NACSW’s mission is to equip its members to integrate Christian faith and professional social work practice.

Its goals include:

- Supporting and encouraging members in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice through fellowship, education, and service opportunities.
- Articulating an informed Christian voice on social welfare practice and policies to the social work profession.
- Providing professional understanding and help for the social ministry of the church.
- Promoting social welfare services and policies in society which bring about greater justice and meet basic human needs.
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Social Work & Christianity (SWC) is a refereed journal published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) to support and encourage the growth of social workers in the ethical integration of Christian faith and professional practice. SWC welcomes articles, shorter contributions, book reviews, and letters which deal with issues related to the integration of faith and professional social work practice and other professional concerns which have relevance to Christianity.

Views expressed by authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of SWC or NACSW. Membership in NACSW or publication in SWC in no way implies endorsement or certification of the member's or author's qualifications, ability, or proficiency to practice social work. NACSW and SWC do not assume responsibility in any way for readers' efforts to apply or utilize information, suggestions, or recommendations made by NACSW, its publications, conferences, or other resources.

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At least three members of the editorial board will anonymously review manuscripts and recommend an acceptance decision based on the following criteria: relevance of content to major issues concerning the ethical integration of competent social work practice and Christianity, potential contribution to social work scholarship and practice, literary merit, clarity, and freedom from language that conveys devaluation or stereotypes of persons or groups. The journal editorial team will make final decisions.

Authors may correspond with the managing editor by email or phone: Rick Chamiec-Case (rick@nacsw.org); 203.270.8780.

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Social Work and Christianity welcomes book review manuscripts for the Reviews section of the journal. Submit book review manuscripts electronically to the Book Review Editor, James Vanderwoerd, at jwoerd@redeemer.ca.

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• Reviewed books should be relevant to SWC's readership and therefore should include content pertinent to Christians in social work.
• Ordinarily books should be fairly recent (published within 2 years); if later, reviewers should provide some justification for why an older book has current relevance.
• Reviews should be about 600-800 words in length.
• Reviews should include an overview of the book's main points, especially those pertaining to Christians in social work.
• In addition to a descriptive summary of the book's content, reviews should provide some assessment, critique, and analysis of the book's strengths and weaknesses, and
its contribution to the field of social work practice, especially to specific audiences such as subfields of social work practice, students, academics, administrators, and church leaders.

- Reviews should adhere to general guidelines for formatting and writing described in the general Instructions for Authors.
- All submitted book review manuscripts, whether invited or not, are subject to editorial review and acceptance by the book review editor, in conjunction with the editor-in-chief, who will make final decisions regarding acceptance for publication.
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Please contact James Vanderwoerd, the Book Review Editor of Social Work and Christianity, at jwoerd@redeemer.ca with any questions or for additional information.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The purpose of the Letters to the Editor section in Social Work & Christianity is to provide creative space for dialogue about complicated topics for Christians in social work. Our hope is that submissions in this form allow for the healthy exchange of ideas and perspectives. The Letters to the Editor section is grounded in our Christian values of humility, mutual respect, and generosity of spirit, as well as our professional values of critical thinking and integrity.

Submissions should be no more than 500-1,000 words in length and invite conversation as it offers the opportunity for readers to observe an open and civil exchange of ideas and perspectives. Letters which are a response to articles previously published in Social Work & Christianity will be shared with the article author(s), who will have the opportunity to respond to the letter. Such Letters to the Editor are encouraged to ask clarifying questions in a spirit of curiosity (as opposed to a spirit of confrontation), model careful listening, and seek common ground where possible as it shares alternative points of view for readers’ consideration. Letters to the Editor which include personal attacks or denigration of individuals or organizations will not be considered.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: Welcoming the Sojourner

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According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2018), we are currently experiencing the highest numbers of displaced persons on record - at 65.6 million people forced from their homes by the end of 2016. That is roughly the size of the entire population of France, according to UN Population Division data. With this many people facing displacement in our world, the topic of migration is one that Christian social workers should be at the forefront of addressing. Thus, we have sought to bring you a special issue that addresses best practices for serving refugees, methods and examples of what welcoming the sojourner could look like, and perspectives on what it is like to be on the receiving end as a refugee.

Social workers of Christian faith may have a variety of perspectives on immigration issues; however regardless of opinion, it is important that we live faithfully to our calling as Christians, ethically as professional social workers and have evidence to support our opinions and actions. As David Sherwood (2017), former editor-in-chief of Social Work and Christianity stated when referencing the “Christian Response,” Christian principles may be clear, but “no single policy, programmatic, or practice action...perfectly [embodies] the “Christian response.”” Thus, NACSW and Social Work & Christianity, “have chosen the difficult middle road- clearly committed to both Christian faith and competent social work practice” (p. 4). This special issue, through position papers, case studies, and empirical research, seeks to inform our competency and improve our social work practice with refugees and immigrants - while still holding true to Christian faith. As Christian social workers, it is vital that our active response to immigrants and refugees is supported by faith perspectives along with the values and ethics of our profession.
Scriptural Support for Practice with Migrants

It is clear in scripture that God has a heart for seeking justice and protecting the vulnerable. While multiple references from scripture could be quoted here, we have chosen a few to highlight. For example, in Psalm 10, verses 17 and 18 say:

O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

These verses in particular are concerned about those who are the most at-risk, have undergone affliction, and need our encouragement and support. We are told to listen to them and seek to bring justice so that others who are exploiting them (“man who is of the earth”) may strike terror no more.

The Bible also discusses those who are living among us, such as immigrants, refugees, those not from the area in which they find themselves living. Leviticus 19:33 says, “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.” It is clear that we should be careful not to do wrong or commit injustice towards the sojourner, but the Bible goes beyond that. In fact, scripture often speaks of providing for the sojourner, along with the widow, the orphans, others who are vulnerable. Deuteronomy 24:19 instructs God’s people,

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

These are just a few scriptural examples, among many, that we could draw from to inform how we live as Christians as we support the poor, oppressed, and “those who live among us.”

Ethical Support for Welcoming Immigrants

In addition to biblical support, the NASW Code of Ethics (2018) reminds us of our obligation as social workers. Similar to scripture, there are many parts of the Code that could be cited, so we have chosen the parts that seem most relevant to this issue.

First, as social workers, we have an ethical obligation to the broader society. “Social workers should promote the general welfare of society, from local to global levels, and the development of people, their communities, and their environments” (p. 29). Social workers are also charged to join into social and political action that speaks against injustice. “Social workers
should act to expand choice and opportunity for all people, with special
regard for vulnerable, disadvantaged, oppressed, and exploited people and
groups” (p.30).

As social workers, we are called to stand up for the most vulner-
able. “Social workers should act to prevent and eliminate domination of,
exploitation of, and discrimination against any person, group, or class on
the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation,
gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion,
immigration status, or mental or physical ability” (p. 2). Migrants who
seek the help of social services typically come to our country for political,
economic, and social reasons and are often the world’s most vulnerable
persons. Finally, the Code states that social workers:

should promote conditions that encourage respect for
cultural and social diversity within the United States and
globally...should promote policies and practices that dem-
onstrate respect for difference, support the expansion of
cultural knowledge and resources, advocate for programs
and institutions that demonstrate cultural competence, and
promote policies that safeguard the rights of, and confirm
equity and social justice for, all people (p. 30).

If we were to apply a biblical principle here, this means treating people
who are migrants or immigrants the way we would want to be treated if we
were in their situation. It means educating ourselves and others about their
situations and working to promote policies and programs that uphold their
rights, support their dignity, and provide equal access to justice.

As those who claim both Christianity and social work, we are held ac-
countable for what we do by both the Bible (ultimately God) and the NASW
Code of Ethics. We must take extra caution to critically think through our
actions when it comes to the policies we support, the programs we imple-
ment, and the people for whom we vote. We need to take time to reflect as
we make decisions that can have long-term implications for some of the
most vulnerable populations.

Responding to Societal Questions about Welcoming Migrants

As we introduce this special issue, which has a primary focus on practice
with a subset of migrants and refugees, we thought it pertinent to present
some information on refugee resettlement, as the majority of our articles focus
specifically on practice with refugees. A refugee has fled his or her country
due to violence, war, or persecution (UNHCR, 2018). A refugee has either
already been persecuted due to his or her race, religion, nationality, politics,
or other sort of group membership or has “well-founded” reason to believe
that he or she will be persecuted for one or more of these factors. A refugee either cannot return home because his or her life is at risk or he/she is afraid to do so. The leading reasons refugees leave their countries are because of war and violence (usually ethnic, tribal, and/or religious).

One of the number one debates in society on whether or not migrants should be welcomed is over whether refugees and immigrants pose a security and/or economic threat. While in Europe people often go through the asylum-seeking process to become refugees after already arriving in the country, in the U.S., those who arrive as refugees have already gone through the legal vetting process to be approved as refugees. According the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2018), those applying for refugee status to the United States are more tightly screened than any other type of traveler to the U.S. This process usually takes anywhere from 18-24 months according to the U.S. Department of State (2018). In addition, 51% of the world’s refugees are school-aged children younger than 18 years of age (UNHCR, 2018).

Another argument for limiting, or even prohibiting, refugee resettlement is that refugees put a drain on our economy and welfare system. However, this “drain” is a misnomer. In fact, refugees have to start paying back their plane tickets within six months of arriving (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2018). In addition, refugees end up making a positive contribution to society by paying taxes and working. For example, in 2012, $4.8 million was spent on services to support refugee resettlement in Cleveland. During the same year, refugees invested $48 million back into the economy and provided at least 650 jobs to local residents (Chmura Economics and Analytics, 2013). The return on this investment continues year after year as refugees continue to engage in their communities. In Akron, Ohio in 2013, refugees paid more than $3 million dollars towards taxes (state and local) and afterwards had more than $23 million dollars of disposable income they were able to spend - stimulating the economy (New American Economy, 2016).

Next, we provide an overview of the papers included in this special issue of Social Work & Christianity. The articles in this special issue offer viewpoints, practice examples, and research evidence on practice with refugees from a Christian faith perspective.

**Overview of Papers in this Issue**

We were pleasantly overwhelmed by the number of submissions we received to the call for papers for this special issue and are grateful to all who contributed to this process. In fact, we are pleased that two additional articles that were accepted will be published in future issues of Social Work & Christianity. In one of these upcoming papers, author Gianesini discusses the results of a pilot study that was conducted with female victims of trauma, trafficking, exploitation, and torture who were forced to flee from Africa.
and Eastern Europe to Italy. Gianesini discusses her use of a strength-based and resource-based approach to understand how these refugee women have been able to cope with such traumas. In the other upcoming paper, Scott and Caceres examine the idea of sanctuary. They focus on sanctuary in congregations and discuss how the new sanctuary movement involving churches is navigated with U.S. immigration law.

The first article in this current special issue, by Goss-Reaves, Crouso & Lefdahl-Davis, encourage a Christian social worker's response to welcoming the Sojourner to fit into the biblical narrative of reconciliation, while also supporting social work values and ethics.

Next, Baxter discusses the concept of human flourishing, offering biblical support for the work of resettlement agencies in bringing transformation in the lives of those resettled. The author discusses ways some resettlement agencies work with the community and church in order to promote human flourishing among some of our most oppressed world citizens.

Roe & Bushnell's qualitative study explores perceptions of faith-based community work in refugee resettlement. The authors offer suggestions on how to promote anti-oppressive practices that empower rather than further marginalize refugees from achieving their fullest potential.

Butler-Mokoro, Doss & Kohlmann and Trinidad, Soneoulay-Gillespie, Birkel & Brennan's articles each provide case studies on congregational partnerships that respond to welcoming the sojourner. Butler-Mokoro et al. look at how the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) is providing opportunities within their congregations. They compare the work of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) to social work principles, encouraging future partnerships. Trinidad et al. examine a parish collaboration with faith-based organizations. Both of these articles provide strategies for successful partnerships.

Cecil, Stoltzfus & Hagues explore Germany’s response to the refugee crisis in Europe through a qualitative study that examined social workers’ perceptions of refugee resettlement related to faith, motivation and coping. They offer suggestions for educators as well as practitioners based on the social workers’ responses.

Finally, Schwander provides a case study that explores faith and religion in the lives of six young adult refugees who live in West Michigan. Schwander discusses the importance of ethical practice in regards to the role of faith in the lives of social workers as well as their clients.

This special issue concludes with three book reviews. The first book review by Petra Dankova is of The New Odyssey (2017). In it author Patrick Kingsley, in his role as migration correspondent to The Guardian newspaper, follows a family from Syria to Europe. The second book, Seeking Refuge, is reviewed by Kayte Thomas. Seeking Refuge is by the director of one of the resettlement agencies in the United States, a legal advisor to refugees, and a former refugee who now provides counseling to other refugees. These
authors are able to highlight the refugee experience in a unique way. Finally, the book Violent Borders by Reese Jones (2016) and reviewed by Savannah S. Young provides insight into the various meanings of borders, forcing the reader to wrestle with the idea of borders as mistakes that were man-made.

Conclusion

Although this special issue cannot comprehensively cover the wide variety of topics, practice issues, and research related to faith and practice migrants, our aim is to offer you some examples of best and promising practice to encourage you in your practice, faith integration, and further research on work with migrants. In conclusion, it is our deep desire that this special issue will offer unique and helpful insights into a complicated issue, challenging social workers, those in ministry, and other helping professionals to remain faithful to their calling as Christ followers while thinking critically about how to practice competently with migrants.

References


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Keywords: Refugee, Immigrant, Faith, Christianity, International Social Work
A Christian’s response to migration and refugee resettlement is shaped by a belief in the Triune God, who reconciles all people to Himself. When we accept that we are all sojourners, awaiting our final home in heaven, our treatment of the sojourner changes. Christian social workers are called to be transformed by Christ, which creates motivation for reconciliation that is inclusive and love-filled. This article explores a Christian social worker’s response to all of God’s people, focused specifically on the immigrant, migrant, and refugee. Drawing on the the social work code of ethics, Biblical truth, and Emma Lazarus’ sonnet on the Statue of Liberty, practical implications are made for those responding to people in need. Social workers are at the forefront of mezzo work in communities. Their training also makes them well-suited to champion advocacy for the immigrant at the macro and micro levels.

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Emma Lazarus’ sonnet, New Colossus, also known as the “Statue of Liberty poem,” has been widely quoted and closely associated with the Statue of Liberty (Lazarus, 2002). The words, inscribed on a plaque mounted with distinction at the statue’s base, provide insight and wisdom to a world in need (Sutherland, 2003). The sonnet’s famous line, “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” is held up as the beacon of America’s welcoming shores. These words describe the beckoning plea for those without a home to come freely, readily and honorably, into this land. Through this invitational entry message into America, we find a nation formed from immigrants.

It is often assumed that the United States is committed to immigrant hospitality because, as a nation, we welcomed different people groups from various places in the world. This notion has been challenged by others who propose that Americans at times have shown hostility (Behdad, 2005). Regardless of how our nation is perceived, a Christian social worker’s response to the immigrant is shaped by the Triune God who loves unconditionally. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Christians are called to reach out to all people with compassion and love (Schmidt, n.d.). The Christian social worker’s call to service is congruent with the desire to faithfully follow Christ (Ressler, 2002). According to the NASW Code of Ethics, social workers are instructed to serve all people groups regardless of ethnicity, morality, or sexual orientation (NASW, 2008). Furthermore, the reality of our identity is one that is congruent with a larger ideal of the Kingdom of God as a place where people from “every nation, tribe, people and language” can live together in peace and harmony (Rev. 7:9, New International Version).

The Land of Liberty

“Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free” are well-known words that have become synonymous for what we honor as the very fiber of the United States of America (Lazarus, 2002). American culture is a ‘melting pot’ of cultures and identities, and those ideals expressed in Lazarus’ sonnet on the Statue of Liberty propose freedom for all in this ‘land of liberty.’ This invitation to equality and justice for all is a part of American history and penned in Article I of the Constitution of the United States (Somin, 2017). However, American history also bears witness to the reality that not all people have been
extended the same liberties in the United States, and inequality is still present for minority groups such as immigrants, migrants and refugees.

The Bible also upholds ideals that parallel the inspiration for hospitality and social justice found in Lazarus’ sonnet. One of the parables shared by Jesus stirs our hearts and minds with these words:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me” (Matthew 25:35-36, New International Version).

Lady Liberty invited those who were hungry and displaced to a geographic freedom, but Jesus invited his disciples into a new way, allegiance to God, which would compel them to serve those in need. As Christian social workers, our loyalty is rooted to God’s love for all those created in the image of God, which includes all humanity, especially those in need. As those who belong to Christ, we have a new membership and citizenship, which includes loyalty towards all those who are “hungry...thirsty...a stranger... needing clothes...sick...in prison,” who reflect the presence of Christ in the world (Matthew 25:35-36, New International Version).

**God’s Family**

In the Bible we find this declaration,

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone, the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting men's sins against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21, English Standard Version).

Our familial belonging as one of God’s children is an identity that demands a new way of life. Because of the mercy and grace of Christ, and through the Holy Spirit, we can be enthralled with compassion and a natural, habitual compulsion to a pure and holy love. As Christians, we have a dual citizenship, first to the Kingdom of God, and then to the nation where
we reside. Without understanding and awareness of this dual citizenship, Christians might hold themselves to a nationalistic allegiance and miss the newfound belonging to a kingdom culture predicated on a glorious freedom that comes from a Christ-centered culture, where all humans are treated with equality, justice and dignity.

Once aware of this Kingdom citizenship, Christians begin to realize that this freedom was also given to us because as we ourselves are also strangers and aliens in this world; we now inhabit this world as incarnate beings and not as mere earthly beings. Those who believe in an eternal Kingdom are invited to see ourselves as “foreigners and exiles” on the earth, living in a way that points to a heavenly homeland (1 Peter 2:10-12, John 18:36, NIV). This newfound revelation leads to the expression and responsive compulsion of a holy, compassionate love. Once they know their own identity as members of God’s household, Christians are able to love others with the same generosity and hospitality. It flows with a habitual, boundless love that cannot be contained, offering to all people the very dignity God offers us. We are called to the same purpose, among all peoples, to be the incarnate, restorative, and redemptive way of Jesus Christ. This is our patriotism now, and we are patriots of that citizenship. As those who were welcomed regardless of their former way of life, Christians can resist a political ideological gospel, or a cloistered, isolated gospel. Both fall short of the embodied, embracing gospel of the Trinitarian God.

A Holy Love

From Matthew 25 we can understand what this compulsion of service and hospitality looks like, and what the implications are if Christians miss the mark of this new way of love.

Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?” The King will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.” They also will answer, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing
clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?” He will reply, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.” Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. (Matthew 25:35-46, NIV)

As we compare and contrast Lazarus’ sonnet with these Scriptural passages, we see the divine urgency in the call for Christians to embody a holy love that transcends time, space, and place. Just as Emma Lazarus gives Lady Liberty’s words to the “tired, poor and huddled masses,” God urges us to acknowledge and meet the needs of our fellow humans who, through such injustices as persecution, oppression, war-torn separation, gender brutalization, and tyrannical political ideologies, find their way to our shores and borders.

Christian social workers have an additional responsibility as image bearers, as they are in the unique position of authority to directly impact the lives of the “tired, poor and huddled masses,” those who are oppressed, and those in need who fit the description in Matthew 25 of having practical and significant need. Through culturally competent intervention, having knowledge, awareness and skills that can meet specific needs and advocate for others, social workers influence change in social structures that perpetuate inequality (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Christian social workers represent Christ through their actions, by loving in practical ways both with and without words. Those entering our country through immigration come with pasts often laden with trauma. The need for advocacy is great. The call for love is paramount.

**A Human Issue**

The immigrant and the refugee are not new identities within God’s created beings. These groups have been defined as people who were born in one country and relocated to another (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). The difference is that one group left voluntarily while the other was forced out when their human rights were somehow violated. Those who are refugees have fled due to a lack of safety, the inability to provide for their families and protect their children, and the very real fear of death, disease or destitution. The plight of refugees and the existence of immigrants at this point in history is a reality that has been brought to the forefront by mass media reporting, but it is not new. The movement of people into regions, territories, and land masses existed from the very first movement of Adam and Eve out from the Garden into new lands. As this migration continued through the Abrahamic land journey, Noah’s flood journey, and the conquering of tribes and nations over centuries, people have inhabited the land and invaded the land. Acknowledging this truth may help us, as Christians, to see that
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this is a real and perpetual social issue, and that God, in His Trinitarian
holistic goodness, cares about His humanity.

As Christians, we find our new citizenship and see that this land is
filled with an abundance of Kingdom citizens that form the body of Christ.
Wherever we are located, in the place we call our earthly home, we can
now live out our Kingdom conviction and compulsion to love. So, what is
it we are compelled to do as image bearers of Christ, as ambassadors of the
One who came to redeem all humanity? What is the particular, embodied
divine work of faith communities in the lives of immigrants and refugees?
We have the rightful and honorable invitation from God to participate in
the work of reconciliation. God is intricately and deliberately engaged with
all people and their holistic needs, and faith communities are a conduit
for the ongoing incarnation of this holy love and liberating life. Christian
social workers, as professionals who are trained in specific intervention and
advocacy skills, are in the fortunate position to do the same.

Core Social Work Values

It is critical that Christian social workers integrate their own values
with the values of the profession. Three of the core values of the social
work profession apply directly to our work with the sojourner, or those
who are displaced. The commitment to social justice, the dignity and worth
of the individual, and the importance of human relationships must all be
considered when interacting with client systems at the micro, macro, and
mezzo level (NASW, 2017, 2008). Relationships and communities that are
intercultural, restorative, and reconciled have the hope of being redemptive,
striving to reflect and bear God’s image in the world. Faith communities
and Christian social workers must decide to do the difficult work of em-
bracing diversity, promoting equity, and fighting injustice with diligence,
authenticity, and examination. In order to do this, we must first recognize
that our identity lies fully and centrally in Christ. We must tap into our
capacity to yield to the power of the Holy Spirit in humble adoration and
to see others through the godly lens of mercy, grace and love, which is a
birthright of our Kingdom identity.

The values of our faith speak to our work as social workers. A Kingdom
identity seeks out the work of God in the needs of the world, and the identity
of a Christian social worker embraces the professional core values of service,
social justice, the dignity and worth of the person, the importance of human
relationships, integrity, and competence (NASW, 2017). As dual citizens (of
everth and heaven), we can integrate these identities and function effectively
in these transformative values in our work, as well as in His workmanship.

The following are some of the distinctive Kingdom values that
Christian social workers can know, experience, and live out freely as we
embody our own liberation through Christ:

- God created all people in the image of God; therefore, people are created sacred. We can acknowledge and believe that all people are worthy of dignity and humane love.
- God is at work to bring His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. We can recognize that issues of human rights and inequity are an invitation to God's grace by which we can cooperate with God's work to reconcile all people to Himself through the gospel message.
- God intends and expects justice. We must—and ought to—defend the cause of the powerless, marginalized, oppressed, and disenfranchised, and advocate and offer rightful agency to all peoples.
- Christ's love for us compels us to love our neighbor. We must engage in kindness, compassion, and invitation to the stranger, widow, orphan, and those in need or subjected to inequities and injustices.
- Grace abounds in and through Jesus Christ. We will seek to understand without judgment and offer patience and peace to those we serve, so they might receive God's transformational love freely.
- Christians are compelled by the greatest commandments to “love the Lord your God” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:29, NIV). We strive to live in perfected holy love with God and offer this unconditional love to others and each other.
- Christians have an eternal citizenship in the Kingdom that transcends earthly locations. We can and ought to submit to God's Kingdom authority and to His two greatest commandments, while also honoring earthly laws whenever possible.
- The Great Commission delivers the good news of freedom and new life. We are to follow Christ's example to make disciples of all peoples by declaring good news of freedom, life and love.

**Culturally Competent Social Work and Kingdom Values**

The social work profession has the capacity to make a great impact on our nation through policy, advocacy, and practice (Healy, 2008). Social work graduates trained in cultural competence are equipped with the knowledge and passion needed to speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves due to language barriers and oppression. Christian social workers bear the image of Christ in their personal and professional lives, and are often called to bridge social, cultural and international differences. The values of God's Kingdom and of social work can work together to create a personal and professional advocacy during the work to meet the needs of
diverse people groups, including immigrants, refugees and all who sojourn. A quest to deeply love all people can be enacted through personal contact and service, as well as lobbying for a change in a system that is broken.

The Bible is filled with verses that command God’s people to welcome the sojourner. The Israelites knew what it was like to be aliens and unwelcomed, and they were told, “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19, New King James Version). In Leviticus, this mandate was extended to a complete welcoming of the sojourner: “The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34, NIV).

Nash, Wong, and Trln (2006) provide insight into the ways social workers can use their skill set to help immigrants and refugees. At the macro level, this involves a focus on advocacy, social justice, and the rights of all humans. Mezzo work includes working with the community to ensure that adequate resources are available, accessible, and affordable. Individual work is done at the micro level to help individuals deal with past trauma and loss. Family needs are addressed at this level as well as helping individuals feel safe and healthy on an emotional and physical level. All of these practical ways of meeting human need can be motivated by divine love, embodying Kingdom values and honoring God’s commandments, as we work in practical ways as Christian social workers.

**Conclusion**

The NASW Code of Ethics states that “the mission of the social work profession is to enhance the well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of all people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty” (NASW, 2017; 2008, p.1). Working to reduce and prevent psychological harm for immigrants is a heritage of the social work profession’s history (Chang-Muy & Congress, 2008). It is a critical time in our country to stand up for the rights of those who are rejected because they were not born in the United States. As Christian social workers embody the love of God, they become a conduit for acceptance, inclusion, and positive societal change. This is done through hospitality, practical advocacy, and the reconciliation of diverse individuals, groups and cultures.

