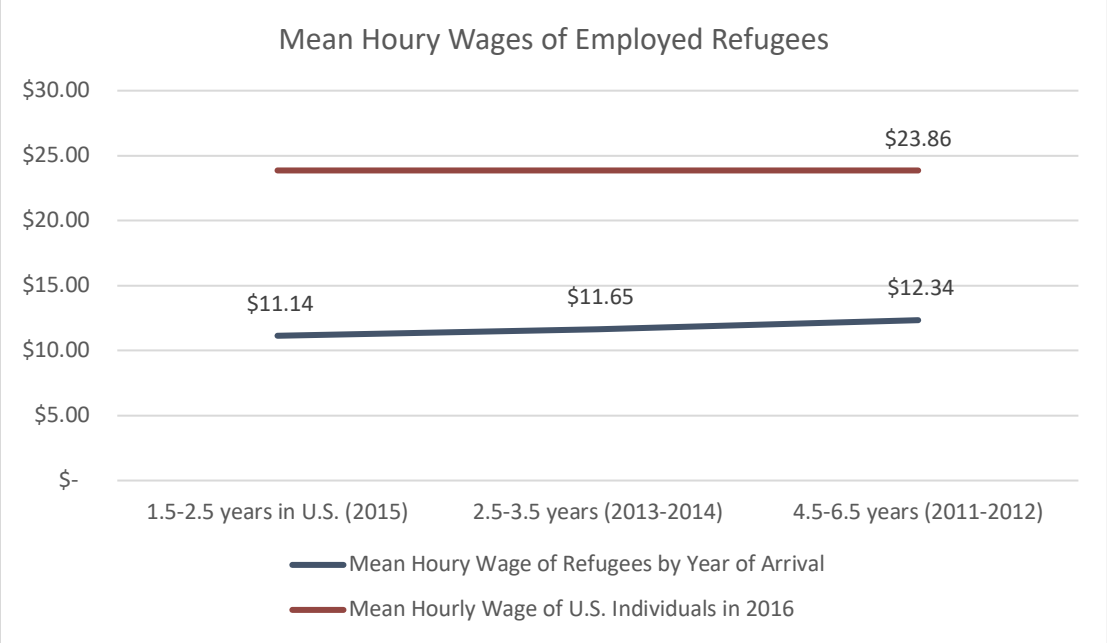


Figure 11: Mean Hourly Wage of Working-Aged Refugees compared to U.S. Native Individuals, 2016

Source: 2016 ORR Annual Survey of Refugees. Data refers to individuals aged 18-64 in refugee households in the five-year population consisting of all refugees who arrived in the United States between October 1, 2010, and September 30, 2015 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018). The national comparison is derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' May 2016 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates data ("Occupational Employment Statistics," 2016)

Among the working-age refugees surveyed in the 2016 ORR Annual Survey of Refugee, a majority of both men and women who were not in the labor force listed poor health or disability and attending school or training as the reasons they were not employed (figure 13 below). Women also listed child care or family responsibility as a reason for unemployment at a disproportionately higher rate than the men (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018). The reasons for unemployment among refugees provides evidence against the political narrative that refugees become a burden on the host country. The majority of them are employed and most who are not are unable to be employed due to a disability that prevents them from working, familial responsibility possibly because of high cost for child care, or attending school or training that would enable them to get better jobs in the future.