The writer of Colossians defines reconciliation in this way: “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior, but now He has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you as holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation” (Colossians 1:21-22, NIV). When we live out a life of reconciliation, those who were once enemies become friends (McGee, 2003). That is the desired response to the sojourner as we call on social workers to lead the way.
References


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Bringing Refugees from Crisis to Flourishing: The Role of Resettlement Agencies and the Church in Facilitating Integration and Stability

Mary Baxter

Refugee resettlement in recent months has become an issue of intense debate in the United States. An issue that was once viewed as a humanitarian one has now taken on political significance. It has become a commonly discussed subject in public circles and one that requires an opinion regarding its good or evil. Despite these overarching debates, resettlement agencies continue to do the work of refugee resettlement that they are contracted by the U.S. Government to do. However, within World Relief, one of these resettlement agencies, a different debate is taking place. There is a continual evaluation of the scope and impact of the agency's work, and whether or not best practices are being used to serve refugee clients. This paper will explore the concept of human flourishing within the context of refugee populations and identify suggestions for successful practices to better guide clients into transformation. My current role within World Relief as a Resettlement Specialist has been to work directly with refugee clients to provide services and case management during their first few months in the United States. This experience has helped to inform the topic of this article and issues related to refugees and refugee resettlement. It has also given me opportunities to contemplate the concept of flourishing as it relates to the integration of refugee clients into society.

The Refugee Crisis and Resettlement

We are in the midst of a refugee crisis. This article promotes the use of best practices and the importance of care for refugees. A refugee, “under international and U.S. law…is someone outside of his or her own country
with a well-founded fear of persecution in that country based on: (1) race; (2) religion; (3) nationality; (4) membership in a particular social group and/or (5) political opinion” (Refugee Council USA, 2017, para 1). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are 21.3 million refugees worldwide and 65.3 million forcibly displaced people (UNHCR, 2016, p. 2). As wars continue to rage in countries around the world and persecution is perpetrated among religious minorities and ethnic groups, masses of people continue to flee conflict in order to find safety and peace for themselves and their families. For them, the decision is not between leaving or staying, but between leaving or dying. Of these individuals, most flee to a neighboring country, few are able to return home after time, and even less are resettled in a third country. In 2014, “only about one-half of 1 percent were resettled to any new third country” like the U.S. (Bauman, Soerens, & Smeir, 2016, p. 87). Resettlement occurs when refugees have no option of returning home or integrating into the country to which they fled. In the U.S., this process is “…only for those who demonstrate the greatest and most immediate need for protection and takes place after eligible refugees undergo a rigorous selection, security vetting and medical screening process” (Refugee Council USA, 2017, para 2). This screening process can take between eighteen months and 3 years (Bauman, Soerens, & Smeir, 2016, p. 79). In the 2016 U.S. fiscal year, most resettled refugees came from the countries of Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, and Syria (Refugee Council USA, 2017, para 3).

Care for refugees comes from a biblical foundation. God speaks specifically and often about this category of people, separating them out from other groups. “The Hebrew word ger – translated variously into English as foreigner, resident, alien, stranger, sojourner, or immigrant – appears ninety-two times in the Old Testament” (Bauman, Soerens, & Smeir, 2016, p. 30). For example:

“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:33-34, English Standard Version)

“The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (Psalm 146:9, English Standard Version).

Jesus also brought attention to the stranger, stating that those who care for the needy are doing so as if caring for Jesus himself:
“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me”
(Matthew 25:35, English Standard Version, italics added)

Another reason this is important is because of the humanity and personhood of refugees. “We ought to love refugees because they are our neighbors, but also because the Bible teaches us to value them since, like us, they are made in the image of God” (Bauman, Soerens, & Smeir, 2016, p. 36). Refugees are simply people who, because of certain circumstances, have been given the title ‘refugee.’ This does not have any impact on the truth that they are created by God and made in his own image.

The United States operates a refugee resettlement program in response to worldwide humanitarian needs. As described by the UNHCR:

Refugees are resettled across the country through affiliate offices of the nine national resettlement agencies... that resettle refugees on behalf of the U.S. Government. Resettlement agencies help newly arrived refugees settle into local communities and provide a wide range of services that promote self-sufficiency. (UNHCR, 2017, para 1)

World Relief is one of these agencies that contracts with the U.S. Government to resettle refugees. Founded in 1944 in response to the humanitarian crisis in Europe after World War II, the mission of World Relief is “to empower the local church to serve the most vulnerable” (World Relief, Home, 2017, para. 1). Services are provided both nationally and internationally, not only for refugees, but also for other vulnerable populations. As the organization states, “with initiatives that focus on disaster response, health and child development, refugee and immigration services, economic development and peacebuilding, we work holistically with the local church to stand for the sick, the widowed, the orphaned, the alienated, the displaced, the devastated, the marginalized, and the disenfranchised” (World Relief, About, 2017, para. 2). In regard to refugees, World Relief has been working with the government to resettle refugees since 1979, the only evangelical organization to do so (World Relief, “Our history,” 2017, para. 4).

World Relief’s evangelical foundation leads it to pursue excellence in resettlement services that are beneficial to the client and the community. The Bible states that “whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (Colossians 3:23, English Standard Version). For this reason, World Relief employees seek ways to carry out the work given to them (specifically refugee resettlement for the purposes of this article) with integrity, excellence, and quality. This desire has driven organizational evaluation, discussions, and ultimately practices.
Resettlement and Integration

World Relief is pursuing the concept of “integration” in its work of refugee resettlement. According to Tim Breene, CEO, and Scott Arbeiter, President (2017), “our work of ‘welcoming the stranger’ here in the U.S. looks increasingly beyond initial resettlement to longer term integration within the host community, leveraging the love of local church volunteers who bring their resources and commitment alongside our deep technical expertise” (p. 1). The integration described does not merely refer to ensuring that clients find jobs and connect with their local community, although that is certainly a component. In reality, integration is much more complex and multifaceted and denotes well-being in all aspects of life. Integration is neither isolation, nor self-reliance, nor immobility. Rather, it can be thought of as “…the inclusion of refugees and migrants in all spheres of social, cultural and economic life. This helps refugees and migrants to achieve their human potential and make a positive contribution to the economies and societies of all receiving countries. It promotes social cohesion” (Kimoon, 2016, para 63).

A similar idea is one that scholars have lately termed human flourishing, but many words have been used to attempt to describe it, such as well-being, wholeness, shalom, justice, and success. A definition provided by Fredrickson and Losada (2005) is that “to flourish means to live within an optimal range of human functioning, one that connotes goodness, generativity, growth, and resilience.” Flourishing therefore helps to inform integration as these characteristics become goals in its multiple areas of development. Dr. Gil Odendaal, Senior Vice President of Integral Mission at World Relief, states that “we want people to flourish, and in order for that to happen we need to help them meet all of their needs” (2017, p. 9). He lists these needs as physical, mental, emotional, social, and making good choices. He then adds that all of these areas are connected to and influenced by the spiritual (p. 9-10). Without flourishing in all of these areas, true transformation and integration cannot take place.

The concept of this form of integration is not a new one but an innately biblical one. The Bible has much to say on the topic, and God expresses his desire for mankind to experience flourishing. Tim Keller (2010) describes this Biblical concept, one he terms ‘shalom,’ as “…complete reconciliation, a state of the fullest flourishing in every dimension—physical, emotional, social, and spiritual—because all relationships are right, perfect, and filled with joy” (p. 174).

God explicitly offers this kind of transformed life to his followers who trust in him, and one might argue that these characteristics of well-being and shalom are only for those who have put their trust in him. But Sanneh (2003) comments that the Christian faith, including the desire for flourish-
ing and shalom, is helpful for all of society and not just for Christians. He states that “the norms of faith and forgiveness, undergirded by the practice of the arts of charitable action, community solidarity, trust, and faithfulness, offer a way forward for all of society. The Christian example is part of the public good, not apart from it” (p.33). Keller (2010) also comments on this by connecting the concept of shalom with social justice:

In general, to ‘do justice’ means to live in a way that generates a strong community where human beings can flourish. Specifically, however, to ‘do justice’ means to go to places where the fabric of shalom has broken down, where the weaker members of societies are falling through the fabric, and to repair it. (p. 177)

The importance of transformation is that it restores the right order, that which God intended, to our lives, relationships, and world. Without it, individuals and societies continue in discord, brokenness, despondency, and unrest. They are unable to fully enter into a life marked by flourishing and well-being.

Refugees are particularly vulnerable in the areas of life that contribute to well-being and flourishing. In regard to the physical, refugees have limited financial resources and are therefore less likely to have proper housing, adequate food, and adequate medical care. Before being resettled, they have gone through periods during which they lacked safety and security (Ostrander, Melville, & Berthold, 2017). A large number of refugees have limited to no education. According to a 2016 report by the UNHCR, only 50% of refugee children attend primary school, only 22% of refugee adolescents receive a secondary education, and only 1% go to a university (UNHCR, “Missing out”, para 4). In regard to the emotional, refugees most often have experiences of loneliness, depression, psychological distress, and trauma due to the persecution and suffering they have experienced (Bemak & Chung, 2017; Segal & Mayadas, 2005). In regard to the social, refugees are often separated from families and traditional communities, and therefore when they arrive in a new country they do not often have a natural social network that they can rely upon in times of need (Wilmsen, 2013). Refugees rarely have the luxury of planning their futures while fleeing, and tend to live reactionary lives, forced to make decisions based upon negative and unwanted circumstances (Bemak & Chung, 2017; Segal & Mayadas, 2005). Refugees also lack an easy understanding of how to access resources to meet these needs once they arrive in a new country (Segal & Mayadas, 2005). In order to experience true flourishing, a person who is a refugee must experience transformation in all of these areas and receive healing and freedom from the pain and suffering of the past. It is at this point that resettlement agencies and social workers, church volunteers,
and community partners can step in to help facilitate integration that leads to flourishing.

The Role of Resettlement Agencies and the Church

Refugee resettlement agencies have a unique, privileged position in moving refugees forward in the direction of transformation because they are the first point of contact for a refugee arriving in the United States. If flourishing through integration and stability are goals of resettlement agencies for refugee clients, how are they achieved? Currently, resettlement work begins with the Cooperative Agreement, the contract between the agency and the U.S. Government. The agreement necessitates the provision of basic needs for newly arriving refugees. These services include safe and sanitary housing, furnishings, culturally appropriate food, applying for public benefits, applying for appropriate documents such as social security cards and identification, registering adults for English as a Second Language (ESL) and children for school, assisting the refugee with medical services and immunizations, assisting with employment, and providing cultural orientation. The resettlement period for accomplishing these tasks lasts for three months and then the case is officially closed. These tasks provide a foundation for the journey towards stability and integration as they focus on the primary, physical needs of clients.

Because of the guidance provided by the Cooperative Agreement for the beginning stages of resettlement and integration, there are many refugee clients who arrive, pass through the resettlement period and at the end are progressing quickly and easily towards integration and stability. They are connecting with community, receiving education, are employed, and are building a life for themselves and for their families. For others, more time and support are needed in order for them to enter into a state of integration and stability. As an example, below is an actual case of a World Relief client, using pseudonyms.

Case Study

A family of four arrived at the beginning of 2017. They progressed well in their resettlement and by the end of the resettlement period one adult was working, another was receiving SSI, and they had adequate income for their needs. They connected to a local community and are learning to navigate services and the community on their own. However, since arrival the mother, ‘Anne,’ has complained about ongoing pain in her arm and back that prevents her from sleeping and completing normal tasks. After several doctor appointments and various tests, the results of one test came back recommending an evaluation for cancer. The family has limited
understanding of how to navigate the healthcare system, much less for something as complex as cancer. ‘Anne’ needs help ensuring that she has insurance to cover the cost of medical bills, since her short-term Refugee Medical Assistance through Medicaid will soon expire. She needs help talking with physicians about her condition and her care. She is currently still relying on her World Relief case manager to help with these medical appointments, arranging interpretation and transportation, and determining next steps, even though her case is closed. In this area of need, the family is not flourishing. Despite their beginning connection to the community, they have not integrated enough to understand the resources available to them as they relate to this particular circumstance.

Challenges to Integration

As families remain with barriers to integration such as these, agencies must establish their role and purpose in addressing these needs. There are several challenges if one assumes that the resettlement agency alone is tasked to bring about flourishing and transformation. The first and most apparent challenge is the time frame of the agency’s involvement. While three months is sufficient time to complete the Cooperative Agreement tasks, this period is insufficient when considering complete integration and stability and leading clients to flourishing, which typically takes years to develop.

Another challenge is the case load. Case managers often deal with 15-30 cases at once, depending upon the number of arrivals. Each case comes with complicated and individualized strengths and needs, and it can be difficult to complete the Cooperative Agreement tasks, much less to contemplate how to further bring each client to integration and stability. In addition, as new cases arrive, older cases tend to be engaged less in order to help the new families who arrive with their more basic needs.

Finally, a more recent challenge is the uncertainty of the refugee program. The current political climate has led to many changes and shifts in the work and structure of resettlement agencies, and has affected employees of these organizations, closed entire offices, and impacted the refugee clients. As the program continues, there is concern for its future and the decisions that will be made by the current administration regarding its policies and programs.

Completing the Framework of Integration

Because of the challenges listed above, the Cooperative Agreement and resettlement period provide a good basis for integration and stability, but they are only the starting point. How then do resettlement agencies, such as World Relief, complete the framework for bringing about transformation in the lives of refugee clients? Part of the role of the agency is to jump start
the process in a constructive and comprehensive way, alongside local NGOs and nonprofits, community partners and leaders, employers and businesses. Ultimately, though, and in line with World Relief’s mission, the Church is a powerful agent to bring about lasting transformation in the lives of clients. Resettlement agencies are especially positioned to bring the Church into this process as they are the first resource for refugees beginning a new life in the United States.

Traditionally, the Church has been concerned and involved with bringing transformation to individuals and communities both economically, spiritually and socially. The Church is therefore already prepared to step into the process begun by government policies and resettlement agencies to help lead clients to true transformation and flourishing. World Relief is already committed to mobilizing this resource in serving refugees, as described in its mission. It mobilizes church teams called Good Neighbor Teams, which are groups of volunteers from a specific church who commit to come alongside the refugee client and walk him or her through the transition to the United States with more longevity and intensity than the agency. It also mobilizes individual volunteers in this process when whole church teams are not available. Both team members and individuals participate in a staff-led training before beginning work with clients. The ultimate goal is to connect each case with a volunteer or volunteer team who can assist the client with transformation in their new life.

What does this look like practically, and what practices between resettlement agencies and church volunteers bring about flourishing? The remainder of this article presents some suggestions for how to accomplish this, based upon the work at World Relief. These suggestions are in no way comprehensive, but they provide some ideas about how to move clients forward in integration and stability.

Before continuing, it is important to emphasize that the refugee client is not to be absent from these discussions, but rather the center point. As Keller (2010) points out:

…if we are talking of community development, it must mean that the people of the community are ‘the primary agents of action’…they must be in control of the type and pace of change that will affect their families, lives, and economic life. Any other kind of ‘help’ usually keeps residents in dependency, because it doesn’t really bring social and economic capital into the neighborhood. (p. 119)

We have to remember that even though refugee clients are vulnerable because of trauma, persecution, circumstances, and limited resources, they are experts on their own lives and needs, as well as those of their community, and have many strengths to offer. As Hutchinson and Dorsett (2012) state,
“refugee people entering a new country and adapting to a new lifestyle need time to settle into their new surroundings and to be given an opportunity to find their way and draw upon existing resources and strengths” (p. 57).

**Opportunities for Best Practices**

*Client-centered, Strengths-based Practice*

In order to facilitate integration, client-centered and strengths-based practices must be utilized by case workers, who can draw volunteers and clients into the process. “Strengths-based frameworks can assist practitioners to identify refugee people’s strengths and resources and assist them in mobilizing pathways to build resilience” (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012, p. 66). One example of how to facilitate this is by using a document called the Self-Sufficiency and Service Plan. It is required for each refugee client and is completed with input from both the client and the case manager. The document goes through a background of the client, including education, work experience, and skills/trainings. The client then shares goals for the future, and action steps are created, typically in the categories of employment, English language acquisition, and training. This document is a good start to facilitating client-centered, strengths-based discussion about experiences, goals, and future actions.

However, depending on what questions are asked, the information gained about the client may not be comprehensive. For example, after completing the document with a client, I discovered later that the client liked to draw and paint but had not thought this information relative to the plan. In order to avoid this, the conversation can be expanded past general questions and include questions that are more open-ended and related to integration, such as the following:

- What does a good life look like to you?
- What do you need to be healthy and happy?
- How do you want to be a part of your new community?
- Where do you think you are now in relation to where you hope to be?

Also, following a strengths-based model, the refugee client can be asked what he or she perceives as his or her strengths. Questions such as:

- What skills are you good at?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- How do you use your time?
Another suggestion is that, instead of action steps relating simply to practical needs, steps can be created based on the refugee's hopes for a 'good life.' Specifically, what steps can be taken to improve the social connectivity, or the happiness of the client, or the education of the client beyond ESL. The document can then serve as an ongoing reference for the resettlement agency, community partners, and refugee client in order to remind them of the specific and individualized goals of the refugee relating to flourishing.

These conversations can be beneficial in helping the client think more about flourishing, and in order to promote accountability and continuation towards the goals set by the client, church volunteers can participate in assisting the family with the creation of, and work towards, the plan. This is, of course, contingent upon the consent of the client, but allows volunteers to be aware of what hopes and goals the client has for the future and how to help the client achieve those goals. The volunteers will be involved much longer than the case manager and even some community partners, and so they are the best resource for helping to guide the client to their goals of well-being and flourishing. Volunteers also have more time to discuss these goals with clients and facilitate the journey, as case managers are often meeting with a client to accomplish a task or fulfill a need.

It may not always be possible for volunteers to participate in the creation of the plan, but they can still play an important role in its development and fulfillment. In the example provided above of the client who likes to draw and paint, this information was discovered by the Good Neighbor Team volunteers who subsequently provided drawing and painting supplies for the client and notified me of these skills. They have continued involvement with the family, and despite not having been involved in the plan, they have helped the clients fulfill some of its goals, such as teaching them to drive, orienting them to the community, building friendships and even exposing them to new activities, such as rock climbing. The involvement of these volunteers has been crucial to help lead the family in their journey towards integration and stability.

**Cultural Competency**

There can exist some tension between cultural norms and an assumption of what is needed for transformation. Case managers and resettlement agencies must therefore “…work with cultural humility…” (Metzl & Hansen as cited in Ostrander, Mellville & Berthold, 2017, p. 73) and guide volunteers in culturally appropriate practices. Sometimes, working with people of another culture is a new experience for a volunteer. Therefore, they automatically assume that the transformation needed for the client looks a certain way that is grounded in their own worldview and informed by their own cultural orientation. They can be unaware of how much cul-
ture and experience create different views of what a good life looks like. For example, a recent case included a young unmarried Muslim daughter in her early 20s. She was too old to enter high school. Her family was very traditional and viewed her role as staying home and caring for other family members, and possibly doing some crafts at home to then sell for income. The volunteer working with her frequently stated that she wished the young woman would be freed by her family to go out and find employment. The volunteer said it would be beneficial for her to get out of the house, have an income, and have some independence. I had the opportunity to talk with the client in a safe environment apart from her family and ask her what she wanted for her life. She said that she wanted the same that her family wanted, that is to stay home and work some out of the home. I was able to communicate this back to the volunteer who then arranged for the client to have sewing lessons in her home. In this situation, a flourishing life looked very different to the client and to the volunteer. The volunteer now has an understanding of how to encourage the client with her goals, but the volunteer can also hold open future opportunities for education and employment should those become a desire for the client. At this time, however, the client sees her needs as being met, she has social support, and she is emotionally happy. She does not see any needs beyond this. Resettlement case managers can help engage volunteers in conversation when situations like these arise and help them recognize that “…cultural competency implies that practitioners do not privilege their ideals, values and belief systems over other people’s worldviews” (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012, p. 71).

Volunteers also serve as cultural brokers to new refugees. They can serve as bridges between the refugee and the new culture by providing information about cultural norms, community resources, and family practices. By building a relationship with the client, they provide a safe space for the refugee to ask questions, learn, and make mistakes. Resettlement agencies, using guidelines from the Cooperative Agreement, provide cultural orientation for clients, but volunteers can engage in an ongoing orientation that is deeper and more personal. The volunteers themselves also grow through the experience by gaining knowledge of a new culture, making new friends, and expanding their worldview. Both the client and the volunteer are experts in their own field and experiences, and by coming together have the opportunity to share them with each other, a key component to integration.

Community Engagement

Another opportunity to help lead clients to transformation is to involve all community partners at the beginning of resettlement, including church
volunteers. This is important because “…resilience in refugee people is not essentially concerned with just one's innate qualities and strengths but extends further to encompass the person's external environment. This includes family, social support and ethnic community” (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012, p. 68). Case managers often know within the first couple of weeks after arrival what foreseeable challenges will be present in a client's life, such as a lack of childcare or social support, significant medical needs, opposition to employment and lack of personal agency, poor mental health, etc. As the Cooperative Agreement requirements are being completed, community partners can be brought in at the beginning once a need is identified to prevent a crisis in the future. Church volunteers can again play a significant role when involved in these conversations. They gain a better understanding of client circumstances and needs and can also contribute to the conversations based on their own involvement with the client. It is easier for everyone to focus on their own work, but it is more beneficial to share the load, work together, and communicate with each other about how to lead clients to better development. It is also necessary to avoid a rescue mentality of trying to be the one to meet the needs of a client, and to recognize when other organizations or volunteers can better serve a client's needs.

When discussing church and community involvement, it is crucial to include ethnic churches in this category. In a study on religious coping strategies among African refugee groups, Adedoyin et al. (2016) state that:

…African immigrant religious places of worship (especially churches and mosques) should be in collaborative and partnership relationships with social work and other healthcare agencies to better serve African refugee populations. The proposed collaboration may help to tear down every imaginary wall of suspicion, fear and differences that may otherwise impede professional and therapeutic interventions. Partnership between social service providers and African immigrant clergy also bridges the cultural and language divide and fosters trust and cooperation. (p. 104)

Based on experiences at World Relief, involvement of ethnic churches with refugee populations is beneficial not only for helping African clients integrate, but all clients who have religious backgrounds.

Direct Communication

It is important to mention the role of expectations within the scope of refugee resettlement work. Refugees come with expectations, agencies have expectations, and volunteers have expectations. Oftentimes they
agree, but they can also have points of disagreement. As a case manager and resettlement agency, it is important to gain an understanding of refugee expectations at the beginning of the resettlement period and help them manage their expectations by sharing with the refugees what they can expect from the agency and being in the U.S. This can be done by “...effectively using directiveness and appropriate self-disclosure” in order to establish credibility and authority (Segal & Mayadas, 2005, p. 569). Case managers must also recognize what expectations they have for the refugee and how that impacts their work. In the same way, the case manager can help set up expectations for refugee and volunteer involvement. If expectations are discussed at the beginning, volunteers can avoid burnout and refugees can have a better understanding of what boundaries and limitations exist.

**Client Empowerment**

Integration is not built on dependence. Both refugees and volunteers need to understand the role of personal motivation and the consequences of actions. The role of the case manager and of volunteers is not to protect individuals from the consequences of their own actions, and not to make the refugee client rely upon either the agency or the volunteer for something that the client can do for himself or herself. This will, in the long run, lead to greater flourishing through client empowerment. An example of this is a volunteer who was matched with a young family that needed assistance with transportation to various appointments. Rather than providing the transportation, the volunteer took the family on the public transit system and oriented them on how to use this system for their own transportation needs rather than having to rely upon others. Another example is a volunteer who worked with a single male client who had medical issues that needed to be addressed. The volunteer went with the client to his medical appointments and showed him how to sign in, how to fill out paperwork, and how to interact with the staff at a U.S. doctor's office, rather than simply doing these tasks for the client. This enabled the client to then accomplish these tasks on his own. Van Hook (2016) comments on empowering traumatized clients, such as refugees, when discussing spiritual issues, but the concept applies to all areas and not just the spiritual:

…following the client’s lead is especially important for traumatized individuals because they have been left feeling that someone has taken control over their lives and they do not have the power to make decisions. Acknowledging and respecting the client's critical decision-making power represents an important step in creating a safe relationship. (p. 18)
Integral Mission

Ultimately, services described in this article that are offered using client-centered, strengths-based, and culturally-appropriate practices help lead clients to integration as equals in society. This occurs as clients learn how to use resources, how to connect with community, how to navigate culture, and how to identify and work towards their goals of flourishing. Most of what has been discussed involves the physical, social, mental, and emotional areas of development. However, case managers and church volunteers can also play a significant role in the spiritual development of clients as they work on the other areas. This is how World Relief’s Christian identity and emphasis on a concept called Integral Mission impacts the services provided. Integral Mission is described on the World Relief Durham (2017) website as the combination of word and deed, or sharing the good news of Jesus through service and action. The holistic services offered as a means to bring about integration and flourishing are the deeds. The word aspect is that as they work with clients on practical needs to help them towards transformation, they demonstrate the care and affection of Christ and have the opportunity to proclaim the gospel. As Keller (2010) states:

…if neighbors see church members loving their city through astonishing, sacrificial deeds of compassion, they will be much more open to the church’s message. Deeds of mercy and justice should be done out of love, not simply as a means to the end of evangelism. And yet there is no better way for Christians to lay a foundation for evangelism than by doing justice. (p. 142)

Church volunteers play a particularly important role in this, since they will ultimately be more involved than the resettlement agency and for a longer period, giving them additional opportunities to demonstrate the love of God. They are also doing so out of a desire to serve and without receiving any compensation or reward, which can be a powerful witness to the client. Therefore, the connection of church volunteers with refugee clients is vital if the clients are to experience continued transformation in all areas, including the spiritual.

Conclusion

These suggestions are ways in which to start the process of transformation, and this can be the resettlement agencies’ role in helping to bring about integration and stability in a refugee client’s life. As Odendaal (2017) notes, “growth is a process” (p. 11). It takes a great deal of time to bring about these changes and they do not happen suddenly or swiftly. Rather,
it is small changes that lead to the ultimate goal of turning “...the poor man's life into a delight” (Keller, 2010, p. 13). And once this transformation happens in individuals, it can lead to flourishing in families, communities and societies. Refugees do not have to remain refugees. Our desire is that their life becomes a delight and that they become flourishing citizens of the United States.

References


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Refugee Empowerment and Faith Communities: A Qualitative Study

Elizabeth Patterson Roe & Jenny Bushnell

Based on 26 qualitative interviews, this article explores the perceptions of faith communities’ work with refugee communities with the goal of learning how Christian faith communities can best serve and empower resettled refugees. Findings showed how Christians and faith communities are serving and empowering the U.S. refugee population, while also indicating concerns for how faith communities can be perceived to be harmful in their practices. Results indicated the need for faith communities to be equipped to better understand and serve refugee communities in an anti-oppressive manner. Based on the research, recommendations are given on how to utilize social work theory and skills to prepare faith communities to facilitate the empowerment of refugees who have been resettled.

Although people have been coming to the United States to seek asylum for centuries, the U.S. refugee resettlement program officially began in 1948 when Europeans were fleeing their home countries during World War II due to persecution and war (Administration for Children and Families, n.d.). The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (2017) defines a refugee as:

someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

Since the beginning of the U.S. refugee program, faith-based organizations and congregations have had a key role, not only in providing support services for refugees, but also through acting as government contracted resettlement agents (Eby et al., 2011; McKinnon, 2009; Nawyn, 2006).
Many Christians believe in living out the gospel message by welcoming refugees in the midst of modern day world crises. Some Christians are responding to this crisis by providing services to refugees. However, in recent years, there has been much fear and concern for welcoming refugees. This paper presents a subset of results of a qualitative research study related to how Christian faith communities are both involved in refugee work and are perceived in their work with refugees. Results of this study can help both Christian social workers and faith communities better understand how to support the empowerment of refugee communities from an anti-oppressive practice perspective.

**Oppression and Empowerment**

In the book of Mark, Jesus states that the second greatest commandment in the Bible is “to love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31, New International Version). Who one’s neighbor is and how that love manifests itself can be lived out differently. Some Christians suggest our neighbor should only be our Christian neighbor; others suggest our neighbor includes all people in need regardless of religion (Goodstein, 2017). As we love our neighbors as ourselves, it is important to recognize oppression and facilitate empowerment. Numerous scriptures speak against oppression of marginalized groups, including foreigners and sojourners (examples include: Jeremiah 7:5-7, Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalm 146:7-9, Deuteronomy 24:19-21, Matthew 25:34-39). Yet the Christian church has a history of both empowerment and oppression when working cross-culturally (Case, 2012; Cronshaw, 2015; Mino, 2014).

Oppression, whether intentional or unintentional, can hinder empowerment. Mullaly (2002) describes oppression as:

“When a person is blocked from opportunities for self-development, is excluded from full participation in society, does not have certain rights that the dominant group takes for granted, or is assigned as second-class citizenship, not because of individual talent, merit, or failure, but because of his or her membership in a particular group or category of people (p. 28).”

While also addressing systemic oppression, anti-oppressive practice literature suggests that individuals must be agents of their own change so that they maintain and “gain greater control over all aspects of their lives and social environment” (Mullaly, 2002, p. 79). In this process, helpers must be careful not to repeat patterns of oppression. Lee (1996) suggests three interlocking dimensions as he defines empowerment:
“1) the development of a more positive and potent sense of self; 2) the construction of knowledge and capacity for more critical comprehension of social and political realities of one’s environment; 3) the cultivation of resources and strategies, or more functional competence, for attainment of personal and collective social goals, or liberation (p. 224).”

Through learning from both positive examples and past mistakes, modern theories of missions suggest that when working cross-culturally, one of the goals is to empower indigenous leadership in a culturally sensitive manner (Eitel, 1998; Smith; 1998; Tennent, 2010). Yet, there has been more awareness in recent times of how Christians who have good intentions when helping the marginalized can actually do harm when intending to help those they serve. This can hurt people in the process by creating dependency rather than empowering them (Corbett & Fikkert, 2009; Lupton, 2011; Zoma, 2014).

As refugees are given the opportunity to lead, both communities of faith and our most vulnerable neighbors benefit. Groody (2015) states: “mission done from the margins of the church, particularly by migrants themselves, is key to the church’s own renewal” (p. 319). Yet, Valtonen’s (2002) research reported that “Resettling refugees feel shackled by negative stereotypes, misinformation about their emigration motives and circumstances, and absence of background information on reasons for refugeedom” (p. 116). Valtonen encourages anti-oppressive practice methods to help eliminate these feelings of oppression.

Marsiglia and Kulis (2015) suggest that when working cross-culturally across social and economic boundaries, our own values, beliefs, and perspectives influence the relationships. If left unchecked, our values and beliefs can be a barrier creating unintentional oppression and impede empowerment. As perspectives have the potential to influence empowerment or oppression, a review of Christian perspectives on refugee resettlement will now be explored.

**Christian Perspectives on Refugee Resettlement**

The media have expressed conflicting opinions from church leaders and communities of faith regarding refugee resettlement, particularly in light of President Donald Trump’s 2017 executive orders related to immigration and refugee resettlement. Some individuals of faith and churches have responded by supporting refugees coming to America as part of their biblical calling to love their neighbor as themselves and to welcome the stranger. Others supported President Trump’s order to close the borders for a period to revamp the vetting process, feeling this would help protect the U.S. from terrorist attacks (Shellnut, 2017). Many fear that America is
losing its “national security” due to a perception that Muslims are entering our country as terrorists (Goodstein, 2017, para. 13).

There are variations of viewpoints from Christian leaders on this subject. For example, the head of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, Samuel Rodriguez, and Franklin Graham, an evangelical leader, have diverse perspectives on immigration issues, yet they share the view that while supporting refugee resettlement is important, so is the security of the United States (Green, 2017). Graham compares the United States to Jerusalem, where sometimes the walls and gates need to close to protect the nation (Johnson, 2017). Another varying perspective comes from Jim Daly, the President of Focus on the Family. Jim Daly believes in valuing refugees and their stories with a healthy immigration policy (Green, 2017).

Despite some negative perceptions of refugees, many Christian leaders have made the decisions to stand with refugees. In February 2017, 100 Evangelical Christian leaders signed a newspaper ad denouncing the refugee ban and supporting the Christian calling to “love our neighbor as we love ourselves,” stating that “compassion and security can co-exist” (Washington Post, 2017). Some, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, believe the executive order entailed religious persecution in banning refugees from all Muslim-specific countries (Darling, 2017; Gore, 2017). Similarly, Jenny Yang, the senior Vice President of World Relief, a faith-based refugee resettlement agency, supports refugee resettlement as part of the Christian calling to love all people (Green, 2017). The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops are also opposed to the executive orders (Green, 2017).

These perspectives not only influence Christians’ perspectives on refugee resettlement, they can also influence a refugee’s perspective on how the Church is receiving them, having the potential to foster further oppression or empowerment (Mullaly, 2002). Regardless of opinion, as refugees are being resettled, there are faith-based organizations (FBOs) and churches responding to the needs of refugees. Next, we will review the literature to explore the involvement of FBOs and churches in the resettlement process.

**Faith-Based Organizations’ (FBOs) Involvement in Refugee Resettlement**

More than half of the organizations that contract with the U.S. government to resettle refugees are faith-based (Riera & Poirier, 2014; UNHCR, 2017). However, according to a study in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania that surveyed over 4,000 congregations to evaluate faith-based communities’ work with refugees, only 5.2% reported major support towards the refugee community and 25% reported giving to programs that supported refugees (Ives, Sinh, & Cnaan, 2010).
There are a variety of perspectives on FBOs and churches involvement in refugee resettlement, suggesting that their involvement can be both an asset that empowers refugees in their process of resettlement, while also having the potential to be oppressive in some of their actions.

**Perspectives on Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)**

Both faith-based and secular organizations regularly partner with faith communities to provide goods and services for refugees (Eby, Iverson, Smyers and Kekic, 2011; Nawyn, 2006). Zoma (2014) suggests that FBOs’ work with refugees and asylum seekers is often perceived to be no different than that of secular organizations. Furthermore, FBOs frequently have networks and resources that secular organizations cannot access. Barneche (2014) suggests that FBOs that are not constrained by government regulations and eligibility requirements are an asset to refugee resettlement in order to fill in the gaps of needed services.

However, McKinnon (2009) examined the rhetoric utilized by FBOs in their recruitment of volunteers for refugee resettlement and found that FBOs tended to utilize language and tactics that place the volunteer in a position of power as “agents of change.” For example, they found FBOs use language to appeal to potential volunteers as “doers of good deeds” (McKinnon, 2009, p. 319). In addition, FBOs were helping refugees without seeking perspectives from refugees, thus potentially making refugees “immobile” in the relationship, and further perpetuating oppression.

Offering a more positive perspective, Nawyn’s (2006) research reported that religious practices among faith-based nonprofits in refugee resettlement tended to act as a form of community development. For example, they discovered that religious organizations were helping to bring immigrant and refugee communities together with others from their own religious community, such as linking refugees of Muslim faith with other refugees who shared the same religious and cultural practices. Also implementing practices that align with community development principles, Eby, Iverson, Smyers and Kekic (2011) reported FBOs have values that develop a “long-term community presence” and provide resources for the refugee that may not otherwise be available, such as links to the community and opportunities for advocating for refugees. Both Nawyn (2006) and Eby et al.’s (2011) studies indicate that faith communities are offering empowering approaches to refugee resettlement.

Riera and Poirier’s (2014) study on UNHCR’s cooperation with FBOs also reported examples of both empowering methods offered by FBOs and behaviors that can be oppressive. Strengths noted in this study were FBOs’ ability to provide hospitality, respect, and equality within their provision of services. Along with these positive attributes that faith-based communities
offer, their report also noted that when problems do arise when working with FBOs these problems are typically related to negative behavior towards those of other religions. They also expressed concern that some FBOs pressure people to convert in order to receive continued support.

Zoma (2014) suggests that FBOs also can offer religious and spiritual support that can be a “source of coping, recovery and resilience” (p. 46). However, she also suggests that refugees may not feel supported by faith-based agencies of a different faith than themselves, as refugees may feel those that are of the same faith as the FBO receive preferential treatment. Furthermore, Riera and Poirer (2014) noted instances of concerns related to gender stereotyping and lack of gender equality, HIV/AIDS discrimination, and discrimination against LGBTI individuals. They also suggest that some FBOs focus too much on charity and too little on human rights issues.

The literature reveals both positive contributions by FBOs and churches in their work with refugees and potential concerns that could oppress or hinder refugee empowerment. The review of the literature helped us further understand how those involved in refugee resettlement perceive church and FBO involvement so that we can work towards maximizing the opportunities for empowerment and anti-oppressive practice.

**Purpose**

The overall purpose of this study was to develop empowering, anti-oppressive methods for working in refugee resettlement. To ensure opportunity for the lived experiences of refugees to be shared, qualitative methodology was chosen for this research. This article focuses on the research results that relate specifically to participants’ perspectives on faith communities’ involvement in refugee resettlement. Through understanding how faith communities are perceived in their work with refugees, we can build awareness and help better equip faith communities to empower refugees in an anti-oppressive manner.

**Procedures**

The methodology of this qualitative study is based on Lofland et al.’s (2006) approach to design and it follows an interpretive approach. This included a step-by-step process, consisting of a literature review, the development of a semi-structured interview guide, and systematic coding of data to draw out themes and patterns based on the subjective reality of the participants (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Cresswell, 2007; Lofland et al, 2006). An anti-oppressive, post-positivistic approach was utilized throughout the study in order to develop interview questions and analyze the research from the perspective of former refugees (Lofland et al, 2006).
Initial interview questions were developed based on a literature review. Then three staff from World Relief Akron, a refugee resettlement agency in North East Ohio, gave their feedback on the methodology. Their feedback helped finalize the interview guide and determine the type of participants to seek for interviews. In order to gain multiple perspectives, participants were sought out who either had the lived experience of working with refugees and/or had been resettled as a refugee themselves (Padget, 2008). After receiving institutional IRB approval, participants were recruited through purposive sampling based on recommendations by people working in the field of refugee resettlement in North East Ohio. Later in the process, participants also recommended other participants (i.e., snowballing).

**Interview Process**

Interviews lasted approximately an hour. Utilizing a semi-structured interview guide, former refugees were asked to describe their story of arrival to the United States and then asked to describe their process of resettlement. Those working with refugees were asked about their work and goals of working with refugees. All participants were asked to describe their perspectives on empowerment and oppression of refugees. Finally, all participants were asked to suggest ways in which professionals, faith communities, and the community in general can better serve resettled refugees in order to promote empowerment and reduce oppression.

**Increasing the Rigor of the Study**

Steps were taken to increase the rigor of this qualitative study. Purposive sampling was utilized to select participants with a variety of experiences (Lofland, 2006). After the interviews were transcribed, the data were inputted into Atlas.ti software and coded for themes. During the analysis, bracketing was utilized through coding, memoing, and constant comparison (Creswell, 2007; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Recording and transcribing the exact words of interviews, along with providing rich and thick descriptions, increased the confirmability of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Liamputtong, 2009). To increase trustworthiness and credibility, two outside evaluators reviewed transcriptions and developed themes separate from the lead researcher, in order to compare and confirm results (Lapan, 2004).

**Sample**

Twenty interviews were conducted with a total of 26 participants. All of the participants in this study either work directly with refugees or came to the U.S. as refugees. Six of the interviews were in pairs, with family members or
colleagues who work together, and the rest of the interviews were completed individually. Nineteen of the people interviewed are currently working with refugees. Sixteen participants self-identified as male and twelve as female. The ages ranged from 21-75 years old. Thirteen of the participants came to the U.S. as immigrants, nine of those with refugee status. The others who were born outside of the U.S. came under a variety of immigration visas. Those who identified as former refugees self-identified as Nepali speaking Bhutanese (5), Syrian (2), Iraqi (1) and Vietnamese (1). Those born outside of the U.S., who were not refugees, self-identified as from Hong Kong (1), Korea (1), Germany (1), and from South East Asia (1). U.S.-born participants (13) all self-identified as Caucasian or White. All participants lived in Northeast Ohio at the time of the interview except for one who was living in Germany. All but two participants were fluent in English. An interpreter was used for communication with these two participants. Pseudonyms were used in this study to protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

**Defining the Term Refugee**

All participants who came to the U.S. as refugees had been resettled in the U.S. and have legal status as refugees. They are all citizens or on a pathway to citizenship if they so desire. Resettled refugees typically receive resettlement assistance for 90 days through the refugee resettlement program. Most former refugees who were interviewed had conflicting feelings between being proud of their story as a refugee and their desire to be seen as a human being without the oppressive baggage or stereotype they feel goes along with the title, “refugee.” Therefore, the language “former refugee” was chosen for this study, in order to recognize the stories of those studied, while valuing their dignity and worth as new Americans. The results of the study will now be discussed.

**Results**

**Motivations for working with refugees**

Many participants had motivation to work with refugees that linked directly with principles of empowerment. Daniel, a former refugee from Nepal who works with refugees, said his work was first focused on working “within the (refugee) church,” as a pastor, but now he wants to work “outside the church.” He said, “I want to reach out in the community (of refugees). But now, right now what I am encouraging our people to (do is to) sustain ourselves.”

Kris, a refugee case specialist, expressed personal faith motivation behind this desire:
To come beside or come up under refugees in order to help them be self-sustaining...work ourselves out of a job. I think that's why we are here....My hope is to be the hands and feet of Jesus to share that and to, I think, restore a little bit of the shalom or the peace and order in the world by helping them and helping not necessarily to proselytize, but to help their eyes look up a little bit. That's my goal.

Although participants expressed personal motivations to empower refugees, participants also had concerns that suggest oppressive practices within faith communities' methods. These results will now be discussed.

**When Helping Hurts Refugees: Perceived Barriers Created by Faith Communities**

**Hostility and Fear.** A commonly discussed barrier to empowerment was hostility and fear of refugees entering into the U.S. Several participants felt that this lack of welcome inhibits refugees' ability to be fully empowered in their process of becoming new Americans. Some of the participants expressed that this fear is preventing Christians and faith communities from participating in refugee resettlement efforts. Kris, a case manager for a faith-based resettlement agency, states:

There are so many myths surrounding the community and so much fear and that causes people (to) either oppose refugees or to fear. Normally it's fear that causes opposition. Then they don't act... I think churches should act. There have been some really great churches that have been helping us out so much. There have been a lot of churches who have shut me down completely when I talk to them...I just feel this urgency of why aren't you acting?

Many participants expressed that some of this fear is based on lack of education on the facts regarding refugee resettlement. Many also expressed that people lack empathy towards refugees due to not being in relationship them. Alexa, who coordinates work with refugees at her church, desires to not only work with refugees directly, but also to change this mindset within our culture.

I want our culture to have a global mindset that we're all people of the world and you have no control over your situation in life. And it's by grace that you are not a refugee in another country... so (1) try to mobilize people's empathy and mobilize them to be good citizens of the world... really directly addressing the fear issues that are in our country...
One participant felt that the truly Bible-believing churches do not have hostility or fear towards refugees, as described by the above participants, but she still felt that churches and Christians need to be educated on how to help refugees, so that their efforts are not harmful. One particular area of concern expressed by both former refugees and those working with refugees was how proselytizing or evangelism can be perceived as harmful and manipulative.

**Proselytization.** When asked to discuss ways the community could be involved in refugee resettlement and empowerment, half of the participants noted that faith communities are a valuable asset to refugee resettlement and half of the participants noted negative perspectives on the church’s direct practice in refugee resettlement. Five of these participants (19%), were overlapping, expressing both positive and negative views on faith communities’ involvement in resettlement. Kim, a former refugee, stated, “Churches need to know that they need to be careful that if they’re serving refugees, not having the refugees think that they’re manipulating them into something.” Further emphasizing this concern, Amil, a former refugee, stated:

“They (refugees) don’t know anything here, so some people are taking advantage of them and they are forcing them to change their religion and making them Christian, forcing them to go to church, like they are giving some housing stuff and they want them to come to church and have them in church every week… Because of that, many families (say that) they are frustrated…Some people, they broke (from) their family because…some would be wanting (this help) and others won’t be wanting…. they give wrong information to involve them….and that affects their family.

Others appreciated some of the work that churches did, but also expressed concern about some churches’ desires to recruit members or convert people to their religion. One former refugee, Ana expressed, “they do do a lot of good things, but at the same time, every time you’re getting help from them you always have that guilt on you like (they are) really trying to get you to get into the church.”

Several participants also expressed that the motivations of church members should be to aid and empower refugees, not to convert them to become members of their church. Lan, a former refugee, said that refugees “come here for freedom; they want to believe whatever they want to believe,” suggesting that faith communities should help refugees, but should be intentional about helping refugees regardless of religious beliefs.

Tina, a Christian who leads refugee resettlement efforts within a faith-based organization, values partnerships with churches and Christians.
However, she spoke of some of the dangers within faith communities related to dynamics of power and oppression due to types of relationships church members are used to having in their helping relationships.

The Church is used to engaging transactionally and the normal appeal to why a church would get involved is because they need to come to the rescue and that's what the Church wants to hear and that is the temptation for ministries to appeal to. (Churches) are used to an appeal that puts them in a position of power and then when they hit the reality of being taken advantage of...they don't know how to approach without being a savior so it's a constant tension...

Along with concerns regarding faith communities serving in a way that puts them in the position of being “the savior,” creating feelings of oppression, concern was also expressed regarding faith communities’ abilities to be culturally sensitive when working with refugees.

Lack of Cultural Sensitivity. Some participants expressed examples of culturally insensitive practices within church-based refugee ministries. Alexa, who serves refugees through a church ministry, referred to culturally insensitive practices by stating:

I love the great commission, so I want people to hear about Jesus and I think strategically...people being in this country is an opportunity for the church to welcome them. It's an easy gateway for talking about certain spiritual things. I think hugely in the last year I've seen that people are getting resettled here from all over the world in pretty different stages of difficulties...and so it seems logical that Americans reach out and welcome and help...people to retain their cultures, to help them adapt in a way that this can become home....but I don't think we are good at doing that.

Some participants mentioned specific, practical examples of ways that faith communities could be more sensitive to the cultures and religions of those resettling in the U.S., for example, being sensitive to refugees’ dietary restrictions. Kim, a former refugee, expressed:

some, they donate meat, beef, some there donate pork, so ask them, bring a vegetable (too). Give them the choice. Tell them...they do not (always) know how to read (English)...and the next day they found out it is pork or it is beef, throw it in the garbage. (Give them) chicken or vegetables, noodles, vegetables, whatever. That they would eat. So the people who eat beef or pork, it can go to those people instead of to waste.
Andrew, an immigrant who directs an agency that works with immigrants and refugees, described the challenge of working with people of faith and church communities due to their desire to serve, but their lack of understanding of how to serve cross-culturally.

This is tricky because there's this intersection of ministry and calling and faith and there's this intersection of help but being clear that help is not enabling but it's empowering help. That needs to be wrestled with and I suspect that faith-based organizations, churches, have good intentions… sometimes (I) am not sure if they're fully aware of how to do the work...too often we’ve had instances where churches are like “oh, we want to help refugees, we want to help refugees” and they welcome us in and then as time goes by you hear things like “you know, they’re not flushing the toilet or they’re throwing garbage in the hallway”… The reality of working with refugees, I just don’t think they’re comprehending....They just have to be prepared.

Relatedly, Andrew discussed that churches could be less prescriptive with their funding in order to provide funding in a more open-minded way, listening better to the culturally relevant needs expressed by both the refugees and those working in direct practice with refugees. Although there are concerns as to how faith-based communities are helping refugees in their process of resettlement, there were also examples expressed of how Christians and faith communities are offering help in an empowering manner.

**When Helping Helps Refugees: How the Church can be empowering**

Many participants gave examples of how faith communities are doing work that benefits refugee communities and contributes to their empowerment. Michelle, an immigrant herself, who works with an organization that serves immigrants, stated, “I think the most generous people are the churches, congregants.” She gave examples of a state she noted as being successful in resettlement due to the church’s support. This opinion was not given only by Christians, but by participants from a variety of faith backgrounds. Raif, a Muslim man who came to the U.S. as a refugee, credited that World Relief’s success in refugee resettlement as due to their ability to equip people from churches as volunteers to support and empower refugees.
Filling in needed Gaps of Services

Some participants appreciated specific ways that churches can help to fill in gaps that the larger agencies cannot, such as providing volunteers. Andrew believes that churches that feel called to refugee settlement have a “high level of commitment,” and a great “ability to mobilize volunteers.” Others suggested that churches have a capacity to donate needed essentials like diapers and ethnic-specific foods to help support refugees in their process of resettlement. However, participants cautioned that churches need to be careful to not create dependency in providing such direct services. For example, when describing a church ministry that serves food in a community with a high population of refugees, Betty, an American-born, volunteer mentor to refugees stated, “It’s been a real blessing, but sometimes I think that people say, ‘oh well I can get it, so they’ll just keep getting it’ and you don’t want that to become a crutch.”

Frank, a volunteer, who has helped empower refugees to start businesses and a cultural association, had expressed concern about churches’ involvement in refugee resettlement, but gave an example of one church’s work that he felt contributed significantly to refugee empowerment by providing a space for older refugees to congregate and practice English. He said, “It was a very good thing for refugees...they could go out and hang out with their friends and just practice a little bit of English.”

When asked how churches and community members can be involved in refugee work, Kim, who works with a non-profit focused on immigrants, cautioned against churches proselytizing, but said that “(Resettlement agencies) cannot do everything. Their job is to bring them here...they should divide this.” She gave examples of how churches and other organizations could help support refugee resettlement by helping refugees find jobs and provide childcare for mothers who are often home with their children all day.

Relationship building

The most common theme in the research related to refugee empowerment is the importance of relationships, both with the American-born community and their own community. Both former refugees and those who work with refugees suggested that when relationships are built between refugees and the American-born community, stereotypes are broken down, myths are dispelled, and culturally sensitive-empowering practices can take place. Participants suggested that churches have the capacity to facilitate mutually beneficial relationship-building between refugees and church members.

Those working with refugees spoke of specific people with whom they have built relationships, giving examples of valuable friendships that developed. Amil and Kamal spoke of how community members, some of
Christian faith, have helped them become better entrepreneurs. Ana spoke of a relationship that she has built with an American-born couple she now calls her grandparents. Ana stated:

Meeting grandpa and grandma (is) the biggest thing…every time somebody meet me they are like, you are so lucky and I’m like yeah…My language is a lot better. I probably would have never been able to go to college, never have been able to navigate how everything works. I mean it’s a big, long process and then he helped me apply to like lots and lots of scholarships, you know, so my parents would have never been able to pay for (college)…Every single thing, like so far, whatever I am is because of them.