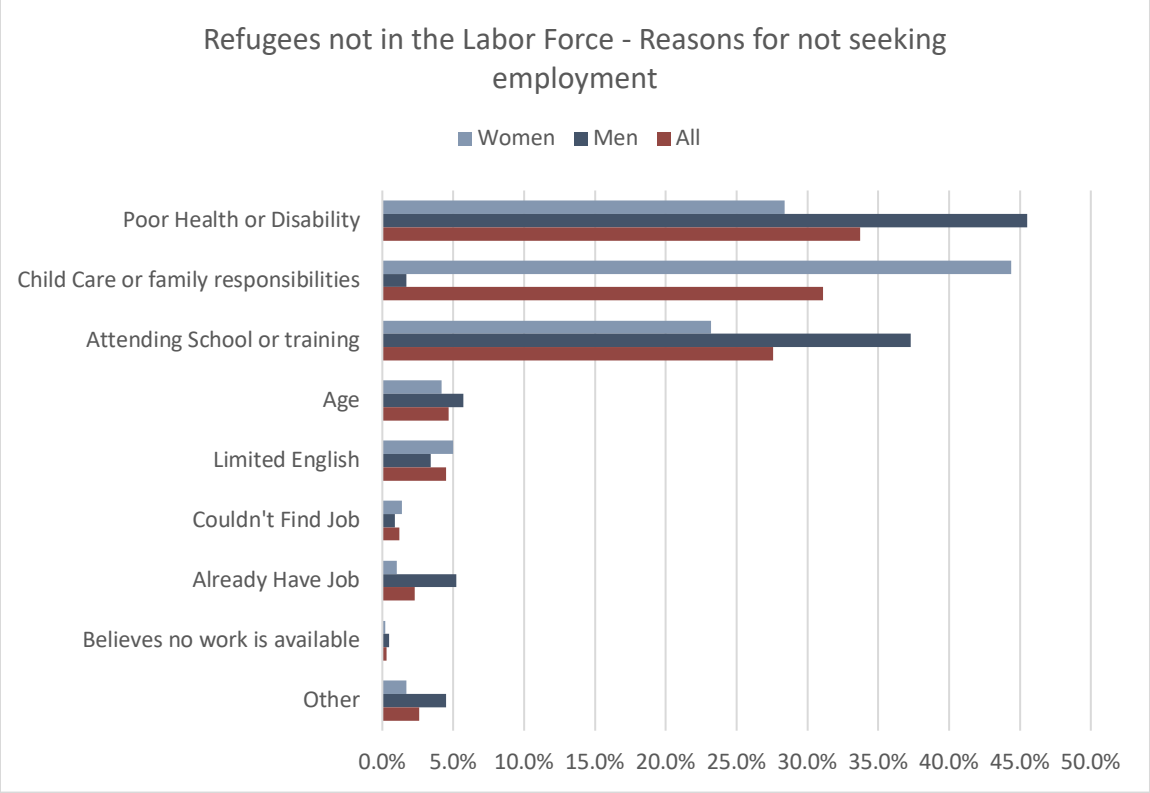


Figure 12: Reasons for not Seeking Employment Among Working-Aged Refugees, 2016

Source: 2016 ORR Annual Survey of Refugees. Data refers to individuals aged 16-64 in refugee households in the five-year population consisting of all refugees who arrived in the United States between October 1, 2010, and September 30, 2015. (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018)

Another set of data that refutes this narrative of dependence can be seen in figure 14 shows that as the number of years refugees have been settled in the U.S. increases, their reliance on public assistance decreases. Among the most recent arrivals, only about 26 percent of the refugee population depended on earnings alone, but that number jumped up to 70 percent for those who arrived in the U.S. in 2011 (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018). The dependence on public assistance also goes down significantly over time. It is important to note that even among the newest arrivals, a majority of them, up to 62.5 percent, depended on both public assistance and earnings to make ends meet. A study of long term refugees in the U.S. calculated the net cost of refugees over twenty years and found that eventually, refugees give back $21,000 more to the government in taxes than they cost them in aid (Evans & Fitzgerald, 2017). This balance of net cost happens through paid taxes as early as within eight years of the refugee living in the U.S. This information further supports the claim that as the number of years in the country increases for refugees, their labor force integration improves as well with better and higher paying jobs.