Alexa, who works for a church that is invested in refugee resettlement and equips hundreds of volunteers to serve in refugee resettlement, shared their vision for work with refugees, “to foster healthy and reciprocal relationships between the church and the refugee, resulting in a multicultural community that both worships God and draws more worshipers to him.” The importance of a reciprocal relationship, like this mission statement states, was a theme that came up regularly in regards to offering empowering, anti-oppressive approaches to refugee resettlement.

Alexa expressed how her church is equipping volunteers to develop relationships with the refugee community:

if (refugees) don’t have native relationships, then how do they get on their feet...you need friendships that can carry you through many seasons. There will be ongoing things that are hard to learn...For us, it’s our explicit goal but we want real relationships…it’s a game-changer because you start to see you have way more in common with this person than differences...We have a hundred and five people that are involved in some way and some have gone in the deep end relationally in amazing ways and it’s been amazing to see how their lives have been transformed and they’ve become spokespeople on behalf of all of the refugee’s friends, to correct and challenge American mentalities. And then we have people who drop off a bag of used goods that they got in the attic with my name on the bag....So there’s a range, but we’ve had a lot of people be very generous with giving refugee resettlement kits and that’s a very simple transaction; it’s quick, but that gets people involved, but all of those people, I would like to move a portion of them towards relational...so we grow it slowly, we can slowly do a few at a time.
Discussion

The results of this research indicate that faith-based organizations and churches can be a great asset to refugee resettlement if equipped with the knowledge and skills to develop relationships that empower and do not further oppress. Even though many participants expressed critique of faith communities, many also expressed how resettlement agencies benefit from faith communities’ support. This support has the potential to last well beyond the 90 days that most refugees are supported by resettlement agencies. Based on the results of the research, a preliminary discussion on how faith communities can be equipped to empower refugees will now be presented.

Anti-Oppressive/Culturally Sensitive Training

Education can help break down barriers and teach cultural sensitivity, but also equip the church to be an excellent resource for empowering, anti-oppressive refugee resettlement practices. Participants expressed that in order for churches to facilitate empowerment, the Church first needs to understand the truth about refugees vs. the myths that often get expressed as facts. After myths are dispelled, individuals from faith communities should be trained on power dynamics that play a role in oppression. They can then learn how to assist refugees in a culturally sensitive and humble manner that develops long-term mutually beneficial relationships. When prepared to facilitate empowering anti-oppressive relationships, faith communities can utilize their calling combined with their resources and congregants’ skills to assist refugees in their process of empowerment. Social work knowledge, values and skills, combined with faith integration, provide an excellent base for this type of training and education that would facilitate the church to be better equipped to serve and empower the refugee community.

Tapping into the Assets of Faith Communities

Faith communities consist of individuals with a desire to share the love of Christ to their neighbor. Congregations are also filled with people with a variety of skill sets. These skill sets range from mothers who can befriend and support other mothers, young people who have a heart for missions with international people, but live locally, and professionals who desire to use their skills and passion of their profession to guide others with similar interests. All these people, and more, are an asset to the refugee community.

Examples of beneficial relationships that can develop through communities of faith include:
- Mentoring relationships that support cultural adjustment
- Conversational language opportunities
• Formal language classes
• Training on public transportation
• Driver's education
• Employment services
• Affordable housing
• Financial literacy training
• Entrepreneurship support
• Trade skill building
• Formal education opportunities/scholarships

Opportunities for Social Workers of Faith to Empower Faith Communities

As we integrate faith with foundational social work knowledge, values and skills, Christian social workers can help faith communities think about how to integrate faith in culturally sensitive ways in order to reduce tension created from the power dynamics and seemingly manipulative proselytizing. Training in this area could help faith communities to not be perceived as controlling, manipulative and hurtful in attempts to love their neighbor as themselves, creating a better witness through their work. The North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) has a number of resources with a variety of perspectives on evangelism that could be a great resource to the church, including several related chapters in *Social Work and Christianity: Readings on the Integration of Christian Faith and Social Work Practice* (Scales & Kelly, 2016). Other books outside social work literature that are helpful resources include *Toxic Charity* (Lupton, 2011) and *When Helping Hurts* (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). These resources could be shared as a part of training.

Furthermore, social workers are trained to understand dynamics of power, oppression and social justice in order to facilitate empowerment at the individual, family, group and community levels. Theories of social work, such as empowerment theory and anti-oppressive practice, along with our understanding of cultural competency, can help equip the church to be an asset for refugee resettlement services (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2014; Mulally, 2002; Lee, 1996). Social workers’ knowledge and practice within the field of mental health can help church members understand and be equipped to support refugees in emotional healing from the trauma that led to their resettlement. At the macro level, social workers can facilitate community and organizational development by assisting communities with community-based assessments that will facilitate empowerment at the community level (Homan, 2015). For example, after this research was presented to the local community where the study was based, social work students from a Christian university were asked to utilize their community
development assessment skills to assess assets in the communities where former refugees live in order to link assets with felt needs. The students were able to link resources in the community, such as transportation opportunities, with the refugee community, in order to assist them in their process of learning how to navigate the city and find their way to jobs and appointments. In addition, social workers can use social policy advocacy skills to advocate for the rights of refugees and build policy that welcomes, supports and empowers them to be actively engaged citizens in our society. Social workers can advocate for policies that line up with Biblical mandates. Social workers can also partner with faithful community professionals and congregants to advocate for policy that assists in the process of degree and credential recognition, so that former refugees can find work in their area of skill and training, allowing them to more quickly utilize their knowledge and skills to contribute to society in meaningful ways.

Strengths and Limitations

As should be the case with qualitative studies, a strength of this study was the ability to learn and listen to the lived experiences of participants with a depth that cannot be offered in quantitative studies with a larger sample size. The thick and rich descriptions were only possible due to the in-depth interviews. Most of the people interviewed were in Northeast Ohio, which limited the interviews to the lived experiences of those in this particular region. Although results may be relevant to other regions of the U.S., this study may not be generalizable to all areas, especially countries that have different policies and practices for refugee resettlement. Even though clear themes developed as the data became saturated, interviewing more former refugees from a broader range of countries may have further confirmed the results. The results of this study provide opportunity for larger studies to test these results to confirm the transferability to other settings.

Conclusion

This study adds to the literature on faith integration and refugee resettlement by furthering our understanding of how Christians and faith communities may be perceived in their work with refugees. Through providing education on refugee resettlement that combines the Biblical calling to welcome the sojourner, dispels the myths and fears related to refugees entering our community, and trains on how to facilitate culturally sensitive, anti-oppressive practices, faith communities have the potential to be a great asset to our refugee community. Social workers of Christian faith can utilize the results of this study, combined with their skills and
mandate to serve vulnerable groups, in order to help educate, inform and be involved directly in helping faith communities be equipped to facilitate the empowerment of refugee communities in an anti-oppressive manner.

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Church-planting, Direct Service, and Advocacy: The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Response to Welcoming the Sojourner

Shannon Butler-Mokoro, Heather Prince Doss & Cynthia Kohlmann

Social justice, respect for individuals, and care for others are some of the threads that connect social work and churches. Both religious and social service organizations have worked with vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized people. Both organizations have sought to help those individuals whom we call migrants. Specifically, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) welcomes and works with migrants in at least three distinct ways including new church development, direct service, and advocacy. This article describes the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s response to migrants and gives examples from specific churches and presbyteries on how the Church is advocating for, supporting, and welcoming those living in the U.S. The similarities between the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the National Association of Social Workers’ (NASW) response to migrants is discussed. Additionally, a social work perspective on the strengths of a potential partnership along with recommendations for future work and growth are discussed.

It is a challenging task to take an accurate count of those whom we call immigrants or newcomers to the United States. The terms immigrant, newcomer, and/or migrant can include those with legal documentation and those without. Faith-based and secular social service organizations and churches seek to help all those who present in need of assistance, regardless of documentation (Snyder, Bell, and Busch-Armendariz, 2015; Openshaw, McLane, Parkerson, and Court, 2015). For purposes of this
article, the authors are using the terms immigrant, migrant, and newcomer to reference a person not born in the United States who now lives here, regardless of the circumstances under which they came. The Pew Research Center’s 2014 “Religious Landscape Study” reveals that 40% of migrants to the United States attend religious services at least once per week, compared with 30% of U.S. adults overall. The Pew Research Study includes first, second and third generation individuals from The Americas, the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, Middle East and North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Second and third generation Americans reflect national trends (Pew Research Center, 2014). For migrants, faith-based organizations and churches represent safety, solace, support, and solidarity. In the 21st century, newcomers to the United States are turning to churches to help them with their daily needs, support for themselves and family members, and advocacy around issues like immigration status (Connor, 2014).

History and Foundations

Congregational Social Work Model

Gaynor Yancey and Diana Garland recognized that social work has been taking place in congregations both formally and informally since the profession began in the 19th century (Yancey & Garland, 2014). They created a model for Congregational Social Work (2014) whereby congregations (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim) partner with communities (and other disciplines such as nursing) to provide social services to those in need - usually people living in rural areas and/or the elderly. Congregations that implement this model often employ a nurse or social worker to reach out to specific populations like the elderly, immigrants, or rural residents. While the PC (U.S.A.) does not have a formal Congregational Social Work model, there are social workers within PC (U.S.A.) congregations and many social service agencies physically close to (in the same cities and towns) these churches, creating a foundation for congregational social work-type work. Based on the ideals of service and advocacy, justice and cultural competency there is a foundation for a partnership between social work and congregations (Hugen et. al., 2003; Unruh, 2004).

Presbyterian History and Governance

“If you tell the story of the Presbyterian Church (PC) (U.S.A.), you tell the story of a number of significant immigrations,” said the Rev. Dr. Charles Wiley III, coordinator of the PC (U.S.A.’s Office of Theology and Worship, at the 2015 Big Tent conference. Presbyterians first came to North America in the Scotch-Irish migrations of the 18th Century. Presbyterian
immigrants formed the first Presbytery in Philadelphia in 1706. After the Revolutionary War, Presbyterians migrated to the southern parts of the United States (Odom, 2015). Like many denominations, the Presbyterians have argued and split over theological issues like biblical interpretation, ecclesiastical issues like ordination standards, and social justice issues like slavery. The authors of this article write based on practices within the PC (U.S.A.), the largest denomination within the Presbyterian tradition (McKim, 2003). Currently, the PC (U.S.A.) “has approximately 1.8 million members, 10,000 congregations, and 20,000 ordained and active ministers” (Presbyterian Historical Society, 2016). Particularly this article will look at the work of several congregations and two presbyteries within the Synod of the Northeast.

Large denominations such as the PC (U.S.A.) tend to have clearly defined structures of organization and governance. The Presbyterian Church is representative in nature; smaller bodies elect representatives to larger bodies. Each congregation elects elders, together called the session, to govern the congregation. Each session sends their clergy and some elders to represent the congregation at the presbytery level, the second unit of governance. The PC (U.S.A.) designates its Presbyteries by geographic boundaries and include all the congregations within those bounds. Further, the church has created Synods, the third unit of governance, across larger regions and facilitate communication between the presbyteries and the General Assembly (GA), help to develop and implement the mission of the church, provide support to presbytery leadership, and mediate conflicts between presbyteries and individual churches. The General Assembly (GA) is the highest form of government in the PC (U.S.A.), representing the church across the United States. Churches elect representatives to the GA from among the 170 presbyteries. The GA focuses on issues of governance, including amending the denomination’s constitution and guides mission work in areas of compassion, peace, justice, education, and evangelism. They also set priorities for social witness policy and commission workers for global mission (Mid Council Relations, 2018).

**PC (U.S.A.) Theological Framework**

Immigration is important historically to the formation of the PC (U.S.A.), and it remains important theologically. A concern for migrants and newcomers “is rooted in our rediscovery of ourselves as the church of the stranger, the biblical mandate to welcome and love immigrants, and the need to alleviate the suffering created by an unjust system” (PC (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness, 2013).

The Bible tells the story of a minority people chosen by a loving and sovereign God in order to display God’s glory and salvation story within
the world. In the Old Testament, when God first called Abraham, he was a wanderer, as recounted by the Hebrew people as they retell their story: “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous” (Deuteronomy 26:5, NRSV). Even as they became a people with their own land and king, they were commanded to “love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deuteronomy 10:19, NRSV).

The New Testament tells the story of God’s work of salvation through Jesus Christ, who worked with people on the margins of society and was accused by the powerful of “eating with sinners and tax collectors” (Mark 2:16, NRSV). Jesus’ ministry clearly showed an affinity for the poor, the dispossessed, the outsider, and the marginalized. As the early followers of Jesus began to organize into communities of faith, they wrestled with issues of whether newcomers should adhere to the Jewish laws, or instead be welcomed as full members without fulfilling the requirements of the law. One example is the debate over circumcision, a requirement for Jewish males but dropped as a requirement for entry into the community of Christ (Acts 15, NRSV).

Other theological foundations for the PC (U.S.A.)’s work among and for migrants are rooted in imago Dei, an understanding of all human beings as created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27, NRSV), and in missio Dei, an understanding that the church carries out the mission of God in the world. The opening sentences of the PC (U.S.A.)’s “Book of Order” read as follows:

The good news of the Gospel is that the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—creates, redeems, sustains, rules, and transforms all things and all people… The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, the Church participates in God’s mission for the transformation of creation and humanity.


While this statement does not point specifically to ministry with or among migrants, it serves as the theological foundation upon which the Church builds its ministry.

**Presbyterian General Assembly Policy**

The PC (U.S.A.) often takes strong and positive stances and action on specific social issues as a way to support those who are oppressed and/vulnerable. As examples, the church has taken stances and written policies on Black Lives Matter, the environment, same-gender marriage, and
immigration. Building upon the above-mentioned biblical and theological foundations, the General Assembly of the PC (U.S.A.) has adopted multiple resolutions related to the denomination’s relationship with migrants. These resolutions guide the national church staff as well as synods, presbyteries, and congregations in their local work. A resolution adopted by the 220th (2012) GA encourages presbyteries, congregations, and individual Presbyterians and their families to do the following: 1) affirm the scriptural call to provide hospitality to and advocate justice for migrants regardless of status; 2) encourage presbyteries to build bridges by creating cross-cultural ministry teams and immigration issues task forces or their equivalent; 3) educate and advocate in partnership with religious, business, community, and law-enforcement leaders for reform and action; and 4) partner with religious, business, community, and law-enforcement leaders for legislative reform at the federal level (Office of Immigration Issues, 2012). Each profession and discipline (social work and theology for example) have guiding principles for the work they do. The PC (U.S.A.) has the Book of Order and resolutions are adopted by the GA to guide actions and responses. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has a Code of Ethics and often creates policy statements in a similar vein to the PC (U.S.A.). While the two disciplines are different, one can find some similarities on the issue of welcoming immigrants. While the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics is not grounded in Biblical scripture, the ideals expressed by the PC (U.S.A.) are ones that ring true to the social work profession’s values. Two of the core values in the NASW Code of Ethics are social justice and the dignity and worth of an individual. Through those values, coupled with the profession’s commitment to cultural diversity and policy action, NASW has determined that the profession’s position on immigration is embedded in its values.

Social workers see the impact of immigrant and refugee policies in their everyday practice. Their very capacity to help and do “good social work” is constrained by immigration policies, especially policies that limit family visitation and family reunification. Deportation policies intervene in social work practice when family offenses become grounds for deportation and thereby impede willingness to report. (NASW, 2015, p. 178).

NASW published a statement denouncing the current administration’s Executive Orders related to immigration bans as inhumane, insensitive, and unacceptable; further stating that “Our national priority should be to find ways, within reasonable national security policies, to welcome refugees – not deny them sanctuary” (NASW, 2017).

There are many strengths in the way in which the PC (U.S.A.) does its work with those whom society has historically oppressed, marginalized, and who remain vulnerable. There are also similarities between the ideals of the PC (U.S.A.) and social workers that can be the foundation for
a future partnership in working with vulnerable populations, especially migrants. One obstacle to a solid partnership may be the way in which the PC (U.S.A.) is structured and how the governance works. While the General Assembly may take a stance on an issue, individual congregations can choose to adopt (or not) those policies and presbyteries can choose to highlight or dismiss policies according to their own cultures. Denominational-level resolutions related to social issues (such as the support of migrants) enshrine the opinion of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as a whole and give direction to the Office of Public Witness that interfaces with the U.S. Government, but individual congregations may or may not act on those resolutions. A General Assembly policy on supporting newcomers is not a policy that is mandatory or enforced throughout the denomination (Office of the General Assembly, Book of Order, 2017). Overall, based on its roots as a reformed church and its twentieth and twenty-first-century social justice initiatives, the PC (U.S.A.) has consistently engaged in progressive and productive work towards welcoming and supporting sojourners who are passing through and who are seeking permanency (Office of General Assembly, 2017).

Work of the PC (U.S.A.) Among Sojourners

For the purpose of this article, the authors have divided the work of the PC (U.S.A.) with migrants into three categories - church planting, direct service, and advocacy - and will illustrate how congregations and presbyteries within the Synod of the Northeast are doing this work. The final section on implications for social work practice will provide suggestions for how the PC (U.S.A.) and other communities of faith can work with social workers in welcoming, advocating for, and supporting newcomers.

Church-Planting: New Worshiping Communities

In the Synod of the Northeast, there are twenty-two presbyteries, serving congregations in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. This geography lends itself to a great range of diversity within the congregations and the communities they represent. Because of the long history of world mission through the PC (U.S.A.), recent migrants who attended Presbyterian schools and churches in their home countries, and who want to continue that connection in America are approaching many churches (Presbyterian Mission). Congregations that were completely white fifty years ago are now ethnically diverse in ways they could not have imagined. In Boston Presbytery, every congregation now can count some level of racial and ethnic diversity, and even in Northern New England, covering Maine,
New Hampshire, and Vermont; the growing immigrant populations are affecting the small, local congregations.

One result of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s robust world mission program for 175 years is the growth of new worshiping communities formed by migrants who value the Presbyterian heritage they learned in their home countries. English-speaking migrants will often seek out a welcoming English-speaking congregation, but other migrants, hungry to worship and fellowship in their primary language, will form new language-specific worshiping communities. In 2012, immigrant ministries were the fastest growing communities in the PC (U.S.A.) with “racial ethnic” churches and fellowships accounting for 15% of faith communities (General Assembly Mission Council, 2013). Both the Presbytery of Northern New England (PNNE) and Boston Presbytery have established guidelines that provide a framework for such communities to affiliate with and eventually join the PC (U.S.A.). The two common ways for such groups to begin is either through the identification of a leader who feels called to gather people for worship or through an existing community reaching out to the Presbytery to seek affiliation (PNNE, 2008). These new immigrant congregations express the social work value of self-determination in that the newcomers request to develop their own community of worship with their own leaders, in which the congregants hold services in their native tongue with their own songs and ways of worship.

Eliot Presbyterian Church in Lowell, Massachusetts (PNNE) has been a partner to immigrant congregations both within the PC (U.S.A.) and beyond by providing meeting and worship space at low or no cost. In recent memory, there have been Brazilian and Kenyan groups within Eliot Church. The congregation first thought these newcomers might become members of the existing congregation. The Brazilian group left Eliot and joined other congregations due to theological differences with the PC (U.S.A.) over the question of whether LGBTQ persons could be ordained to the ministry. The Kenyan group left Eliot to found a Kikuyu/Swahili language congregation that still exists in Lowell as part of the PC (U.S.A) (Eliot Church, 2012). In these cases, the PC (U.S.A.) congregation nurtured an immigrant group who, through a process of self-determination, eventually chose to leave the host congregation.

In addition to the congregations clustered in Lowell, MA, PNNE has helped establish a Sudanese Fellowship in Portland, Maine and Marturia Presbyterian Church, an Indonesian congregation, in Rochester, NH. Both communities have received extensive support from the presbytery and denomination over the years, and both are active participants in the life of the presbytery (Presbyterian Committee on Self-development of People, 2016).

In Boston Presbytery, new worshipping communities have been formed
by Kenyans, Brazilians in three locations, and Ghanaians. These join
more established Korean, Taiwanese, Spanish-speaking, and multicultural
congregations across the presbytery. Resources such as PC (U.S.A.) level
grants through 1001 New Worshipping Communities initiative and presby-
tery level grants through the Committee on Congregational Support and
Development are tangible ways these recently organized newcomers are
welcomed in our minds (Presbyterian Committee on Self-development
of People, 2016).

One of the core principles of the social work profession is that of self-
determination. This concept guides social workers to allow the individuals
and families with whom they work to make the decisions that the client(s)
feel are best for them and their situation (NASW Code of Ethics, 2017).
Social workers honor and respect the dignity and worth of individuals
and, with that value in mind, guide clients using theoretical frameworks
(strengths-based) and provide clients with evidence-based suggestions
so that clients can make decisions on their own (Kirst-Ashman & Hull,
2015). The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), without always using the same
language of self-determination, also values the principle of individuals
making their own decisions and living their lives in a way that speaks
to their situation, location, beliefs, culture, and values (PC (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission, 2017). By supporting migrant groups to organize
their own worshiping communities in ways that reflect their language,
culture, traditions, and unique expressions of faith, the congregations and
presbyteries cited have demonstrated a commitment to the social work
value of self-determination and community building.

Direct Service

In social work, the very first principle detailed in the Code of Ethics is
to be of service. “Social workers’ primary goal is to help people in need and
to address social problems (NASW, 2017). Social workers elevate service to
others above self-interest” (NASW, 2017). The churches in the PNNE and
Boston Presbytery fulfill this principle. In particular, Eliot Church has
consistently welcomed migrants, supporting them with basic needs, legal
referrals, and advocacy since the 1970s. Eliot Church began supporting
Cambodian refugees in the mid-1970s under the leadership of Revs. George
Pomeroy and Joyce Adams. Reverend Adams first hosted refugees in her
home then she organized the Eliot Church Women’s Association to assist
with housing, food, clothing, and legal aid. By the early 1980s, half of the
church members were Cambodian, and Pastor Steve Stager led the congrega-
tion through the ensuing cultural shifts. In the 1990s, under Pastor David
Malone, West African migrants began to worship at Eliot because of their
Presbyterian roots in Africa (Eliot Presbyterian Church, 2004). The culture
of the congregation shifted yet again to accommodate new music styles. The addition of Cambodian and African migrants was a source of vibrancy for the declining urban congregation (Eliot Presbyterian Church, 2004).

At Eliot, fellow congregants nurtured both Cambodians and West Africans newcomers to share in the leadership of the congregation, including supporting a Cambodian chaplain to attend seminary and become ordained. As these “newcomers” became members of the congregation, direct service became less an organized ministry of the institutional church and more a product of organic relationships and support networks among members and friends. For example, to this day, Khmer-speaking members will bring mail to the church so that English-speaking Cambodians can help them tell the difference between important correspondence and solicitations (Eliot Presbyterian Church, Mission Study, 2012). In addition, in Northern New England, a group of Somali refugees in Lewiston, Maine, has recently received financial support through the PC (U.S.A.)’s Self-Development of People (SDOP) program. This is

a ministry that affirms God’s concern for humankind. We are Presbyterians and ecumenical partners dissatisfied with poverty and oppression, united in faith and action through sharing, confronting, and enabling by participating in the empowerment of economically poor, oppressed, and disadvantaged people, seeking to change the structures that perpetuate poverty, oppression and injustice. (Presbyterian Mission, Self-Development of People 2018).

Through a grant, women who fled war and famine in Somalia have been able to start a business weaving baskets, generating financial support for their families and enabling a self-sufficiency that can be difficult to achieve for newly arrived refugees.

Additional examples of direct service are beginning to take shape as deportations of community members are rising. Church members who have fled their home countries due to violence, war, famine, and personal danger, or who have come to the United States out of a desire for a better future for their children are turning to their pastors and the Presbytery for help (Office of the General Assembly, 2018). Pastors are attending immigration hearings with their church members, in order to provide spiritual support but also to show the courts that the people in question have direct connections in the community. The Presbytery of Boston has begun to raise funds to help support families going through immigration hearings so they can secure necessary legal counsel. Interested Presbyterians have established Immigration Response Task Forces in both Boston and PNNE. Pastors also scheduled “Know Your Rights” workshops for the summer of 2017 to coincide with worship in several immigrant congregations. From meeting
material needs like food, clothing and shelter to providing assistance with the immigration process, congregations and presbyteries are enacting the social work principle of direct service.

**Advocacy**

Advocacy is a term and activity with which social workers are very familiar. It appears early on in social work education as one of the key roles that a social worker performs. The founders of the social work profession laid out social change as a founding principle and, as such, its largest professional association, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), has a department, which engages in legislative advocacy on a regular basis. The Public Policy Department at NASW advocates to members of Congress on behalf of its members regarding issues of importance to practice, policy, and education. NASW’s Policy Agenda is in keeping with the Code of Ethics and the values of the profession (NASW Advocacy and Social Justice, 2017).

Within the PC (U.S.A.), advocacy occurs formally and informally. Formally, the PC (U.S.A.) engages in advocacy and social justice reform as a cornerstone of their mission and of what it means to be faithful members of society (Presbyterian Mission, Advocacy, and Social Justice). Denominational staff are working in Washington, D.C. in the Office of Public Witness, and the PC (U.S.A.) issues frequent calls to action to concerned members, inviting calls to members of Congress, letter-writing campaigns, peaceful protests, and opportunities to engage in the ministry of presence. The denomination also employs an immigration attorney who provides legal advice and counsel to presbyteries working to bring pastors from other countries or to assist church members who are undocumented. Informally, pastors and congregation members rally around specific issues and people as the Spirit moves and as needed.

At the Synod and Presbytery level, the statements made by the PC (U.S.A.) and the resolutions passed by the General Assembly provide the basis for local and regional advocacy efforts as appropriate. This can take the shape of Presbytery-sponsored resolutions directed at state lawmakers or local efforts to establish sanctuary spaces or shift-hiring practices.

At the congregational level, Eliot’s advocacy work has shifted over the thirty years of its work with newcomers and the pastor often directs Eliot’s work. In previous years, Eliot has been a member of the Merrimack Valley Project (MVP), a local community-organizing group that works on immigration issues. During those years, Eliot would have been included in any advocacy efforts led by MVP. During a long period of transitional leadership, advocacy efforts declined in the congregation. Under new leadership, Eliot has revived its commitment to community-based organizing, advocacy, and protest. In addition, the current pastor, an author of
this article, has also advocated to local lawmakers on behalf of particular congregants who are facing deportation or other immigration challenges.

Social work response: Implications for future partnerships and work

The strengths and weaknesses of the P.C. (U.S.A.) model

Scholars who study social work, faith-based organizations, religion, spirituality, church congregations and church attendance have researched and written about the sometimes uncomfortable coexistence of social work and faith-based denominations, in particular Christianity (Furman, et. al., 2011; Canda & Furman, 2009, Brandsen & Hugen, 2007; Yancey & Garland, 2014). Public critics have accused many Christian denominations of not being inclusive nor welcoming of all identities (Harper, 2005). The accusation of not being inclusive is particularly true when it comes to: (a) women, who are sometimes not allowed to have roles of leadership, including being pastors or priests; (b) people of color, who have been excluded from mainstream denominations and thus the historical creation of separate churches by race and ethnicity; and (c) people who identify as LGBTQIA – some denominations have policies that do not approve of same-sex marriage or adoption (Harper, 2005; Wood & Conley, 2014; Bowland, Foster, & Vosler, 2014).

A few studies on newcomers have found that one of the first places they go in order to find solace, support, and a sense of community is a church (Pew Research, 2014). Many migrants, immigrants, and refugees find a denomination with which they were familiar in their home country and/or go to a congregation in which they know there are other people who speak their language or share their culture. It is a way for them to find sanctuary – a sacred place. Recently, some churches have begun to declare themselves sanctuary spaces (a place for refuge or safety) for those who are being pursued by authorities looking to detain and/or deport them (Borter, 2017). Protecting the persecuted is a stance that social workers can support and a situation in which they can lend assistance and expertise.

From a strengths perspective, both the PC (U.S.A.) and NASW are committed to service - to helping the vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized, which includes migrants. Both institutions have made resolutions that support educating and bringing awareness to the plight of migrants and both have committed to doing what they can to advocate for and work with newcomers. Both institutions support the ideal of self-determination. Finally, both institutions explicitly and implicitly aspire to be culturally competent in their work with others, in particular with migrants. In the PNNE and Boston Presbytery church bulletins, songs, and sermons are often delivered in two or three languages, ensuring that migrant communities can participate in worship without feeling lost in unknown words
Church-planting, direct service and advocacy all require that those engaging newcomers employ culturally competent practices. One of the critiques of church-planting is that the practice does not fully employ cultural competence. In the practice of church-planting, there is a tension between allowing space for developing congregations to be self-determining and the steering of those congregations and individuals towards assimilation (Emerging Ministries Policy, Presbytery of Northern New England, 2018). Becoming a fully recognized congregation requires the leader of the newcomers’ congregation to become an ordained PC (U.S.A.) pastor. The ordination exams are offered only in English, Spanish, and Korean, a barrier for any newcomer not skilled in those languages (PC (U.S.A.) Preparation for Ministry, 2018). A culturally competent approach would be to offer the exam in a language that is more comfortable for the pastoral candidate. The PC (U.S.A.) does give individual presbyteries permission to adapt or waive the traditional ordination standards for immigrant pastors (PC (U.S.A.) Preparation for Ministry, 2018).

Secondly, the practice of direct service with newcomers within the PC (U.S.A.) walks a fine line between empowering individuals and families and making them dependent on the services the church provides. The Church could use some guidance from a social worker or social work agency in assisting individuals and families in a way that allows them to be self-determining and empowered versus dependent on church clergy and/or members. As an example, in areas where public transportation is a viable option, instead of providing car rides to newcomers to church, work, or school members of a congregation can help the newcomers learn to use public transportation, teach them to drive (if possible), and/or help them use other viable means of transportation.

Finally, as it relates to advocacy and the use of congregations to provide sanctuary for undocumented newcomers, the church should carry out its efforts in partnership with immigrant groups and with immigrant input. The church should inform its advocacy efforts based on the needs and desires of actual immigrants, not the needs or desires anticipated by the majority group. Congregations, presbyteries, and denominations wishing to advocate on behalf of newcomers should strengthen their ties with immigrant-led advocacy groups.

**Partnerships with social workers and social work agencies**

Much of the language that the PC (U.S.A.) uses in its description of and support for the vulnerable and oppressed mirrors the language used by social workers. Both the NASW and the PC (U.S.A.) use the words service,
advocacy, and social justice. The language of policies by both organizations are affirming, positive, grounded in social justice and the respect and dignity of individuals regardless of their status. While the PC (U.S.A.) does not have a specific policy or value related to cultural competency, as does NASW, the Church is committed to “to teach how injustice, power, and privilege impact society and church, and how the Church can be change agents by responding with compassionate action and prophetic witness.”

The 221st General Assembly directed the Presbyterian Mission Agency to make available print and electronic resources on cultural competency, anti-racism, anti-sexism to mid-councils and the larger church. The office provides anti-racism and cultural competency training materials, tools, and resources for Presbyterians who seek to continue the Presbyterian Church’s long-standing commitment to face and dismantle racism” (PC (U.S.A.) Office of Gender and Racial Justice in Racial and Ethnic Ministries). There is much space for the two institutions to collaborate in order to assist and advocate for migrants.

Another way in which communities of faith and social work can help newcomers is by reaching out to the social workers in any given congregation. Churches can even consider collaborating to combine their collective resources. Churches have long used the services of nurses, lawyers, and teachers in their congregations to help offer public health programs, teach Sunday School, assist congregants with specific needs, etc. Social workers bring a specific skill set that congregations can use to help newcomers find needed resources - including housing, medical services, employment, and education (Yancey & Garland, 2014; Canda et al., 2009, 2011).

Forming intentional partnerships is yet another way in which communities of faith and social work can help newcomers. Many churches are located in areas in which there is a Department of Children and/or Family Services, a food pantry, a community health center, etc. Churches can invite those agencies to come to their congregation and have a “Newcomers Fair” in which the local agencies come and share what services they have for which newcomers may be eligible. One of the difficulties that newcomers face is trying to figure out which agency to go to for which service and deciding whether they qualify. A church could reach out to local agencies and have those questions answered in one place.

The Presbytery of Northern New England and the Boston Presbytery are two ideal places for a partnership between the PC (U.S.A.) and social work to begin. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is one of the most diverse states in the nation. It is the third most densely populated state in the U.S. In 2004, the total population included 881,400 foreign-born individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). These population numbers along with the data about languages spoken at home and the number of English-language learners in the schools, point to an environment ripe for a partnership to
help advocate for and support migrants in their transition to the U.S. Many states across the country are experiencing similar population trends. Many of these newcomers often seek a church home as a place for primary or secondary support (Pew Research Center, 2014). Other denominations and cities and states can look at their population and determine the best way in which to partner based on their growth and changing demographics. The Presbyteries of Northern New England and Boston have done a good job of paying attention to the changing demographics of their state and stepping up to welcome the sojourner.

In Urban churches: Vital signs, Nile Harper tells the stories of urban churches, the pastors of those churches, and how those congregations engage their surrounding communities (2005). The subtitle of the book is “Beyond charity toward justice.” That subtitle captures the work and common ground between social work and communities of faith, like the PC (U.S.A.). Presbyterian pastors, especially those located in urban churches like Eliot and in cities and states with growing migrant populations (like Boston and Massachusetts) are consistently engaged in their communities. They attend City Council meetings, rallies, marches, graduations, and other hearings that affect their congregants. Churches often provide informal as well as formal social service through meals, emergency funds, counseling, advocacy, and/or referrals. Urban churches help to build bridges between community and faith and among communities of faith. PC (U.S.A.) pastors, like social workers, are agents of positive social change on the micro and macro levels. While there may be some discomfort or hesitation with the unknown elements of creating a partnership between social work and a faith community, there is much common ground in terms of values and ideals related to helping the vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized, especially migrants. In the current socio-political and economic environment, migrants need a collaborative effort to help them adjust and survive in their new country. A partnership between two institutions that have similar values and beliefs - social work and a faith community such as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is necessary for a successful transition and continued advocacy.

Conclusion

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has beliefs and practices that in many ways mirror the values and ethics of the social work profession. There is room for growth and expansion and for utilizing social workers to help build more culturally competent practices with newcomers. Overall, the PC (U.S.A.), and especially the Presbyteries of Northern New England and Boston, provide an example of how a church denomination can embrace and integrate the values of the social work profession in working with
migrants, immigrants, and newcomers. The practice of church-planting speaks to allowing people of faith who are new to the United States to self-determine. A focus on making that practice more culturally competent would allow newcomers to build a community of faith using their own traditions and language, and could open the door for an ordination process that is also culturally sensitive. Providing direct service, which values self-determination and empowers individuals and families, rather than creating dependency or pushing for assimilation, can lead to flourishing communities. Finally, the PC (U.S.A.) does much to advocate for newcomers. The General Assembly statements and policies clearly support migrants and immigrants and make a commitment to embracing those who do not have the documents, which the U.S. government requires. Further engaging in advocacy that newcomers request specifically, as opposed to imposing on them what clergy or congregation members feel they need, would be a best practice to strengthen a denomination’s already existing welcoming and supportive practices. In each of these areas, further commitment to the Congregational Social Work model advocated by Yancey and Garland (2014) would strengthen the informal social work that is already happening in PC (U.S.A.) congregations and presbyteries, bringing it further in line with the social work values of self-determination, empowerment, and justice.

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Keywords: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), faith-based social work, migrants, newcomers, direct service, church-planting, advocacy, social justice
Parish Collaboration and Partnership in Welcoming Refugees: A Case Study

Alma M. O. Trinidad, Toc Soneoulay-Gillespie, Richard C. Birkel & Eileen M. Brennan

The majority of refugees coming to the U.S. are resettled by faith-based organizations (FBOs). As a result, social workers engaged in resettlement work are likely to find themselves working within or in cooperation with FBOs. Past research suggests that FBOs rely on their ability to harness both social and spiritual capital to accomplish their work. This article highlights the growing literature on the role of FBOs in refugee resettlement. It examines how a FBO and parish partnership emerged, developed, and has been implemented. Using qualitative research methods, transcripts of interviews with key volunteers and social work staff were analyzed along with archival data. Findings indicated the importance of articulating goals and establishing clear partnership agreements and structure. Partnership development occurred through providing training for volunteers and supporting their evolving roles, fostering open communication, and building ongoing relationships with refugees. Social workers and volunteers shared values aligned with Catholic Social Teaching that guided this grassroots initiative to welcome refugees. Finally, practice implications are discussed.

A Call to Serve and Walk Like Jesus

Most people of the Christian faith know the story of Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt to escape the potential violence of King Herod. Jesus himself was a migrant during his childhood years and “lived as a refugee because his home land was not safe” (Betz, 2017, p. 1), and the king wanted to kill baby Jesus. Later as an adult, Jesus takes care of the “stranger,” and in his teaching tells his disciples,

For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, a stranger, and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison,

This message embodies an epistemic stance, symbolic meanings, and values for many Christians. The responsibility to serve is at the core of Christian faith and values, and is a guiding principle of Catholic Social Teaching. South Africa

For social workers to facilitate partnerships with communities of faith and find common ground in social justice work, we must be mindful of how faith-based knowledge, values, and understandings of the Christian’s mission to respond to humanitarian initiatives play out. We also must identify ways to appropriately integrate them in the structure and process of an intervention. This requires an authentic and intentional partnership with a community of volunteers willing to serve a vulnerable population. The NASW Code of Ethics (National Association of Social Workers, 2017) highlights the values of dignity and worth of the person, and the importance of human relationships, service, social justice, integrity, and competence. Putting these values into practice poses some challenges in the field. Specifically, engaging with faith-based communities on the basis of shared values must include a process of joint meaning-making for social workers and the volunteers who partner with them. To this end, we suggest that building authentic partnerships, collaboration, and community for faith-based work in refugee resettlement is essential for mutually transformative experiences.

Using a qualitative case study approach, this article examines how a Catholic parish partnership emerged to welcome and address the needs of incoming refugees to the U.S. The study investigates the development of such a partnership with key parish volunteers, social work staff, and volunteers within the resettlement agency. Christ’s message regarding welcoming the stranger is reflected in Catholic Social Teaching which carries knowledge and value stances that inform Catholics of a greater call to welcome, love, care for, and serve the stranger, and ultimately act with responsibility (Betz, 2017). This responsibility to serve is at the core of Catholic faith and values, among other Catholic Social Teaching, and holds the potential for building collaborative partnerships with faith-based communities. Accordingly, this article examines how shared values that align with Catholic Social Teaching guide the grassroots work that welcomes refugees. This study also adds to our understanding of social service partnerships with faith-based volunteers in order to help social workers intervene in facilitating, organizing, and implementing such faith-based partnerships. Our investigation of a parish community partnership and collaboration builds upon the literature on refugee resettlement work among faith-based organizations (FBOs), particularly through Catholic Charities, and its local institutional culture and processes.
Refugee resettlement work in the U.S. and the role of FBOs. Refugees are individuals who have fled their countries of origin and meet the United Nations’ criteria of having a “well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion” (Bruno, 2017, p. 2). The 2016 World Refugee Survey reported that there were currently more than 22.5 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2017a). The United States has been a world leader in providing assistance to persons facing persecution and fleeing violence since World War II, when the U.S. resettled hundreds of thousands of Europeans to the U.S. who could not return home (Refugee Council USA, 2017). Today, the United States resettlement program is among the largest in the world (UNHCR, 2017b). Since 1975, the U.S. has resettled over three million refugees, with annual admissions figures ranging from a high of 207,000 in 1980 to a low of 27,110 in 2002. In fiscal year 2016, 84,995 refugees were resettled in the U.S (UNHCR, 2017b). Beyond accepting refugees for resettlement from countries of first asylum, the U.S. is among countries that grant humanitarian protection to asylum seekers who present themselves at U.S. ports of entry or claim asylum from within the country. In 2015, which is the most recent year with data available, the U.S. granted asylum to 26,124 individuals (Capps & Fix, 2015).

In the U.S., resettling refugees is a public-private partnership with distinct and complementary roles of the federal government and Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGS). Each year, the U.S. President, in consultation with Congress and federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security), authorizes the admission of a specific number of refugees into the country. Once admitted, the task of resettling refugees to local communities falls to nine VOLAGS, six of which are faith-based organizations, involving Catholic, Episcopal, Evangelical, Jewish, and Lutheran affiliations (Edwards, 2012).

The active engagement of communities of faith and FBOs in refugee resettlement is the primary reason the U.S. has become one of the leading refugee resettlement countries in the world. For example, Eby, Iverson, Smyers, and Kekic (2011) attribute the success of FBOs to several factors including established local networks, capacity for advocacy, and strong motivation for service based on core religious beliefs. Ager, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and Ager (2015) note that local faith communities “serve as operational partners assisting larger agencies, using their social and spiritual capital to support key operations” (p. 13). Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) affirm this finding in their report that FBOs engaged a greater number of volunteers than secular organizations. They also emphasize that when directly comparing FBOs with comparable secular organizations, the services provided by FBOs were equivalent or superior.

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Charities of Oregon. One of the VOLAGS involved in resettlement is the U.S. Conference
of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The USCCB is the largest VOLAG, accepting the most vulnerable individuals and families—those who present as medically fragile, who exhibit complex mental health diagnoses, who have experienced severe trauma, who are deemed “difficult to resettle,” and who have been “rejected” by other voluntary agencies. In partnership with diocesan offices across the country, USCCB resettles approximately 30% of the refugees that arrive in the U.S. each year. As one of approximately 100 diocesan offices, Catholic Charities of Oregon has provided refugee resettlement services in the Portland, Oregon area since the 1940s. The Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement Program (CCRR) works to ensure that refugees are properly resettled and adjusted to their new homes in the Portland metropolitan area.

Refugees who arrive in Portland are personally greeted at the airport by an agent of Catholic Charities and a local contact who may be a relative of the family, if there is one locally. In some instances, Catholic Charities volunteers join in greeting the refugees. They are taken to their new home or apartment that has been furnished, stocked, and prepared for their arrival. They are also greeted with a culturally specific hot meal and are shown where to get groceries and how to use public transportation. They receive assistance with budgeting, enrolling their children in school, making doctors’ appointments, and connecting with other refugees in their community to share their experiences of life in the U.S. or to exchange news from their home country. Case managers from Catholic Charities also facilitate referrals to other service providers and help adults learn English and find employment. Because financial support for the refugee is only partially available from the federal government for 30 to 90 days after arrival, and up to eight months from the State, the pace of resettlement activities is rapid (Ives, Sinha, & Cnaan, 2010); there is a need for refugees to rapidly adjust and become self-supporting as quickly as possible. Employment is a crucial outcome of interest.

**Catholic Social Teaching as spiritual capital: A potential venue for value expression.** The need to acknowledge existing spiritual capital among volunteers is essential in FBOs’ refugee resettlement work. Likewise, the ability to facilitate and integrate beliefs and values of a local faith community plays a role in sustaining local initiatives. For example, Ager et al. (2015) suggest that religious communities “motivate involvement in basic service delivery, including active ethical teaching that instructs adherents to care for and meet the needs of the vulnerable” (p. 9). Additionally, Bielefeld and Cleveland (2013) indicate, “Religion attracts, motivates, and sustains volunteers as a method of exploring and expressing their own faith” (p. 470).

The Catholic Social Teaching (CST) are “a rich tradition of scriptural, religious, natural law, political, and social principles concerning social organization and human dignity” (McMillin, 2012, p. 189). Such teaching is essential in the work of Catholic Charities’ refugee resettlement program.
Its core teachings include the following: (a) Life and Dignity of the Human Person (every person is precious and the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person); (b) The Call to Family, Community, and Participation (the person is not only sacred but social and has the right and duty to seek the common good in society); (c) Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable (a basic moral test of society is how the most vulnerable members are faring); and (d) Solidarity (we are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic and ideological differences). These CSTs provide deep meaning for the work of volunteers and staff in Catholic parishes in refugee resettlement (Massaro, 2016). There is a gap in the growing literature on how such teachings can solicit, motivate, and sustain faith-based community members in volunteer roles and/or engagement in social service programs, advocacy, and change (Garland, Myers, & Wolfer, 2008). The current study was designed to fill this gap by adding to our understanding of the dynamic interactions among volunteers from faith communities, social workers, and other line staff.

Social Worker's Potential Local and Global Roles in Refugee Resettlement Work

The profession of social work plays a major role in refugee resettlement, from direct service providers (e.g., case managers; job developers; coordinators of psychosocial, physical health, mental health, or educational programs) to policy advocates. Specifically, social workers may design, develop, and coordinate community support programs for refugees locally, and globally at refugee camps or organizations working with humanitarian aid. Social workers must be knowledgeable of the current laws and policies that may limit access to resources for refugees.

Social workers are likely to engage with local faith communities in their resettlement work at the local level. As Ager et al. (2015) state, local faith communities are “groupings of religious actors bonded through shared allegiance to institutions, beliefs, history or identity” and are “congregations, mosques and temples” with “members [that] reside in relatively close proximity; such that they can regularly meet together for religious purposes, often in a dedicated physical venue” (p. 2). They can “serve as operational partners assisting larger agencies, using their social and spiritual capital to support [local] key operations” (Ager et al., 2015, p. 13). Social workers can play a crucial role in harnessing the creativity, organizational capability, social connections, and ultimately the social and spiritual capital of the parish. As Eby et al. (2011) conclude, “The energy and passion of individuals and groups who are motivated by a moral imperative to help those less fortunate can be a powerful resource to leverage in humanitarian work” (p. 594).
The aim of the current case study is to build on what is known about faith-based approaches to refugee resettlement in the U.S., and explore the process of building a partnership formed by a faith-based organization and a local faith community, resulting in enriched services for refugees being resettled by the FBO. Using content analysis of key informant interviews and archival records, themes were identified that unpack collaborative arrangements, social worker and volunteer team processes, and shared values that were crucial to build this partnership. This study’s authors strive to shed light on the process of building a successful collaboration between and volunteers within a congregation, and to discuss practice implications for social workers who collaborate with faith-based volunteers.

Method

Using content analysis of qualitative data, including transcripts of interviews with key informants and archival documents, the case study presented in this article explored the ways members of a faith-based organization and a local congregation built a partnership to resettle refugees. The four members of the research team were participant observers in the development of the parish partnership. Two research team members are leaders/staff members of Catholic Charities (CC). The third is a parish volunteer who attended most of the joint meetings of CC with the parish steering committee and maintained associated records. The fourth is a volunteer CC board committee chairperson.

Three research questions guided this exploration: (a) How did a social service organization engaged in refugee resettlement build a collaborative partnership with a local congregation? (b) In what ways did this partnership evolve, building upon the support of volunteers as they engaged in refugee resettlement with social service providers? (c) What role did Catholic Social Teaching and values play in this refugee resettlement partnership?

Participants

The Catholic faith community central to this study is Holy Trinity Parish. Holy Trinity Parish has over 1,000 active, ethnically-diverse parishioners and is located in Beaverton, Oregon, a suburban city of 90,151 residents in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area (ESRI, 2016). Every year the parish celebrates its diversity through an international festival that features ethnic food specialties and entertainment provided by parishioners. However, Beaverton remains largely European American and White (73.5% in 2010; ESRI, 2016). This lack of diversity compared to other cities exists despite recent accelerated growth in numbers of regional residents of color, who
made up just 7.2% of the metro area population in 1980, but grew to 23.7% by 2010 (National Equity Atlas, 2016).

After Portland State University’s Institutional Review Board approved the human subjects protection procedures used in this study, in-depth, open-ended individual interviews were conducted with seven participants. All participants were involved in the development and implementation of the parish partnership: five were parish volunteers and two were CCRR staff. The seven informants included five females and two males, with five participants identifying as White European Americans, one as Asian American, and one as Iranian American. They ranged in age from 27 to 75, and all had attained at least one college degree.

Data Collection Procedures

Key informants participated in audio-recorded individual interviews with one of the research team members; participants were interviewed in private offices or meeting rooms. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was transcribed and coded. The interview addressed the three research questions and covered the following topics: (a) the participant’s role in refugee resettlement work and the partnership, (b) strengths of the partnership and lessons learned in the work, (c) areas of improvement for the partnership and how things might be done differently, and (d) ways in which Catholic Social Teaching or values are integrated in the work.

Archival data that was retrieved from a secure file-sharing service included minutes of the steering committee meetings with CC staff and other partnership documents. Minutes were taken during each of the 40 meetings held during the first two years of the partnership and shared with participants in the following week, then reviewed and corrected by participants. Archival documents also included written agreements, statistical reports, and associated community meeting records.

Content Analysis

The content of the interview transcripts and archival materials were analyzed using a combination of inductive and deductive techniques to explore the formation and evolution of the parish partnership. Using a grounded theory approach, two researchers independently generated codes for the emerging themes and patterns they noted in the data and compared their coding results to search for underlying meaning (Charmaz, 2006). Central to the process was identifying the interview participants’ implicit and explicit meanings and experiential views of their contexts. In addition, the resulting interpretation of the data was validated through reviewing the preliminary findings and draft of the article with participants in the study.
The Refugee Resettlement Steering Committee also reviewed the findings and gave feedback as part of a member checking process for validation (Charmaz, 2006).

**Case Study Findings**

During the two-year period of this case study, a working partnership was established between Holy Trinity Parish and Catholic Charities of Oregon, which resulted in increased volunteer services for a substantial group of refugees. From October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2017, CCRR resettled a total of 1,703 persons from 23 countries. As a result of the partnership, 124 of those refugees (7.3%) stayed in the parish’s Ministry House for a portion of that period (588 days) and received volunteer services as part of their resettlement process from Afghanistan, Burma, Eritrea, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, or Syria. A total of 91 people completed the volunteer application process, and at least 36 have been active in the Welcoming Ministry at any one time.

Qualitative analysis of partnership interviews and archives focused on each of the three guiding research questions. Emerging themes were identified within each of the focal areas, with the goal of providing guidance for establishing and maintaining a partnership between a faith-based social service organization and volunteers from a local faith community.

**Building a Collaborative Partnership for Refugee Resettlement**

As the research team investigated the first question, “How did a faith-based social service organization engaged in refugee resettlement build a collaborative partnership with a congregation?” three themes emerged: exploring the compatibility of organizational goals, setting forth clear agreements and structure, and evaluating the pilot program.

**Exploring the compatibility of parish and FBO goals.** Guided by a pastor, parish staff, and parish councils, Holy Trinity had active ministries that included community outreach efforts ranging from a Food Closet providing services to over 20,000 people each year, to shelter and supports for residents of Ministry House. Acquired in 2012, Ministry House is a ten-bedroom home in the parish neighborhood that had been converted to a nursing home by the previous owner. Since acquiring Ministry House, parish leaders explored a number of uses for the home, but found that they did not involve many parishioners as volunteers in this opportunity for outreach.