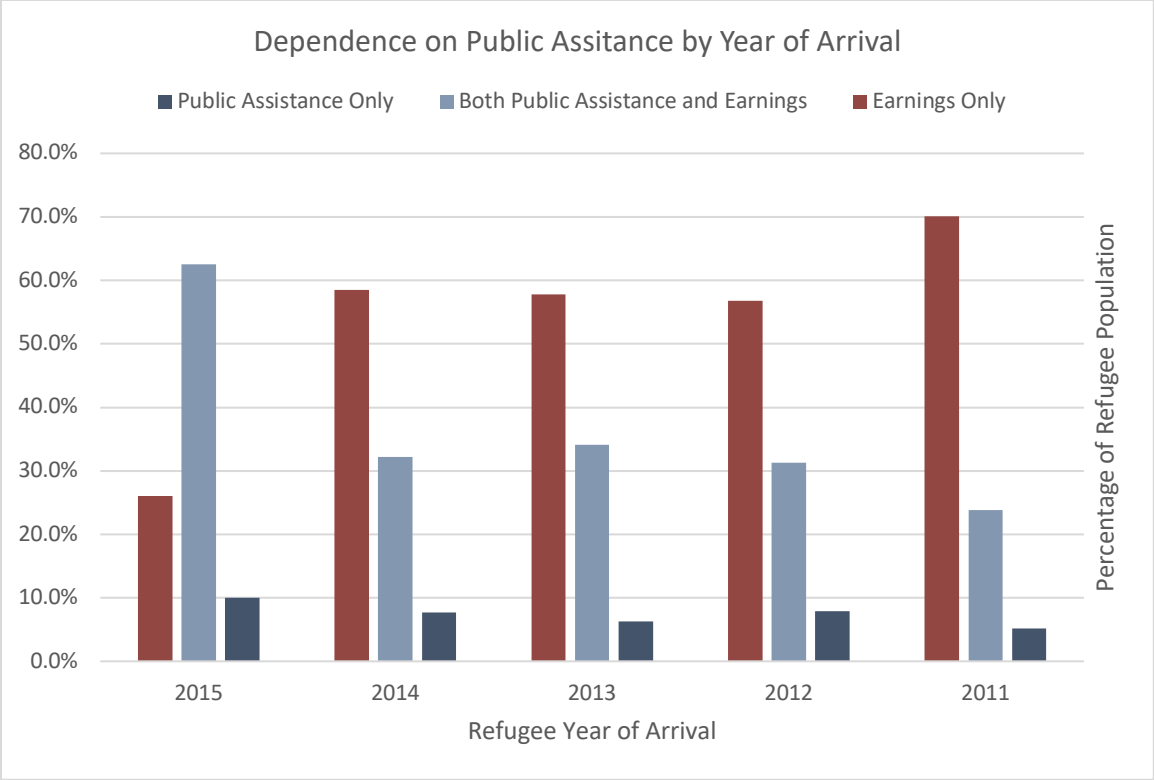


Figure 13: Dependence on Public Assistance by Refugees by Year of Arrival, 2016

Source: 2016 ORR Annual Survey of Refugees. Data refers to refugees in the five-year population consisting who arrived in the United States between October 1, 2010, and September 30, 2015. (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2018)

One of the reasons refugees move away from their first place of resettlement is in search of job opportunities. Often this opportunity comes in the form of larger co-ethnic enclaves where other immigrants have opened businesses that could employ them (Center for American Progress, 2016). These ethnic businesses create not only jobs but also consumers who will spend money in the neighborhood, stimulating further economic growth. These areas of large co-ethnic populations are attractive to refugees because of barriers that limit them to low-skill jobs such as discrimination on cultural, religious, and ethnic bases (Bernstein & DuBois, 2018). Due to this discrimination, it is more accessible, and safer, for them to look for job opportunities within their cultural enclaves.

Another critical issue facing refugees is underemployment, meaning they are employed in a job that is below their educational training. Besides the barriers to entry into the

labor market already discussed in this section, another reason for this underemployment is the lack of easy transfer of educational degrees and certifications earned outside of the U.S. (Center for American Progress, 2016). It is often challenging to meet U.S. requirements for certification in a particular occupational field like architecture, health professionals, and engineering. Refugees are either unaware of ways to get through the certification process in the U.S. or are unable to because it would require further schooling or be too expensive. Underemployment results in lost potential that not only limits the earnings of individuals but is also a constraint on the local economic growth.

(iii) Education

A crucial component of ensuring better economic outcomes is access to education. This access can be both physical and financial. Education level has a direct impact on employment opportunities despite cases of underemployment. The level of education for incoming refugees varies depending on the country of origin, with certain countries like Iran, Russia, and Ukraine having higher education attainment than even the native-born population while others have lower education attainment (Center for American Progress, 2016). Community colleges and vocational training schools become important avenues for refugee integration, especially if these local institutions have special programs for refugees. Some states have even begun to revise their licensing requirements to accommodate refugees with oversees certifications. There are also organizations such as the Welcome Back Initiative and Upwardly Global that help remove barriers for skilled immigrants in several sectors (Center for American Progress, 2016).