In the early spring of 2015, talks began between leaders of Catholic Charities of Oregon and the parish about a possible partnership involving Ministry House that could meet goals of both organizations, and serve as a model for other congregations who wanted to be involved in welcoming refugees.
A formal Ministry House parish partnership proposal was drafted by Catholic Charities in June 2015 and resulted in an agreement with the congregation to launch a pilot project focused on developing, testing, and evaluating the impact of a Welcoming Ministry. The Welcoming Ministry was to include use of the Ministry House and the development of a volunteer program that would serve the refugees that CC assigned to live in this parish home as other, more permanent housing was found. This parish partnership, with the guidance of a parish-based steering committee, aimed to involve parish volunteers to work directly with refugees who had just arrived in Oregon, by way of refugee camps, and to collaborate with CC social service providers.

**Establishing clear agreements and structures.** Clarity in program structure was established early in the partnership in order to bridge differences in organizational cultures. For example, parish leaders recruited three parishioners who had extensive project management experience to serve on the parish’s Refugee Resettlement Steering Committee (RRSC), which was led by the parish staff member in charge of outreach efforts. During the partnership’s 90-day pilot phase, CC staff members were invited to attend selected meetings of the steering committee, but in subsequent months, they were an integral part of the RRSC. During the second year of the project, volunteer leaders were also added to the RRSC. These volunteer leaders provided on-the-ground information about the project operation. In the first set of meetings, an agreement was reached to establish a framework for collaboration setting forth working principles and identifying lines of communication. For example, the parish leased Ministry House to CC for a nominal sum, and CC provided contact information for staff members who could be called for consultation by parish volunteers in an emergency.

The RR Program Director identified two major types of social services offered to incoming refugees: **Reception and Placement, and Refugee Case Services.** CC social service workers arranged for housing, furnished dwellings, secured food assistance and financial support, and linked refugees with health and employment services. Holy Trinity Parish volunteers collaborated with the assigned workers and met refugees to be served at Ministry House at the airport, oriented them to their housing and U.S. culture, accompanied them to major appointments, and assisted them to connect with local resources and integrate into U.S. culture. The parish agreed to provide transitional housing at the Ministry House during designated arrivals’ first weeks in Oregon, and to use the facility as a “learning house” for the refugees placed there. It also provided a valuable temporary housing resource for residents with special medical or disability challenges and for large families who needed co-housing of members.

As part of the written agreement, volunteers from the congregation signed up as volunteers with CC, which served as the organizational home
of this pilot parish partnership program. This meant the parish volunteers went through CC’s training orientation and background check process and were not managed by parish staff.

**Evaluating the pilot program.** As part of the collaborative agreement, a structure was developed for assessing whether the program was reaching short-term goals and following working principles. At one of the early RRSC meetings with CC staff, a steering committee member asked, “What would demonstrate pilot project success?” An administrator of CC responded that success would be determined by: (a) families being resettled more effectively, including being able to navigate systems like healthcare and education with more support, and (b) volunteers being successfully integrated into the refugee resettlement process. The parish outreach coordinator wanted to have evidence that a substantial number of people from the parish were putting time and effort into this process, and this commitment was sustained over time. A joint aspiration was also identified at this meeting: that the project would “make a difference in the life of the parish and parishioners...connecting the work with the lives and stories of all those involved [the parishioners serving, and those being served].” At the close of the 90-day pilot period, 20 refugees had been served, occupying Ministry House for a total of 85 days. Eighty-three parish volunteers had been recruited, with 78 completing the training orientation. After the pilot period, attention was paid to processes that would improve local refugee services and volunteer experiences.

**Parish Volunteers, Social Service Staff, and Team Processes**

The second major research question, “In what ways did this partnership evolve, building upon the support of volunteers as they engaged in refugee resettlement work with social service providers?” was addressed by key informants in their interviews and discussed in joint meetings of the steering committee, volunteer leaders, and CCRR staff. Five themes were developed through content analysis: coordination of parish volunteers, volunteer training and support, the development of the role of “team lead,” maintaining open and respectful communication, and engaging in fellowship and relationship building.

**Coordination of parish volunteers in the partnership.**

One of the RRSC members agreed to act as volunteer coordinator for the parish group, and developed a process to invite parishioners to join the project, in collaboration with the CC staff member in charge of volunteer coordination. This invitation listed volunteer opportunities ranging from Ministry House preparation and maintenance, to welcoming refugees during
the first few days, introducing families to community resources, and providing practical cultural orientation services like helping with currency use, shopping, English tutoring, and employment searches. An online application was developed to collect information on volunteers’ availability and interests and to communicate an array of volunteer opportunities.

**Training and continuing support of volunteers by social work staff.** Prior to beginning their work in the Welcoming Ministry, volunteers participated in CCRR orientation and intensive training. These volunteer training orientations were informed by CSTs, and included presentations by CC staff, including former refugees. In her interview, a trainer emphasized a central principle: “...walking alongside people…[Those who serve need to be] willing to walk alongside people when it is uncomfortable, and it’s hard. They don’t share the language, they don’t share the culture, and it’s not an easy journey.” This guiding principle is congruent with the CST of solidarity, that we are all one family, despite cultural differences that have the potential to divide us. CC staff who were former refugees or immigrants told their stories during the trainings, and emphasized the importance of solidarity in their lives.

Another guiding principle implemented in training and orientation was the clear humanitarian approach to refugees. The Program Director of Refugee Resettlement articulated the way staff approached their work with this group:

The definition of refugees is that they are people: mothers, fathers, children, elders, people with mental health needs, people who are medically fragile, people with severe trauma; they just happen to be from other parts of the world with this special refugee status.

After orientation and initial training, staff provided informal coaching of volunteers on promoting self-determination. For example, parish volunteers were reminded by CCRR staff that refugee residents in the Ministry House needed to make their own decisions about securing health care, and having sufficient food to feed their families. As a CCRR staff member said,

People have fled everything and they’re trying to re-define home, [we need to remember] that it’s not for us to define. Finding ways to share culture and share community so they can define “home” is pretty powerful, but allowing them to do so. … [It is] one of the hardest challenges and the most beautiful.

As a CCRR staff member pointed out in her interview, a major role of the volunteer was to bridge “the gap between cultures, and emphasize that ‘you’re welcome here’ and ‘we’re going to help you navigate this.’”
Volunteer team leads as vital program assets. After a year of implementing the partnership, it was decided that rotating team leads would be designated to bring a dimension that the parish volunteer coordinator said he could not:

The team leads brought a dimension that I simply didn’t have time for. And they made a lot of personal phone calls to volunteers, and kept the volunteers in the loop that way. The technology was good, but it wasn’t good enough. It didn’t have that personal touch. And that’s a big thing that team leads brought in. They’re willing to engage personally with the volunteers, and of course with the refugee families.

The intensive engagement and leadership of the team leads was essential; they managed volunteer assignments through the use of an online calendar and posted essential notices about incoming families. Incorporating team leads also streamlined the communication channels between the volunteers and CCRR staff. Previously there was major confusion about the way to handle communication with the CCRR staff that led to, as staff indicated, “different emails and phone calls from different volunteers,” and added workload strain. The team lead became the point person who was in close communication and engagement with the CCRR staff, its team of volunteers, and the refugees. The team leads also connected the volunteers to each other, and facilitated a sense of camaraderie, even knowing each member’s strengths and talents. Most importantly, they, over time, became deeply familiar with the journey a refugee had to go through. For example, a team lead indicated in her interview,

But I’ve been doing it long enough that I know...how long these appointments are. I know how many weeks this is going to last. So I can give them [fellow team members] enough to do the job, and then more when they’re ready for it.

Team members developed greater confidence so that they could share knowledge more freely, including information about local resources in the community. Most importantly, a CCRR staff member indicated, “...it makes me really proud of where the volunteers have come, and the ownership that the group has taken over the sustainability of the project.”

In addition to team leads for the refugee residents in the Ministry House, a team lead organized volunteers to prepare and “re-set” the home in between groups of residents. A CC staff member said that this group of volunteers was “willing to come in and transform this home into a welcoming place that was inviting...They put their own heart and spirit into making ... [Ministry House] into a home.”

The decision to designate volunteer team leads proved to be a crucial development in the evolving Welcoming Ministry project. Team leads served
as main communicators and organizers for intense periods of engagement with incoming refugees.

**Open communication and respectful team discussion.** Analysis revealed that the level of trust, openness, and respect among the team of volunteers led to authentic communication involving specific tasks and responsibilities. For example, RRSC meeting minutes recorded a lively discussion on cleaning expectations for refugees residing in Ministry House. One long-term volunteer pointed out that a family didn’t clean the house well before moving to an apartment. A team leader who had worked directly with the family shared that the family members had eaten all of their meals sitting on the ground at the refugee camp they had lived in for multiple years, so had developed different cleaning standards. A volunteer indicated that changing one’s expectations may be a “cultural stretch” and parishioners may need more time and interchanges with other volunteers and with residents to “do this kind of cultural navigation.” The result of this discussion was a reminder that the “role [of the volunteers] is to walk beside them [the refugee family].” When an interviewer followed up with the volunteer who participated in the discussion, he described how he continues to learn from fellow volunteers about understanding cultural differences. The ongoing meetings between volunteers and social workers to debrief each refugee family have served as a respectful and trustful space for such dialogue and the development of cultural sensitivity.

**Fellowship and relationship building.** As well as offering a welcoming and accepting entry to the U.S. to incoming refugees, the volunteers and CCRR social service staff also worked to connect residents to local cultural groups and culturally-appropriate resources. A CCRR staff member said that volunteers told her, “We know where the local mosque is and we know where you can go and grab some halal food…They have extended their [reach to] resources to make sure the families are very comfortable where they are.” These new connections helped the refugees join networks of people from their home culture who spoke their own language or practiced in the same religion. Although some of the volunteers had themselves experienced the challenges of immigrating to the U.S., many were unfamiliar with the cultures of the incoming residents and counted on the social service staff who had been assigned to these groups to help them learn about specific cultural practices.

**Learning opportunities.** One of the most important benefits of the program noted by volunteers was their learning about different cultures in an immediate way as they served residents from the Middle East, Asia, and African nations. As part of their volunteerism, parishioners also connected with local cultural groups and learned a great deal more about the religions of the newly arrived residents, but some also had experienced misunderstandings due to cultural differences. To learn more about refugees who followed the Muslim religion, the parish pastor and the RRSC invited a local Muslim
leader to consult with them about cultural practices that were important to know, in order to serve with cultural sensitivity. Through this meeting volunteers learned about differences in standards of behavior, sectarian divisions, and culturally-based belief systems. He also connected project leaders with local cultural and religious organizations and fellowships.

Developing personal relationships. For some volunteers, building bridges between cultures proved personally rewarding, since it resulted in the development of lasting relationships with families who settled in the Beaver-ton area. As a CCRR staff member noted, “You enter into the relationship wanting to make a difference but…the people you are trying to help have changed your outlook, your way of living, your way of being.” Volunteers continued to participate in social relationships with the resettled families after they left Ministry House and counted them among their personal friends. As a female volunteer indicated, “…so we invite some of our refugee families who have become our friends to go to my mom's house and do the barbeque or do whatever.”

Integration of Catholic Social Teaching

In the final segment of analysis, researchers considered ways data addressed the third research question, “What was the role CST and values played in this refugee resettlement partnership?” Two themes were identified as a result of content analysis: the alignment of volunteer values with CST, and the shared values of CCRR staff and parish volunteers.

Alignment of volunteer values with Catholic Social Teaching.

Parish volunteers’ values typically aligned with aspects of CST in the work that they did with refugees. In his interview, a parish volunteer indicated his emphasis on the principle of the preferential option for the poor and his work for social justice when he stated:

I think we realize that we have the obligation to care for people and their needs…All of us, not just Catholic Charities, are obligated and encouraged to care for people in need. The church has always talked about the poor and the need to look out for our fellow human beings. I think it was just as simple as that. And also, our pastor was a great advocate for the social mission of the church and how it was our responsibility as a faith community to be part of that.

Another volunteer spoke about how the teaching of solidarity resonated with her,

…this has been one of the richest experiences of solidarity for me…I knew going into this that what appeals to me
was that I would have the opportunity to build relationships...all of those families completely enriched my life. I’ve taken away so many lessons from my experiences. It’s changed how I look at things in the world. I’ve had a lot of stereotypes that had been challenged. I wouldn’t consider myself a person who, you know, is outwardly prejudiced and yet, you know, [it] is something to actually work on… I have had to encounter some of my internalized prejudice.

She went on to describe that “it is the relationship that is transformative” and “vulnerable” leading to “learning” to “be open” to such experience. Such integration of Catholic Social Teaching provided a deeper understanding of the human experience of being a refugee. In some instances, this learning led to further action in addressing social change and taking a stand on sociopolitical issues.

**Shared values of CCRR staff and parish volunteers.** Interviews with CCRR staff members working with parish volunteers revealed their guiding values were well-aligned with CST and those of the volunteers. A CCRR program administrator noted the compatibility: “Catholic Social Teaching is like our social work code of ethics....” The CCRR volunteer coordinator spoke of the ways in which social work ethics and values were compatible with CST and her work with volunteers:

Catholic Social Teaching is very much why we do what we do. We emphasize the concept of “walking alongside people” [in solidarity]…So much of the work that volunteers do on the ground is social work…Catholic Social Teaching lay great groundwork, and are so much in line with social work principles. Giving people voice. Remembering that this is all brand new [for the refugee families]....Don’t take away from an individual’s humanity. We need to really get them to be seen as humans”[the dignity of the human person].

**Discussion**

The case study of the Welcoming Ministry project has examined the ways in which a faith-based organization and a local congregation forged a partnership to benefit refugees being resettled. In the past, social work has targeted faith-based communities to recruit as partners in resettlement (Ives & Sinha, 2010), since they are reliable and motivated sources of social capital (Ives et al., 2010; Weisinger & Salipante, 2005) and resources that help promote community integration (Martone, Zimmerman, Vidal de Haymes, & Lorentzen, 2014; Nash, Wong, & Trlin, 2006).

Although deeply affected by local conditions, the research results include lessons learned that may benefit other social service organizations’ partnerships with groups of Christian volunteers. The research highlights
the importance of articulating goals and establishing clear partnership agreements and structure. Partnership development occurred through providing training for volunteers and supporting their evolving roles (including the formation of teams, led by key volunteers), fostering open communication, and building ongoing relationships with refugees. Finally, social service workers and volunteers shared values aligned with Catholic Social Teaching that guided this grassroots initiative.

The case study responds to the call by Garland et al. (2008) for research on social work collaborations with volunteers from a variety of faith traditions and on promotion of long-term service engagement of those volunteers. It also presents an example of a congregation that augmented usual services and supplied additional resources to an established FBO’s program (Myers, Lawrence, & Jones, 2013). The current project provided dedicated parish volunteers who believed in the principles of CST as partners with an FBO whose social workers and service providers shared common values with the parishioners (McMillin, 2012). Both social workers and volunteers who were interviewed revealed the primacy of social justice and the recognition of their common humanity with new residents, creating a synergy that drove the process of partnership creation.

Practice Implications: Volunteer Coordination

Beginning with a pilot agreement that recognized the parish members as traditional volunteers within the faith-based organization, participants moved toward the development of a new partnership model. Efforts were made by both partner organizations to ensure that the systems were built for longevity, rather than intense efforts that ended after only a few families were sponsored (Eby et al., 2011). Most notably, the partnership required the development of evolving volunteer coordination practices that went beyond routine social work management of volunteers (Brudney & Meijis, 2014). Although some aspects of the partnership were similar to practices in traditional volunteer programs, there was the challenge of the serendipitous nature of the Welcoming Ministry that required flexibility, discretion, and coordination rather than management (Macduff, Netting, & O’Connor, 2009). Because of the unique access to Ministry House, the surrounding volunteer program that developed at the parish called for emergent planning by the joint parish and CC steering committee, requiring skillful collaboration on the part of the social service staff who were able to “feel comfortable in an interactive group that creates the form and process of the work to be done as it emerges” (Macduff et al., 2009, p. 413).

The development of the role of team lead as the organizer of a group of volunteers assigned to a particular family, and as the person directly communicating with the family’s case manager was central to the successful
evolution of the program. Since the volunteers were also providing some services previously supplied by the case manager, additional training and mentoring promoted greater effectiveness and more satisfying experiences as they met the practical needs of Ministry House residents (Netting, Thomas, & Yancy, 2005). The willingness of the social worker who served as volunteer coordinator to provide support and walk alongside the volunteers as they served refugees was also essential for the continuing engagement of individual volunteers (Thomson, 2014; Vinton, 2012, Wilson, 2000).

Practice Issues: Building Social Capital

A major focus of volunteer efforts in the Welcoming Ministry was to connect the residents of Ministry House to local groups and resources. Their work can be considered as an attempt to help these new neighbors to develop social ties and relationships in their host community. Adler and Kwon (2002) define social capital as, “the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor's social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actors” (p. 23). The social capital that refugees developed through the volunteers’ work involved establishing friendships with volunteers, leads for employment or needed services, and connections with local groups of people who shared their home culture. Becoming a part of established social networks gave refugees access to transitional assistance, but also paved the way for durable solutions and satisfactory integration into their new home community (Ager et al., 2015; Martone et al., 2014).

Volunteer interviews revealed that these parishioners expanded their own social capital as they were able to overcome some of their personal discomfort about interacting with those of different religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds (Weisinger & Salipante, 2005) and establish new social ties. Simply put, the volunteers themselves were changed through the relationships they developed with the refugees (Garland et al., 2008). Social service staff associated with the project not only supported the building of these ties between volunteers and refugees, but also fostered the exchange of information between organizations that resulted in their own additional knowledge of community resources (Ives & Sinha, 2010). Ties of local volunteers helped CCRR find resources for particularly vulnerable residents with medical or disability challenges and affordable local long-term housing for families, which was particularly difficult (Darrow, 2015).

Conclusion

The goals of both Catholic Charities and the local parish were addressed by the Welcoming Ministry project as it evolved. Catholic Charities
had developed an enduring partnership that provided needed services for individuals and families that were part of the Refugee Resettlement program. Dedicated volunteers were recruited and trained, and delivered vital services to Catholic Charities’ clients (Ives et al., 2010). The local faith community also met the goals of the pastor and the project’s steering committee, by providing the opportunity to parishioners to put their faith into action, with large numbers actively engaged as volunteers in a variety of roles that were personally meaningful and transformative (Garland et al., 2008). Parishioners responded with mutuality and found solidarity with their refugee neighbors, which Catholic theologian Daniel Groody (2015) has argued is the essence of a Christian response to immigrants and refugees. The partnership also aligned with the social justice principles of Catholic Social Teaching, and the ways Jesus “embraced the most marginalized in society in order to confront the systems and structures that exclude, reject, and alienate” (Groody, p. 320). The promising nature of the parish partnership and other refugee resettlement collaborative efforts between local faith communities and social services suggests that additional research on faith-based partnerships and future systematic evaluations of long-term programs such as this are essential (Ives et al., 2010).

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**Keywords:** refugee resettlement, Catholic Social Teaching, volunteer coordination, social capital, collaboration, faith-based organization, parish partnership
The Role of Faith and Faith-Based Organizations in the German Response to the Refugee Crisis

David Cecil, Kenneth Stoltzfus & Rachel Joy Hagues

This study examines the association between Germany’s faith-based organizational response to refugee resettlement and the experience and expression of faith related to motivation and coping among German social workers. Researchers have found that personal faith can be a professional asset as it relates to motivation and coping, especially in particularly stressful fields (Kuilema, 2014; Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Putnam, et al., 2012). Drawing on original interview data with German social workers along with an examination of the German system for human services delivery, the current study explored the role of faith and of faith-based organizations in the response to the crisis that resulted from the massive refugee influx in Germany between 2014 and 2016. This article synthesizes literature on the refugee crisis, social and political implications in Germany, a description of the German human services system (primarily through faith-based organizations), and the trends and status of faith among German social workers. We then present our methodology along with findings and a discussion of implications.

Review of the Literature

State of the Refugee Crisis

Providing aid to refugees is one of the most pressing global issues our world is facing today. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) defines a refugee as someone who has been forced to flee his or her country due to war, violence, or persecution (2017). Under the 1951 Refugee Convention, countries agreed to provide asylum to those in need. Today, 144 countries have signed that Convention (UNHCR, 2017). According to the UNHCR, more people are currently displaced due to war or persecution than at any time since World War II. As of the end of 2015, the majority of...
refugees in our world today come from Syria - at least 5 million (UNHCR,). Of these, at least 3.6 million are women and children (UNHCR, 15 Mar 2017). The next largest population of refugees is from Afghanistan - 2.7 million. The scope of this forced migration is staggering, with the Lancet reporting that at the end of 2015, nearly 9,000 refugees were arriving in Greece alone on a daily basis (Morgan, 2015). The UNHCR (2017) reports that in 2015, Germany accepted more than 512,000 refugees. Within six months (January - June 2016), nearly 625,000 asylum applications were filed in 38 European countries; Germany received the most (434,700) (UNHCR, 2016). The UNHCR reported that by the end of 2016, 1.27 million “others of concern” were living in Germany, including refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless persons. The UNHCR (2017) asserts that the category entitled “others of concern” includes individuals who need special protection or services even if they do not fit into the definition of refugee, asylee, internally displaced, or stateless person categories. The current refugee crisis has been precipitated by a number of complex factors; we will provide a brief overview of these factors in the paragraphs that follow.

Background of the Current Crisis

The current refugee crisis came about primarily because of ongoing conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. UNHCR (2016) reports that 216,900 Syrians, 128,000 Afghans, and 94,300 Iraqis have filed for asylum in Europe alone. Additionally, the recent conflict in Ukraine forced 1.7 million people into internal displacement; 1.4 million of these people applied for asylum in surrounding countries, with 8,000 seeking refuge in Germany in 2016 (UNHCR, 2016). There are numerous factors that led to refugees seeking asylum in Germany.

Refugees Seeking Asylum in Germany

In order to examine the role of the German faith-based response, it is important to understand the magnitude of the refugee crisis. In a recent study conducted with asylum seekers in Germany, researchers found that participants were most often forced out of their home country due to the threat or fear of violent conflict or war (70%), followed by persecution (44%), discrimination (38%), and forced military service or conscription (36%) (Brücker et al., 2016). Syrian, Afghani, Iraqi, and Iranian people most often sought refuge due to war and persecution, while conditions in Eritrea led many refugees to flee in order to avoid compulsory military service (Brücker, et al., 2016). Other reasons for seeking refugee status include poor personal living conditions, discrimination, the country’s economic situation, following family members, and being sent by family members (Brücker et al., 2016).
Numbers gleaned from the UNHCR (2017) statistical database indicate that in 2016, Germany received 1,236,691 refugees or asylees. Table 1 depicts the most common countries of origin for refugees received by Germany. The most common country of origin was Syria, (375,122), followed by Iraq (86,045), Afghanistan (46,292), Eritrea (30,020), and Iran (22,910). Table 2 reports the numbers of asylum seekers who entered Germany in 2016; Afghans (126,522) comprised the largest group of asylum seekers, followed by Syrians (100,527), Iraqis (65,646), Iranians (27,254), Pakistanis (22,748), and Nigerians (20,460).

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Brücker et al., (2016) explored refugees’ reasons for resettling in Germany and found the most common reasons include the belief that Germans had a high degree of respect for human rights (73%), the German educational system (43%), and feeling that they would be welcome (42%). The country’s economic stability and the national welfare system were also cited as reasons for resettlement (Brücker et al., 2016). The findings of Brücker et
al. seem to suggest than many refugees chose to settle in Germany due to a combination of factors, including both favorable social conditions and access to opportunities for support and economic stability. Although refugees seem to perceive Germany in a favorable light, German public opinion is sharply divided regarding the potential social, political, and economic implications of the refugee influx.

Social, Political, and Economic Implications of the Refugee Crisis

Arlt and Wolling (2016) reported that Germans are strongly divided on whether or not they are in favor of welcoming refugees. Not only are they divided along political lines, but also along social class lines. This is primarily due to educational differences between classes. Using data from the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) and the Barometer of Public Opinion on Refugees in Germany in 2016, Jacobsen, Eisnecker, and Schupp (2017) reported similar findings, suggesting that those who were more highly educated were more likely to have a positive opinion about the impacts of refugee migration. In addition, respondents who identified as “salaried employees and civil servants” had a higher opinion of the effects of refugees on the German economy than that of blue-collar workers (Jacobsen, Eisnecker, & Schupp, 2017). Recent news reports confirm this growing political and social divide, as well as the trend of Germans moving more toward the fringes politically, particularly toward the extreme right (Stern, 2016).

Some of the dissension regarding whether refugees should be permitted to resettle in Germany appears to be related to differing opinions regarding the likely effect of large-scale refugee resettlement on the German economy. Fratzscher and Junker (2015) suggest that the integration of refugees into German society would eventually benefit the economy, concluding that the long-term benefits of integration will outweigh the costs. In using simulations to predict different economic outcomes, they found that in each scenario, the short-term costs of housing, welfare, health, and market integration will actually serve as an investment, and that Germany’s economy will reap positive long-term results, including higher per capita income for those already in Germany (Fratzscher & Junker, 2015). Bach et al. (2017) agree with this analysis, suggesting that the initial fiscal costs of the refugee influx will be predictably high, but as refugees increasingly enter the workforce a reduction in ongoing welfare costs and an increase in government revenue should occur. Bach et al. (2017) state that research conducted by the Institute for Employment Research-The Research Institute for the Federal Employment Agency (IAB) in Nuremberg and the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) in Berlin concluded that investing in refugees’ language skills and educational qualifications promises high returns. It is estimated that the current percentage of the refugee population with no professional or academic
qualifications (66%) will improve to 55% by 2030, meaning that a smaller percentage will find themselves with inadequate employment preparation (Bach et al., 2017). Over this time period, it is estimated that the German GDP will increase by approximately nine billion euros, or .3%, largely due to resettled refugees' investment into the economy (Bach et al., 2017). The same study reports that overall, German incomes will also slightly rise (Bach et al., 2017). This discussion is particularly important given the social and political (i.e., populist) backlash that has occurred in the early transition period. Many Germans reflexively believe that Germany has overextended itself and that the influx of refugees means both steep costs with no return on investment, as well as a dilution of German identity.

Recent research suggests that factors such as volunteerism and where one resides are also related to attitudes about refugee integration. Jacobsen et al. (2017) found that Germans who reported spending time volunteering with refugees also reported significantly more positive outlooks about the consequences of refugees migrating to Germany than those who had not done any volunteering. It is important to note, however, that the study did not establish whether volunteerism led to more positive opinions of refugee integration, or whether individuals who tended to have positive attitudes toward refugees were more likely to volunteer to work with refugee populations. Jacobsen et al. also found that individuals who resided in the western part of Germany tended to hold more positive attitudes toward refugees than those from eastern Germany.

Although there is a great deal of variation in the views individual Germans hold regarding the recent influx of refugees, the country has dedicated significant resources to providing services to refugees. Many of the services refugees receive are delivered through faith-based agencies. The following section will provide an overview of the German human services system, as well as the principle of subsidiarity, which guides many aspects of human service provision. Examining the complexities of this system provides important context for understanding the role of faith-based organizations in the German response to refugees.

Description of the Faith-Based German Human Service System

Subsidiarity. The German human service systems approach is a balanced and cooperative partnership between the German government and the two largest church denominations in Germany, the Protestant Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland (Diakonie) and the Catholic Deutscher Caritas Verband (Caritas). Göçmen (2013) describes the German human service system's operation as between a high contradiction and separation of government and church (e.g., France's system) and nonseparation (e.g., England's system). The German approach
is underpinned by the governmental ideology of *subsidiarity* (Göçmen, 2013). *Subsidiarity* reflects the German governmental ideology that services should be delivered as close to those in need as possible, with the church understood to be closer to the people than the government. A brief discussion of the two primary churches and systems follows.

**Diakonie Deutschland- Evangelischcher Bundesverband.** The Protestant *Diakonie* dates back to the mid-1800s and was reorganized to help meet the needs of the suffering after World War II (Diakonie Deutschland- Evangelischcher Bundesverband, 2016). Keeping in mind that Germany's population is 81,000,000, *Diakonie* includes 30,000 centers including 2652 homes with inpatient/outpatient facilities. The *Diakonie* system also includes 1015 counseling centers along with 462 inpatient/hospital/hospice service centers. It employs 465,000 full- and part-time employees and has 700,000 volunteers. These services take place in the context of 18 charities and 69 agencies. The administrators for *Diakonie* state that they run independently and across political parties. They take the ethical position of respecting “dignity and uniqueness to promote rights to independence and self-determination.” *Diakonie* serves numerous populations, including those with disabilities and illnesses, children and families, those struggling with addiction, and immigrants and their families. The faith orientation of *Diakonie* is based in the Protestant tradition and emphasizes a desire to demonstrate God's unconditional love as reflected by Jesus Christ (Diakonie Deutschland-Evangelischcher Bundesverband, 2016).

**Caritas- Deutscher Caritas Verband.** *Caritas* was founded in 1897 and serves as the human services organization of the Roman Catholic church (Caritas-Germany Online Editorial Team, 2014). *Caritas* was also reorganized and amplified after the World Wars. *Caritas* includes 25,000 centers and institutes and reports that it helps 11,000,000 people per year in the areas of unemployment, AIDS, substance addiction, homelessness, prisons, mental illness, and immigration. *Caritas* states that their services are also utilized by families, children, young adults, those with disabilities, and the elderly. It is organized and coordinated by 27 diocesan *Caritas* organizations through its Freiburg headquarters.

**Other contributors to German human services.** *Diakonie* and *Caritas* provide the vast majority of social and human services in Germany, but there are a number of other significant contributors that should be mentioned, including Muslim-based organizations and private philanthropic organizations such as the Red Cross (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, 2016). The Muslim community is the largest faith-based community after *Diakonie* and *Caritas*. Given that the majority of refugees in Germany are Muslim, it is important
to note that the German Muslim community is a significant contributor to the response to refugees; but as their membership (approximately 4.5% of the German population) and infrastructure are small when compared to Diakonie and Caritas, they tend to take more of a support role in service and resource delivery (Göçmen, 2013). Organizations such as the Central Council of Muslims (Zentralrat der Muslime) and Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institute for Religions (Dachverband Türkisch-Islamische Union) are active in social, cultural, educational, and religious services, but they are not major social welfare service providers. Additionally, there are private philanthropic organizations such as the Red Cross (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, 2017) that work with refugees in Germany. According to the Red Cross they currently serve 42,500 refugees in 318 emergency shelters with more than 1500 staff and volunteers. Their efforts focus primarily on reception, supply, and registration, followed by efforts for “orderly circulation” (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, 2017).

**Faith as a Motivating Factor and Coping Strategy for German Human Service Providers**

Although the majority of German human services are provided under the auspices of faith-based organizations, the role of faith in German life is complex. For the purpose of this article we define faith as evidence of personal belief in God through a specific religion, particularly the Protestant, Catholic, and Islamic religions. Since World War II, membership in the two major German churches fell from 94.4% to under 62% (Walker, 2007). Some suggest that this decrease in membership means that churches and religion are becoming increasingly irrelevant in Germany (Forschungsgruppe Weltanschauungen in Deutschland, 2017), while others suggest that a more complex, nuanced understanding is required.

Walker (2007) suggests that Germans are as interested as ever, perhaps more-so, in religious dialogue. Walker suggests that the current German religious discourse has been complicated by the reunification of Germany (noting that East Germany was primarily non-religious due to Soviet bloc influences) and by the increase in religious diversity. In regard to the latter point, Walker states that the increasing religious diversity means that there can no longer be a pervasive presumption that Germans will join one of the major churches or that they will speak openly about such matters. These trends have been referred to as pluralization and secularization (Weisse, 2016). It has been theorized that because of the increase in religious diversity, especially in regard to the Muslim population, the German people are more reluctant to presume to speak openly about religious views, because it can no longer be assumed that Germans belong to one of the major Christian denominations.

It can be further deduced that as Germans feel less social, cultural, and familial obligation to join a church and are increasingly less likely to
discuss religion in public settings, they are now less likely to join a church. In light of this, it is possible that, although church membership has decreased, there could be little change in numbers of people for whom faith plays a strong orienting role in their lives. In the final analysis, perhaps we see a less obligatory religious observation, more honest discussion, and little to no judgment or hostility toward those who believe. This conclusion appears to be supported by our study, which found that a number of non-believing Germans were happy and content to be working for either Diakonie or Caritas and strongly supported the humanitarian aims of these organizations, even though the organizations’ faith commitments did not resonate with them. It is also important to note that many individuals may separate personal spiritual faith from participation in corporate worship and/or church membership. All of these factors in the literature review support the importance of a careful analysis of the experience of social workers on the front-lines of responding to the refugee influx in Germany.

**German Social Work Education**

Although the faith-based organizations of Diakonie and Caritas are major employers of social workers in Germany, employment standards had more to do with academic preparation than with faith expression or integration for those who work in these organizations. This contributes significantly to the high variability of faith expression and use of faith for coping that was found. To further understand the professional roles and status of the social workers who were interviewed for the current study, it is important to understand the process of social work education in Germany.

Similar to the United States, social work (Sozialarbeit) has a proud and complex 100+ year history in Germany (Gehlenborg, 2001). Social workers, educated primarily at universities of applied sciences, and social pedagogues (Sozialpadagoge), educated primarily in full research universities, both work as social workers. Ralf Roßkopf, a German social work educator, explained that in 2006, Germany engaged in the Bologna Process, wherein EU Member States agreed upon a common bachelors and master’s degree system (personal communication, October 18, 2017). This was done to promote educational uniformity and student mobility between EU Member States. Prior to this, social workers earned the diploma; this degree is no longer awarded due to the Bologna process changes, but it is generally understood to fall between the bachelor’s and master’s degree in terms of rigor and length of time necessary for completion. In this study, social workers who stated they held the diploma were likely to have received their education prior to 2006. It should also be noted that in both Caritas and Diakonie there are certification programs that can be substituted for university education in social work or social pedagogy.
Methods

This article focuses on the faith-related data from a larger study on the overall German social work response to the massive influx of refugees between 2014 and 2016. In the current study, faith was explored in two ways: first, we sought to understand the role of large faith-based organizations in the administration of services to refugees. This information was largely covered in our literature review. Second, and more germane to our data collection, we examined the extent to which faith is a factor for motivation and coping. Data were collected from interviews and one focus group with 34 social workers who were working with refugees in various capacities. Of the 34 participants, 11 were trained in social pedagogy (n=11), 10 in social work (n=10), and 9 had the diploma (n=9) (between a bachelor’s and master’s degrees). Seventeen were female, 16 were male, and 1 indicated “other” but did not specify. The average length of social work experience was 12 years (M=12) but this number was skewed high by several participants with 40 years of professional experience. The average length of refugee practice experience was 4.48 years (M=4.48) but this number was skewed high by several participants with 12 years of refugee practice experience. Twenty-six of the participants had less than 3 years of refugee practice experience.

Interviews were conducted in 2016 in two regions of Germany, Berlin/Brandenburg (Northeastern Germany) (n=18) and Wurzburg (Bavaria) (n=16). Researchers used a semi-structured interview guide with nine open-ended questions; participants also completed a questionnaire designed to collect demographic data and reactions to five Likert-scaled items. This triangulation of methods increases the credibility of the study’s findings (Shenton, 2004). The semi-structured interview guide includes questions related to the Educational and Professional Background of the Human Service Provider, Preparation and Training, Refugee’s Greatest Needs, Coping and Faith, and Recommendations for Schools and Churches. The Likert-scaled items measured participant perceptions of Effectiveness of Social Work Services, Adequacy of Resources, Benefits to Refugees, Extent of Work-Related Stress, and Role of Faith in Coping. The semi-structured interview guide was constructed over a period of months by the researchers. Once completed, German colleagues working with refugees reviewed the instrument and provided feedback which was incorporated with the final instrument. Finally, the instrument was translated into German by a professional translation service. When collecting data, researchers used paid interpreters and had all materials, including the structured interview guide, provided to participants in the German language.
Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with assistance from the data management system Atlas.Ti using the constant comparative method, as described by Butler-Kisber (2010). All three researchers collaborated to develop potential codes that were grounded in their experience conducting and transcribing the interviews. Researchers then worked together to analyze the first three interviews and continued to develop more codes as they emerged. Two researchers then divided the remainder of the interviews, finishing the first pass at coding. When possible, the words of participants were used as code names in order to get at the deeper, emic perspective of social workers serving refugees (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Following the initial coding, the third researcher reviewed each of the coded interview documents to verify the codes, a triangulating process that strengthened the trustworthiness of our findings (Golafshani, 2003). After codes were verified, the researchers then worked together to collapse the codes into overarching themes.

Findings

In this study we sought to understand the extent to which our German social worker participants A) felt that their work with refugees was personally motivated by faith and B) viewed faith as a coping resource. Results include data from both quantitative Likert-scale questions and qualitative structured interviews. The qualitative component was the primary focus of the study, but the quantitative results provide an efficient overview that helps to understand qualitative results; thus the quantitative findings are presented first.

There were five Likert-scale items, one of which asked about the role of faith in social workers' work. It is important to note that questions about the overall effectiveness of the German social service system's response to the refugee crisis were consistently high. On a scale of 1 to 7, the mean ranges for questions about the effectiveness, resources, and benefits of services were 5.65 to 6.12 with standard deviations between .58 and .76. At less than 11% average variability (interpreted as low variability) this clearly suggests that German social workers believe their work is effective and that they have the resources they need to do their work. However, when asked about stress levels and the role of faith we received much wider varying responses.

When asked about stress levels (e.g., How have you coped with the overwhelming refugee crisis?) there were more moderate scores with significant variability (M = 3.20, SD = 1.54). This suggests that German social workers do not typically perceive a high level of work-related stress, but also that a fairly high level of variance exists. On the question of the importance of faith for coping, the mean suggests an overall moderate value placed on faith (M = 3.84); however, the large standard deviation (SD = 2.35) indicates a high degree of variability in responses to this item, as a standard deviation of 2.35
reveals a 33.62% average difference between responses. To further illustrate, out of 34 valid responses there were nine participants who reported a 6 or 7 (highly valuing faith as part of coping) and 12 participants who reported a 1 or a 2 (little to no value on faith for coping). Therefore, we cannot generalize about German social workers and the role of faith. Results from qualitative data analysis provide further context for this quantitative result.

**Variations in Faith as a Motivating Factor**

Some participants reported that their personal faith was a motivating factor in their work, as they connected helping others with the basic tenets of their belief system. However, other participants were less likely to connect faith with work and some denied having a faith at all. For example, one participant who understood her faith as a motivational factor stated,

What also motivates me is my faith. It is a personal motivation. But I think it if want to be and want to do my job good and because I am a Christian and I want to love my next neighbor and other people then I try to help as good as a I can. And sometimes it’s maybe forcing and that’s maybe why I change my work because since I started in the media we had this theme, “Refugees, refugees, refugees!” and I personally cannot stop myself; it if I see something over and over I need to get involved; somehow it can be stressful for you…

Another participant stated,

Yes, it [faith] does help me. And I have also asked this of myself. And that was when we met refugees from different institution and they did not have the support we did. And the boys had many problems and I could not just say no. And that is part of Christianity: to love your neighbor. So we can do a little extra work to help other people. So religion in that aspect helps; nobody tells you to do that you do it because of the concept of help thy neighbor.

For some participants, the relationship between faith and their work was less straightforward. Such participants seemed to find some underlying value in Christian faith that resonated with them, even if they did not consider themselves to be religiously observant. For example, one participant said,

Okay I’m not necessarily in a classical sense a believer. I don’t believe in God...I’m doing this because I’m interested in it and I’m learning from it. And I’m getting a chance to meet these people no one else gets to meet. I think I am also really helped and driven by the empathy I have for people.
Despite this denial of being motivated by personal faith, the same participant admitted,

Even though I wouldn’t consider myself a believer in a traditional sense, I have a Christian upbringing. And of course that has influenced me. So, the worth of life and respect for other people was part of my upbringing.

Similarly, one participant stated, “I’m not that strong person of faith; but I can identify with the values.” Another participant who works with a Deaconie related organization - supported by the church - admitted,

I am not believing, but who else could do this work? So I don’t know the 10 commandments and the rules; of course they are important but I cannot say in my life that they play a big role. But I can see that it is important.

Another participant said that faith is important to his family, but not for work. He considered faith to be more of a private thing. However, he admitted thinking about faith when working with refugees, reminding himself that “we are no better than the people we are helping. It is the right, Christian thing to do.”

**Faith and Culture**

Regardless of their own personal religious beliefs, many participants suggested that understanding cultural variables, including religion, was vital in order to work effectively with refugees; some discussed the challenges that faith presents. For example, one participant stated that it “would be good to learn religion, to know about Islam.” Even participants who did not explicitly report the need for religious knowledge hinted at this need, noting that some refugees would not shake hands with members of the opposite gender or that it was not advisable for a female service provider to touch a male client, even as a gesture of support. Both of these cases seem likely to relate to religious beliefs, given the fact that some forms of Islam prohibit any form of physical contact between unrelated men and women.

A few participants suggested that religious faith was sometimes problematic in the work that they were doing. For example, one participant who reported having no faith at all said that his lack of faith can sometimes be problematic when working with people of faith -- which includes many of the refugee population. He reported that it can be challenging to understand the various faiths of his clients in order to not offend them.

Another participant, again reporting no personal faith, expressed the problems that faith can sometimes present when working with the refugee population. He shared an example of a volunteer who wore a cross around his neck being physically attacked (kicked in the shins) by one of the
refugee children because of the cross. This participant went on to explain the importance of acting -- faith or no faith -- in a way that is respectful. He emphasized that acting respectfully includes not doing certain things, such as wearing religious emblems that might cause conflict.

**Faith as a Source of Coping**

Qualitative interviews confirmed this polarization of experiences, as interviewees either had a deeply rooted faith that seemed to help them get through each day, or they almost completely denied faith being involved at all (at least on a personal level). Although many stated clearly that faith does not play a role in motivation or coping, none expressed opposing or antagonistic views toward the idea of faith. When asked if faith played a role in her ability to cope with her work with refugees, one participant said, “I know God is in control and I don’t have to save the world. I think prayer to acknowledge my own helplessness…[has helped with coping].” Another participant (possibly our most openly evangelical participant) said,

Yeah of course, hoping that God also put us the right people in the way who are like also prepared for the Gospel...And hope that they find Jesus in the end, or other people who can tell about the faith.

A participant admitted that faith plays a role in his coping, but also confessed that while he is a Christian, he is not currently attending church (at least on a regular basis). He said specifically,

We tend not to go to church. From my belief, yes, as a Christian faith makes me strong and gives me power. I don’t go every Sunday because it’s…early for me (laughter). But I get strength [for coping].

Another participant was hopeful that the refugees would end up becoming Christians; however, this participant went on to emphasize the importance of being careful to avoid imposing religious beliefs on clients.

Finally, one participant discussed the hope that he has been able to have because of his faith. He said,

faith together with this refugee crisis has given me positive type of hope. Because not…I want to divide it. A negative type of hope is: it’s so bad, and I hope, I hope it will…it won’t get worse but it will get better. A positive type of hope for me is: it WILL get better.

Other participants stated that faith played no role in coping with the stressful aspects of their work. For example, in response to the question as to whether
faith played a role in coping with the stress of their work, one participant stated: “I’m not a believer,” while another stated, “I’m without confession.”

A Good Team Helps with Coping

Social workers who did not tend to indicate faith as a significant source of motivation or coping tended to use other coping strategies, such as psychological/emotional self-care, working with a trustworthy team, exercise, and appropriate boundaries between work and personal life. Managing psychological and emotional health in the context of a good team was articulated by some in this way,

And what really helps is the team here. We can say, “I’m struggling” with my co-workers and

there will be support. Yeah. And so we say, one person says to the other, “go ahead and take a walk, I’ll take care of it.” Ok and the worst thing that would happen to you in a case like this would be that a teammate might interpret it as weakness and you would be judged for this inability to cope. Yeah. Ok I’ve not yet experienced that I would be judged...

Other participants agreed. One explained,

The team is all; you need a good team around you; it’s not good to be a single worker and go on your own. You have to make sure you all are on the same level.

Participants discussed meeting with the team and getting support from each other, but also talking through cases and personal challenges with supervisors. In addition, some participants emphasized keeping their work separate from their private life. They talked about how their team was able to help them through case management issues which helped them to set limits around their work -- not allowing it to spill into their private lives. For example, one interviewer asked a participant, “is there anything you have found that helps deal with the stress?” The participant responded, “talking to my colleagues about it. And for me personally, not talking about it in my private life.”

Don’t take work home—learn to shut it off

Another theme that emerged was the belief that work-related matters should not be taken home. Social workers who reported having supportive colleagues who helped them cope seemed most likely to be able to leave work at work and set boundaries for themselves. Participants talked about having to learn to shut off their work when they leave to go home. Some participants reported that this came easily to them, while others discussed having to train themselves to do this. For example, one participant stated:
I think it is important to have a professional distance that you don’t take home with you. It’s difficult. I think maybe you have to find the right way. What’s the right way? Everyone has to figure out for him or herself.

Others talked about training themselves to stay in the present. For example, one participant said,

I don’t know if I have coping strategy. I know I cannot save the world. I just know that I can meet the people at this moment who are in front of me, and I want to treat them and serve them as well as possible. That’s how I see it. I know I’m limited. I’m happy I’m not the chancellor and making all of the decisions, and I’m not thinking too much about the political issues. I’m just helping the people who are in front of me, and I care for them. That’s it. I can’t take it home. I can’t solve the situation...I mean you can’t turn it off, off, but it’s not like I take it home.

Another participant, in explaining how she “shuts off,” said,

Participant: I don’t know really how, how I like shut a little bit off.
Interviewer: You shut it off?
Participant: Yeah, I don’t know how I do this and I learned it a little bit not to let everything into my soul…

Her explanation seemed to communicate that she still has empathy and is able to mourn in the present when needed, but she does not carry around with her the stories and the hardships of the refugees’ experiences. Others had similar thoughts. For example, one participant said, “I don’t have a strategy; it is stressful and I don’t really know how I deal with it. These boys have so much going on; I just don’t let it get to me. In the evening I try to leave it at work and I can cope with it.” Still another explained,

You don’t let things get so close to you. And a personal strategy is to focus on when you have succeeded. There are laws; there are things I can and can’t do. And in the beginning you realize if you can’t handle it you need to quit the job. And so when you hear that a family member died you have to accept that fact. You have to remember that they come from a war-zone and things like that happen a lot. If you do have empathy of course you have feelings but you cannot, yeah, you need to draw a line...

Another participant explained that she had to train herself how to “be fine” at home and that this took time. She said,
In the beginning it was hard because I was experiencing a lot of new things; and it was hard to not take home with you. And now it is impossible to not talk about this topic because it is always on the TV. But right now I can go home and be fine.

Finally, a participant said that she goes home and turns “on my radio and then I switch it [her stress or concern about work] off.” This ability to “shut off” seemed to be developed over time and through experience. The idea of setting boundaries - leaving work at work and being fully home when home - was something we heard frequently. This method of coping was noted whether the participant reported being religious or having a faith that helped them cope or not.

Discussion

We had two primary motivations for examining the role of faith among German social workers; first, a curiosity about the delivery of refugee services through the faith-based institutions of Caritas and Diakonie and the extent to which social workers would reflect the faith inherent in the respective mission statements of the organizations for which they worked. Second, there was a hypothesis that this work would be stressful or even overwhelming, causing social workers to seek deeper resources, such as religious faith, to assist with the coping process. While the study’s participants seemed to value their jobs and their organizations, and for some this value was at least partially related to their faith orientations, most did not report faith as a strong motivation for working at a faith-based agency or as a social worker. Additionally, we found that social workers in our study were not as stressed, and certainly not overwhelmed, as hypothesized. Perhaps social workers did not need to seek deeper coping mechanisms than when working under normal circumstances. Nevertheless, it was also observed that very little objection was voiced against the idea of faith integration. While we saw great variability in faith beliefs among German social workers, as a group we found very little objection to faith-based organizations (i.e., Caritas and Diakonie) as human services providers. This finding is consistent with the concept of subsidiarity that characterizes the German human services delivery system. It may indicate that German society still values religious principles and beliefs on some level, albeit in the form of latent, culturally-derived values, as we heard from several of our participants who appreciated the values gleaned by their faith upbringing but did not consider themselves to be people of faith. The qualitative nature of this study prevents us from generalizing about the role of faith among German social workers; however, the variability of responses we received in regard to this topic is noteworthy. This
variability seems to mirror that of the general German society, which is characterized by increasing religious diversity.

**Implications**

The responses of the social workers in this study provide an important perspective on the nature of faith-based human service provision in Germany. Although the majority of social workers we interviewed were providing services under the auspices of a religious organization, many did not report religion to be a primary motivation for their work. Although there were some exceptions, most of the social workers we interviewed seemed to be motivated by a desire to serve others and to become increasingly competent in their professional roles. Even participants who reported having a personal faith tended to be careful to avoid overtly integrating or transmitting their faith via their social work practice. In light of this, the faith-based organizations that employed the social workers in our study seemed to fall into a middle ground between organizations that focus on explicit faith integration and those that are non-sectarian.

Since the 1980s, the helping professions have increasingly recognized the importance of understanding clients' religious beliefs and involving these religious beliefs in the process of human service provision when desired by the client (Derezotes, 2006; Hodge, 2005b). For example, Hodge (2005a) suggests that the social work assessment process should include an assessment of the role that faith plays in a client’s life. Some research suggests that social workers and other human service providers tend to be less religious than the general population (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University [CASA], 2001; Sheridan et al., 1992). This study produced similar findings, with a relatively low mean score and high degree of variability in regard to the role and expression of faith among German social workers. In light of this, schools of social work and human service organizations should train social workers, regardless of personal faith background, to ethically utilize spiritual assessment and faith-integrated intervention techniques.

**Limitations**

Limitations for this study include a restricted sample size, use of non-standardized instruments, and data analysis procedures that are limited to qualitative analysis with the use of descriptive statistics. Thus, these findings cannot be generalized to participants outside the Berlin/Brandenburg and Wurzburg areas. Additionally, data were collected at two intervals approximately six months apart. During that six months, there were several terrorist attacks in Western Europe, one in particular in the
Wurzburg area. Therefore, reported views may have been influenced by the events that occurred during this time.