(d) Health and Wellbeing

Health has a significant impact on people's ability to restart their lives, but particular sensitivities surround health and receiving healthcare, limiting refugees' access to proper healthcare. This section will summarize a few of the challenges faced by refugee

communities in prioritizing their health. Newly arrived refugees are given a 90 day period to become economically sufficient in their new community so they have responsibilities with immediate consequences such as the threat of homelessness if they cannot afford rent. Due to these burdens, usually the first item to be removed from their list of things to do is seeking medical or mental healthcare (Jackson et al., n.d.). The language barrier also impedes the refugee from seeking medical care and an unfamiliarity with the U.S. healthcare system can leave many feeling overwhelmed. There are also certain mental health issues due to exposure to violence, torture, warfare, and constant loss that can result in depression, anxiety, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and can often go unrecognized or untreated by refugees because they do not recognize the signs. Mental health is also exacerbated by anti-immigration sentiments in the U.S. that further burden refugee life (Jackson et al., n.d.). Making healthcare as readily available as possible for refugees and educating them about the benefits they may be eligible for must be a priority when thinking about integration.

(e) The Receiving Society

One of the most important pieces of refugee integration is the attitude of the host society regarding the refugee. The host community's acceptance or rejection has a significant impact on the refugee's agency in the city. Despite the recent politicizing of refugees for political gain, the Public Religion Research Institute's (PRRI) 9th annual American Values Survey released in 2018 revealed that a majority of American respondents, about seventy percent, thought that the idea of being welcoming of people with different cultures was "very important" when thinking about what the American way of life represents. However, while the majority of Americans had favorable views towards immigrants, with 86 percent saying they are "hardworking" and 84 percent saying they have "strong family values", there was a divergence in opinion along political party lines: 74 percent of Republicans think immigrants are a burden as opposed to only 35 percent Democrats. As for attitudes towards refugees, the PRRI survey found that a majority of Americans, 60 percent of those surveyed, were opposed to passing a law to keep refugees from coming to the country. However, that

opinion split along party lines – 65 percent of Republicans were in favor of passing a bill to keep refugees out while 65 percent Independents and 75 percent Democrats had the opposite opinion (National Immigration Forum, 2019).

Realistic group conflict theory suggests that if members of one group perceive or experience threat from an outgroup, their prejudice towards members of that outgroup is heightened. Research in this tradition also suggests that when the proximity between these groups is increased, it could result in dysfunctional consequences for both groups (Brief et al., 2005). With the state of the political environment and the blatant criminalizing of refugees, it is not surprising that local communities will suffer the consequences of such discrimination. It is human to fear the unknown, and this is why the role of participatory planning and community engagement is so important to bring people of different backgrounds together to learn about each other's cultures and ways of life. A collaborative approach to resettlement must be considered with organizations planning events for cultural exchanges because integration is a two-way street and cannot happen when groups fear each other or feel entitled over the other (Zanghi, n.d.).

(f) Refugees' Agency in the City

> *"As a growing number of local political leaders are realizing, doing what is good for refugees is also good for American communities: Their success is our success." (Center for American Progress, 2016)*

The refugees' agency in the city can be defined as their ability to make directed changes to their community. These changes can be programmatic, like local recognition of certain religious holidays, or physical, in the form of a new ethnic businesses. This agency goes beyond visibility and is about the empowerment of the refugee enabled by local initiatives and attitudes towards the refugee group. Recognizing and valuing refugees' contributions to the community can be a form of empowerment or validation. On the other hand, disrespecting the refugees and their way of life by forcing them to change and 'assimilate' is a form of oppression. When refugees are supported in their endeavors and systematically

supported, they become contributing members of the community who develop a strong sense of belonging in their new communities.

Unlike the false perception of refugees in the media, refugees do not have an extractive relationship with the communities they resettle in. As previously discussed, not only do they give back more than their received share of benefits in taxes but also make significant cultural and economic contributions to their community. There are numerous examples of refugees revitalizing main streets by becoming business owners and employees, and adding cultural diversity to cities ("The Real Economic Cost of Accepting Refugees," n.d.). The revitalization of main streets has been especially significant in American cities that suffered substantial population decline in the mid-20th century as can be seen in Twin Cities Minneapolis- St. Paul, Minnesota, Philadelphia, PA and Columbus, Ohio. Refugees in these cities were enabled to have agency in their community in a way that allowed them to make their neighborhoods their own. These cities saw areas that were previously declining come back to life as immigrants started moving in and opening new local businesses such as barber shops, grocery stores, restaurants, and stores (Center for American Progress, 2016).

While some of these main streets were a result of a high concentration of immigrant population in an area, some of them were a result of a concerted effort by local government to revitalize a neighborhood. Philadelphia's 5th Street Corridor is an example of this; the City Planning Commission recognized it as a vital part of the city's economic development plan and appointed a Business District Manager to spur small business development in the area as a result of the success another part of the city had on 9th Street Italian Market which grew organically due to immigration (Kallick, 2015). The Business District Manager's role was to help navigate the challenges that immigrants, including refugees, face when opening new businesses. These challenges can consist of financial constraints, lack of knowledge of the processes around the opening and registering of a new business, and backlash from the native population for changing the character of the neighborhood. Different communities in Philadelphia and beyond have employed a variety of approaches to traverse these challenges. Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) play a vital role in helping

finance small businesses by financing loans below-market rate, providing accounting and legal services, creating business plans, and perhaps most importantly, creating lending circles that register cash transactions with major credit card companies to build credit for a population that mostly operates on the basis of cash (Kallick, 2015). Organizations have also had to build trust among the immigrant groups, the native population, and the government agencies through community engagement. This building of trust with the local government is especially important for refugees who have previously escaped persecution at the hands of their government and are naturally averse to institutions of authority and power. Mayors' offices and City Halls that invest in multi-cultural sensitivity training and create dedicated offices for helping refugees and immigrants in their city is a step towards bridging the gap between the local government and its newest constituents. Last but certainly not least, as mentioned in the previous section, the role the native receiving population plays in these communities is of utmost importance – refugees cannot thrive in a place where they do not feel welcome or safe.

Despite all the benefits refugees bring to a city, it is important to note that humanitarian and ethical responsibility should still be the primary reason to resettle refugees in local communities and not the potential economic benefits of their integration. Successful integration cannot be selfishly motivated. Still, it is essential to study this phenomenon of the returned investment refugees make in their community because it will benefit the refugee in the end. If local decision-makers can see the contribution of refugee groups in the local economy, they might be more inclined to invest in them by furthering their agency and setting the stage through policy interventions for them to empower themselves.

Chapter 7.

Moving Forward

"Offering a welcoming environment and a supportive infrastructure for immigrant communities is a smart strategy for cities and states." (Kallick, 2015)

Due in part to the selective nature of the refugee resettlement process in the U.S. and the comparatively small number of immigrants who enter the country as refugees, the U.S. hasn't had to grapple with the volume of refugees that other first-asylum countries in Europe, like Germany and Italy, have had to deal with. However, this has also resulted in the U.S. not feeling the pressure to propose innovative policy interventions to support refugee resettlement. Once a refugee has arrived in the U.S., they are afforded 90 days of support from the local refugee resettlement agency but are left to provide for themselves beyond that. There are no provisions of affordable housing or employment opportunities beyond any non-profit or volunteer endeavors from the private sector. They are treated as any other immigrant even though the challenges they face are unique. Ninety days of financial support is not enough for a group of people who have been forced to uproot their lives and start anew in a foreign place. To facilitate their integration into the host society, the local government must play a role through local policy interventions that can make an impact on refugees in their cities.

Often when thinking of refugees, images of people in refugee camps come to mind where thousands of people live together in make-shift living quarters that evoke thoughts of temporality. However, with more than half of the refugee population now living in urban areas according to UNHCR, the refugee issue is now a city issue (Refugees, n.d.-a). Living in an urban area, especially as a resettled refugee in the U.S. with a right to work and a path to citizenship, means that refugees can begin to rebuild their lives with more control and agency over what happens to them than they would have had in camps. However, they still face socio-economic

barriers in society that hinder their integration. Urban planners and local governments, therefore, can play a crucial role in the process of integration and social inclusion to ensure the refugee's right to the city and promote a more cohesive community.

Chapter 8.

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