Conclusion

This paper explores the role of faith and of faith-based organizations in response to the refugee crisis and the massive refugee influx in Germany between 2014-2016. These findings are helpful for understanding the recent experiences of German social workers working with refugees and asylum seekers. From this work, important insights and questions for best practices emerge. The variability of faith experience and expression found among German social workers warrants continued investigation. It is also important to monitor how public opinion, influenced by the magnitude of refugees as well as several terror attacks across Europe, influences Germany’s response to refugees through these organizations.

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Response to Refugees


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The Role of Religion/Faith in the Lives of Young Adult Refugees in West Michigan

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There are currently more people displaced in the world than any other time in history (OXFAM, 2016). Christian responses to welcoming and providing assistance in the resettlement process are often rooted in biblical commands to care for and welcome the stranger. Biblical calls to love one another (Luke 10:27), care for and welcome the stranger (Matthew 25:35) and treat the stranger as yourself (Leviticus 19:33) form the foundation of Christian understanding and responses to caring for and welcoming immigrants and refugees. Beginning in the post-World War II era, the U.S. has been involved in accepting and resettling refugees who face persecution in their home countries (this will be discussed in more detail below). Christians and other people of faith have been at the center of much of this work. The United States Office of Refugee Resettlement, an office of the Administration for Children and Families, contracts with nine voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) to provide a broad range of services to refugees. Six of these are faith-based organizations (FBOs), including Church World Service, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, World Relief, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (www.acf.hhs.gov). Through these FBOs, Christians and other people of faith have been at the center of much of the resettlement efforts in the United States (see Eby et al. (2007) for a comprehensive overview of the role of FBOs in refugee resettlement).

While the current policy environment has created a degree of uncertainty about the future, the United States continues to be a major site of resettlement for refugees, resettling close to 85,000 refugees in 2016 (Krogstad, 2017). The federal government sets limits on the number of refugees allowed into the United States each year and also identifies the countries from which it will receive refugees. There are, however, substantial differences in resettlement participation at the state level. In 2016, half of all refugees resettled (54%) went to just ten states, with the top five being California, Texas, New York, Michigan, and Ohio (Krogstad, 2017). In
the midst of a turbulent and changing political, social and religious climate, acting on campaign promises to close and secure United States borders, President Trump, in January of 2017 signed an Executive Order limiting the influx of refugees from certain countries (Executive Order No. 13769, 3, January 2017). Commonly known as the “travel ban,” the Executive Order suspended entry from six countries (Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen and Syria), required more rigorous vetting of refugee applicants, suspended the refugee resettlement program for 120 days, reduced the refugee admission ceiling by 60,000 for fiscal year 2017, and removed the provision for mandating prioritization for minority-religion refugees for resettlement (Migration Policy Institute, 2017). Although the policy itself and the consequences of it continue to be in flux, the executive order has implications for hopeful refugees as well as the VOLAGs involved in refugee resettlement.

Within the parameters set by the federal government, refugees arrive from various places around the world and enter the resettlement process under difficult circumstances from unique and varied contexts. According to the Migration Policy Institute, data shows that from the mid-1970’s through the early 1990’s, large numbers of refugees arrived in the U.S. from Vietnam (Migration Policy Institute, 2017). In the later decades of the twentieth century there was a shift in resettlement efforts with over 50% of newly arriving refugees coming from Somalia, Cuba and Laos (Krogstad, 2017). These changing trends continue; beginning in 2007/2008 refugees from the near East and Africa make up the majority of refugees settled in the U.S. (Migration Policy Institute, 2017).

Although a complete history of immigration to the U.S. is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that individuals and families enter the U.S. in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons. A complex visa system exists to admit people from around the world and includes categories such as family reunification, student visas, and work and skills visas. A good deal of attention has been given in recent years to undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Although the reasons individuals and families come to the U.S. vary and can often include fleeing from difficult political, social and economic conditions in the home country, not all people are eligible for refugee status. The context of arrival in the U.S. for refugees, as well as other immigrants, varies depending on the situation in the home country and the parameters set by the U.S. government. In some cases, refugees arrive as family units, and in other cases individual family members arrive, having been separated from other family members. Children separated from parents may arrive alone, with siblings and/or with grandparents. The circumstances from which refugees are fleeing are unique, but the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) defines a refugee as “a person who has fled his or her country of origin because of past persecution or a fear of future persecution based upon race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group” (http://www.uscis.gov).
The U.S. Administration for Children and Families (ACF) oversees refugee resettlement through the Office of Refugee Resettlement. This office contracts with nine VOLAGs, who in turn, contract with local non-profits to deliver services to refugees at the local level. In the United States, and in particular in West Michigan, these VOLAGs are often faith-based institutions. There is a long history in the United States of the involvement of FBOs in the refugee resettlement process (for a more comprehensive overview see Nichols, 1988; Casanova, 1994; Holtzman, 2000; Nawyn 2006). VOLAGs provide a wide array of services, including employment services, time-limited cash and medical assistance, translation, and day care services, among many other services focused on the successful resettlement and integration of newly arriving refugees. VOLAGs often partner with local churches, synagogues, mosques and other faith communities to provide volunteer support directly to individuals and families in the resettlement process. Families are often “adopted” by members of these faith communities and assisted with tasks of daily living such as transportation and shopping. Unaccompanied minors entering the U.S. with refugee status are placed with refugee foster families, also coordinated by the VOLAGs.

This article presents the findings from a case study that examines the role and importance of faith and/or religion in the lives of six young adult refugees who have been settled in West Michigan. Data were gathered through qualitative, in-depth interviews. A convenience sample of participants was recruited for the study via snowball sampling through connections to local resettlement agencies and congregations that partner with them. A detailed examination of the global circumstances that result in the increased movement of refugees across borders and the detailed and complex process of refugee resettlement is beyond the scope of this paper. The literature review will begin with an historical overview of the role of religion in immigration processes as well as a brief discussion of refugees in the United States and the processes and structures that surround them. It will move toward a discussion of the role of religion in the lives of these young adults as they move through the resettlement process. Understanding the role of religion in the lives of refugees, including young adults, is important in many ways, including the role of religion in many of the crises and conflicts around the world as well as the significant role that FBOs play in the resettlement process.

**Review of Literature**

During the early half of the twentieth century, in the face of a growing influx of European immigrants to the United States, scholars examining this movement included the role of religion, particularly the ways that religion and faith communities were used as a safe haven as well as the way newly arriving immigrants used religion to assimilate into a new environment. This was well-documented by sociologists involved in immigration studies at that
time (Gordon, 1964; Handlin, 1973; Herberg, 1960, to name a few). These early scholars focused on religion as an existing structure in the lives of immigrants but not as a motivating or influential force in migration decisions, nor did these early scholars focus on the meaning of faith for immigrants. Often, the focus was the role of religion as a source of support and protection for newly arriving co-ethnics. Local churches and parishes provided a safe haven for immigrants entering a new environment and aided in the assimilation process of mostly white European immigrants into the U.S. Refugees were largely left out of this work.

At the end of the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first century, immigration to the U.S. has changed significantly. Replacing large numbers of arrivals from European countries are immigrants from Central America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. Included in this influx of immigrants to the United States are refugees. The literature on the role of religion in the lives of refugees is much more sparse than the literature focused on non-refugee immigrants, with the notable exception of a special issue of Refugee Survey Quarterly in 2007. Scholarly work on refugees is on the rise in the current global context, however, the role of faith and or religion in the lives of refugee youth is very limited (Sommers, 2001; King & Furrow, 2004; Cao, 2005; Ni, Raghallaigh, & Gilligan, 2010; Sleijpen et al., 2017).

**Religion and Immigration**

Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000) argue that religion has been largely neglected in migration research, particularly the ways that religion shapes and influences movement and settlement. They offer several reasons why this is the case including the reliance on entities that are unable to ask questions about religion and anti-religious bias on the part of some academic departments and institutions (p. 15), a phenomenon which has also been documented in social work (Hodge, 2008). Despite this, religion has continued to be a focus for some immigration scholars (Ebaugh & Chafetz, 2000; Warner & Wittner, 1998; Cadge & Eckland, 2007; Levitt, 2007; Hirschman, 2004; Hagan, 2008), but the focus of this work has changed a bit.

In addition to the use of religion for acculturation and assimilation, more recent literature has focused on how immigrants use religious organizations in the host country for economic and social mobility as well as use church as a buffer from the harsh conditions often faced by newly arriving immigrants (Hirschman, 2004; Foley & Hoge, 2007; Kniss & Numrich, 2007; Mooney, 2009). Foley and Hoge (2007) examine ways that new immigrants become connected to one another and develop networks within religious communities in the United States. Furthermore, Kniss and Numrich (2007) consider ways that newly arriving immigrants utilize local ethnic churches to connect to employment and economic opportunities. In their
study, they illustrate how newly arriving immigrants connect to co-ethnic communities via involvement in local churches and religious organizations. Connections are made with co-ethnics who have established themselves and their families in the host society and may have access to needed resources such as housing, employment and other social supports. In these ways, religion and connection to communities of faith have provided ways of coping with the stresses of movement and settlement as well as connections to needed social capital that exists within co-ethnic/co-religious communities.

Hagan (2008) turns our attention to the role of religion throughout the migration process, including the decision-making process as well as the migration journey. Hagen explores the intersection of religion and migration in her examination of Central American immigration to the U.S. Her work focuses in particular on the use of religion in the decision-making process and in seeking spiritual guidance and approval for the journey. Although largely focused on the way that prospective migrants use religion, religious practices and cultural expressions of faith in the decision-making process, Hagen’s focus on religion in the home country centers around the role of the clergy for guidance and approval for decisions to migrate and the ways that immigrants and their families express and practice their faith. The transnational nature of contemporary religion has also been included in the discussions of religion and immigration. Levitt (2004) and Menjivar (1999; 2000) discuss how religious institutions in both the home and host countries act to create transnational ties for immigrants.

Refugees and Religion

Missing in much of the literature (although appearing in more recent work) is a specific focus on the unique circumstances of movement and settlement by refugees and the role of religion in the lives of these migrants. As discussed above, refugees are often fleeing social, political and religious unrest in their home countries. Additionally, individuals and families seeking refugee status in the U.S. face a lengthy application and vetting process and often linger in refugee camps for months and even years. Forced from their home countries into difficult and temporary settings, refugees face many obstacles prior to acceptance into the U.S. Arrival in the U.S. does not guarantee fewer obstacles as refugees face challenging processes that move them toward settlement in the U.S.

According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, “refugee status may be granted to persons who have been persecuted or fear persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, and/or membership in a particular social group or political opinion” (www.uscis.gov). As the definition indicates, religious persecution is an eligible category for individuals seeking refugee status. Religion has long been a present structure
In the lives of many refugees, particularly, of course, those fleeing religious persecution. Guidelines for refugee resettlement in the U.S. are administered by the U.S. Department of State, however, the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement oversees the process and contracts with non-governmental organizations to provide direct services to individuals and families being resettled (for more information about resettlement, see www.acf.hhs.gov/orr). Many of these non-governmental organizations are faith-based organizations and it is in that context that many refugees are resettled. Nawyn (2005), in her work, focuses on the role of these religious organizations in the refugee resettlement process and suggests that the relationship between refugees and the faith-based organizations that work with them is a complicated one (p. 6). Others have turned their attention to the role of religion as a coping strategy for refugees (e.g., Gladden 2012; Adedoyin et al. 2016; Bentley et al. 2014; Clarkson Freeman et al. 2013; Leaman & Gee 2012). It is clear that religion is a present structure in the lives of refugees. The extent to which religion shapes their experiences is a ripe area for future research. This is particularly true in the current context of travel bans and increased vetting of refugees based on religion.

Youth and Religion

In their study on families and religious transmission, Bengtson et al. (2013) found that the practices and beliefs of youth are dependent on several factors, including the influences of contemporary culture, historical patterns, religious influences in education and importantly, family and parental relationships. Their theory of intergenerational religious momentum suggests that both context and familial connections are important in determining the practices and beliefs of young people. This study is not, however, specific to immigrant and/or refugee youth. Additionally, the 2001 National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) and many of the studies that draw from it, also focus primarily on U.S.-born adolescents. Although both of these studies include second-generation youth born in the United States, this is not the primary focus of the research, and immigrant youth in general are underrepresented in both studies. McCorquodale and Sterten (2010) discuss this limitation in their analysis of the NSYR with regard to Catholic youth. They point out that immigrant Hispanics were less likely to be included in the sample than U.S.-born Hispanics and immigrant Hispanics were more likely than U.S.-born participants of all backgrounds to be lost between wave 1 and wave 3 of the NSYR (McCorquodale & Sterten, 2010, p. 5). Immigrant youth who entered the United States after the age of 17 are also excluded from the NSYR. Again, refugee status is not of particular concern in the NSYR.

In a review of the literature on religion and American youth, Regnerus, et al. (2003) state that “religion plays a significant role in the lives
of many adolescents in the United States” (p. 7). Missing in the survey, as well as in much of the research that draws on its data, are immigrant youth, both documented and undocumented, including refugee youth. In the conclusion of the review of literature, Regnerus, et al. suggest that understanding the role of religion in the lives of young people must be considered within the context of both developmental processes and cultural context. As discussed above, Bengtson, et al. echo this in their work. The particular cultural context within which refugee youth develop and mature is unique. Many arriving refugees, including young people, have fled home countries in turmoil, lived in refugee camps for extended periods of time, been separated from family and friends, and been resettled in host communities where cultural, ethnic and religious contexts differ significantly from their own customs and experiences.

Methods

This case study utilized a non-probability convenience sample of young adults residing in West Michigan who came to the U.S. with refugee status. The convenience sample targeted individuals who met the criteria for the study, namely, young people currently between 18 and 30 years old who arrived in the U.S. with refugee status. Identification as a person of faith was not required because the interviews included questions about past connection to faith and/or religion and left room for participants to self-identify as well as freely discuss the role of religion in their lives, whether or not they considered themselves religious. Participants were identified through informal networks connected to local refugee populations and selected for participation using purposive sampling, ensuring that participants were over 18 and arrived with refugee status in their youth.

This research was conducted in Fall of 2015 and Summer of 2016. Initial work was completed in collaboration with undergraduate social work majors enrolled in a research methods course at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Students worked together with the primary investigator to develop interview questions, recruit participants and conduct initial interviews. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Calvin College. In-depth interviews were conducted with six young adults who agreed to participate in the study and these individuals did so voluntarily with no incentive involved. Interview questions included demographic information such as current age, age upon arrival in the United States, racial/ethnic identity, religious identity, country of origin, and reason for refugee status. All six participants were male, four from Nepal, one from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and one from Sudan. All of the participants spoke English and therefore, translators were not necessary. Respondent names have been changed in the discussion below to protect their identities.
Three of the Nepali respondents indicated economic hardship as the reason for receiving refugee status. As discussed above, the definition for refugees does not include economic hardship as a reason for granting refugee status. Despite that, these young men identified it as the reason for their migration to the United States. The fourth Nepali respondent identified political and ethnic conflict as the reason for refugee status. The young man from the DRC identified political and ethnic conflict, and the Sudanese respondent said civil war and political and ethnic conflict were the reasons for the granting of refugee status and arrival in the United States.

Interviews also included five open-ended questions including:
1. How important is your faith to you and why? Please describe.
2. How did you learn about your faith and/or your religious beliefs?
3. How has your family’s faith/religious affiliation affected your own?
4. What is your involvement, if any, in your faith community?
5. What else, if anything, would you like to say about the role or importance of faith and/or religion in your life?

Interviews were recorded and transcribed by student research assistants. Using the interview questions as a point of reference, codes were created that included mention of religion broadly, outside influences on faith, individual choice of religion, participation in religious activities, reason for refugee status and circumstance of arrival in the U.S. Coding of the transcripts took an inductive approach, assuming very little about what might be found in terms of the role of faith and or religion in the lives of the participants. Using the codes, two research assistants as well as the primary researcher read through each transcript and documented any statement by respondents that fit one of the codes. Results were compared, documented and analyzed.

Findings

Responses from participants varied depending on their religious and ethnic background and, as expected, their particular circumstances, including reasons for fleeing their home countries, experiences in the refugee camps, as well as the context of their arrival and settlement in West Michigan.

The circumstances of migration, arrival and settlement, in the case of these respondents, was quite important. Three of the six respondents fled for what they considered economic hardship and four of the six respondents, including the three who identified economic hardship as a reason for migration, arrived in West Michigan with their parents and
siblings. Although economic hardship is not a criterion for the granting of refugee status, these respondents clearly connected their movement to their economic situation in their home country. Three of the six respondents identified political and ethnic conflict as the reason for migration and refugee status. In response to the question about primary reason for refugee status, David stated “I would say it is more political conflict and ethnic conflict because most of the time in Congo has been civil war for a long time.” Two of these three arrived in the U.S. without their parents. The respondents who arrived with their immediate families (parents and siblings) indicated a continuation of their religious/faith background and attributed this to parental influence.

We don’t have any say in what religion we are a part of, we just are. We know nothing about it when we are young, but we know it is important to our parents and our parents tell us about it. We think that way and we keep on following them. (Paul)

I have grown up in the Hindu religion my whole life. I was born into it. I have followed what my parents believe. Imagine you were born into the Hindu faith, do you think you would change? It’s just like with you and Christianity. You are not going to change religions because of Hindus around you. (Daniel)

For these young people, their families remained very influential in their religious identification. The presence of close family, particularly parents and grandparents, for these young people played a significant role in the how they identified themselves in terms of religion.

Other participants who arrived in West Michigan without parents and/or grandparents experienced a different trajectory with regard to their faith and/or religion. Outside influences for these young adults included people outside of their immediate family and in one case, revealed changes in religious identity over time and place. In response to questions about religious identity, responses were very connected to and influenced by context, both in the home country and in West Michigan. One respondent discussed the influence of parents at an early age, stating:

So, both my parents were Muslims and since then until the age of 9, that’s when I was attending the mosque, but since age 9 I moved from Congo to Rwanda. And so, when I got to Rwanda, I couldn’t attend the mosque no more, so from that time, and the whole time I lived in Rwanda, I was not attending church. (David)
David went on to discuss the importance of familial influence early in life:

When we are in Congo culture, when kids are born, they follow their parents’ religion. No matter what you believe in, you just have to follow the religion until you are 18 years old, that’s when you can start to say, “I can have whatever religion I want to.” So, when I grew up, I came to lose both my parents at age 8, and I lived with my grandmother. My grandmother also insisted that I have to follow my parents’ religion. She was like, ‘In order to honor them, you have to go to their religion, no matter what.’ (David)

He also shared that when he became a teenager of around 15 years old and lived in the refugee camp, his grandmother “gave them permission” to change religion. Recalling his grandmother’s guidance, he shared her words, “You know what, it is now different for you, whatever church you want to go to, go to church or whatever mosque you want to go to, it’s up to you now, we know who you are, now we can identify yourself to any type of religion” (David). This young adult was guided by his grandmother but discussing his current religious identity, this respondent pointed to his arrival and settlement in West Michigan and the individuals who were a part of that process as being quite influential.

So, once I came into the United States, I came to the family who I live with now. And then they were Christian. And then they asked me, ‘Would you like to come to church with us?’ And then the first Sunday I remember I said no. They asked me, ‘Why, why, do you not feel comfortable?’ Why? Because I never been to church. I never prayed, I never been to church. And they were like, ‘No, it’ll be okay, it’ll be okay.’ And I was like, ‘Um...sure. Let’s go. If I don’t feel comfortable, I’m sorry, I have to get out right away.’ And they were like, ‘Yep, that’ll work.’ So, I went to church with them and then it was a brand-new experience... So that’s the way I came to change the religion, and the more time I spend with the Christians, the more time I go to Bible study, the more time I read the Bible, the more time I came to notice that this is the right way to follow. If you really need your belief to be founded somewhere, you need to read the Bible, you need to know that Jesus is your savior, you need to know that He shed His blood on the cross just for us. That’s how I came to follow Christians. (David)

The one participant who identified as Christian prior to arrival in West Michigan said that although he considered himself a Christian, he did not
“practice” until his arrival in the United States. Asked about “practice,” he said “going to church, reading the Bible, doing youth group” (Marcus). Family influence was also important to this participant; however, he was separated from his parents at an early age and arrived in West Michigan as a young teenager with older and younger siblings. Outside influences for this participant were also important upon arrival and settlement, “my host family encouraged me to go to church and they sent me to Christian school” (Marcus). Identification as a Christian prior to arrival in West Michigan and continued influence by older siblings and a host family who also identified as Christian, was influential in this participant’s life. Surrounded by individuals whose religious identity was similar to his own, he reported being involved and engaged in a local Christian church. Important to note, however, is that the presence of a significant population of co-ethnics for this respondent allowed for participation in an ethnic congregation that provided both spiritual and social activities.

Discussion

As discussed in the literature review, both Regnarus et al. (2003) and Bengston et al. (2013) suggested in their work, context matters. The social, cultural and familial context that surrounds young people influences their connection to religion and/or their faith development. Although this case study provides a small sample of young adult refugees, it seems clear that the circumstances of their movement across borders and their arrival in West Michigan matters in terms of religious identification. Families, it seems, continue to be influential in the lives of these young adults. Despite concerns over the waning influence of families as pointed out by Bengston et al. (2013), findings in our small case study are not surprising. In the Bengson et al. study, most religious beliefs and practices were still shared by parents and their adult children. Their more extensive study, however, did not include refugees as a particular population. The young adults in this current study were clearly influenced by parents, however, their contexts were shaped by influences outside of their own (and their family's) control.

The importance of faith based voluntary agencies (VOLAGs), particularly the role of host families and congregation members that connect with newly arriving refugees, was evident in this study. Because, as suggested by Bengston, et al., family continues to play a significant role in the lives of children and youth in terms of their religious practices and beliefs, refugee foster placement and/or support by local congregations has the potential to influence further faith development and practice. When the hosts share the same faith tradition as the refugee, this can be positive and a continuation of faith. In the case of the respondent who identified as Christian prior to arrival, help and assistance from a Christian community was welcomed.
and familiar. “I knew other people at the church, and we went there, and it was ok. They helped me get into school and there were other refugees there” (Marcus). There is a danger, however, of a conflation of the provision of supportive social services to help with the settlement process and evangelism. When asked whether their faith had been challenged in the U.S., one respondent stated:

In the beginning, the only help we got was from the church. And when they came to help with transportation, they would invite them to come to church on Sundays. But if you keep your mind on the Hindu faith you will not change. They didn't really force it on us, but suggested it, but we held strong in our Hindu faith. (Eric)

Although this respondent believes that it is possible to stay firm in one’s faith of origin, it is important to note that they also arrived in West Michigan as a family unit. In this context, family of origin continues to exert some influence on continued faith development. It is potentially problematic, however, for unaccompanied minors, who are often placed in homes of families of different cultural and faith traditions. These young people have been forced away from their families of origin, often including the cultural and faith traditions carried on by the families of origin. In these cases, host families may, even if unintentionally, exert pressure to participate in the host family’s faith traditions. This is only problematic, of course, if these young people are being coerced or manipulated into participation in faith traditions and/or church activities. It is also problematic if participation in the host family’s faith traditions are a condition for receiving services.

Limitations and Opportunities for Further Research

Interesting information emerged from the interviews conducted with these young adults. Religion, though present in the lives of all six participants, had different meaning to each of them. As a small case study, this work is limited by its size, and the experiences by these young adults cannot be generalized to the broader refugee population in West Michigan, nor in the United States more broadly. Despite this, interesting information emerged with regard to the role of faith and family in the lives of these young people.

Furthermore, questions about the role of faith-based VOLAGs in refugee resettlement, particularly the conflation of the provision of social services and support with evangelism should be an area of concern for Christian social workers, particularly with regard to ethical practice. Further study should include a much larger sample size and include questions that focus a bit more on context of settlement, including the role of religious non-profit organizations and local congregations in the lives of individual refugees and their families, with particular emphasis on faith development
and the changes and/or continuation of faith practices as well as an examination of the presence of any pressure from the volunteer agents working on behalf of the VOLAGs. Research should include an examination of the work of these agencies and volunteers from those providing the assistance as well as the refugees receiving the assistance.

**Conclusion**

Further study of young adult refugees will add to a better understanding of the role of faith and religion in their lives. Additionally, it will provide a better understanding of the role that Christian social workers and faith-based VOLAGs play in the delivery of services. Although that particular question was not the focus of this study, further research should explore the extent to which faith-based VOLAGs and their associated volunteers are engaging in evangelism and the role that Christian social workers, as well as social workers from other faith traditions, are addressing this as an ethical dilemma. While this may not pose problems necessarily, there is potential for unethical social work practice. As Sherwood (2008) reminds us, “It is always ethical and appropriate to demonstrate the gospel to our clients, but it is seldom ethical to proclaim the gospel to them in our professional role as social workers... explicit evangelism of clients (proclamation) in professional social work is almost always unethical” (p. 411-412).

The extent to which this ethical responsibility extends to the associated volunteers of the VOLAGs is also an area for further exploration. It is clear in this study however, that circumstances and social, economic, political, cultural and familial contexts in both the sending and receiving countries is important, as are the circumstances surrounding movement away from the home country, obtaining refugee status, and who accompanies the individual on the journey.

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The role of faith and religion had various meanings and played different roles for these six young adults. Christian social workers involved in refugee resettlement, in addition to recognizing the importance of faith in their own lives and work, should be mindful of the role and importance of faith and religion in the lives of the people with whom they work, including refugees. As Hohn et al. (2017) remind us, “the profession of social work provides social workers with a unique opportunity to professionally and ethically integrate faith with practice in all situations” (19-20).
References


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The New Odyssey: The Story of the Twenty-First-Century Refugee Crisis

Patrick Kingsley used his appointment as the first-ever migration correspondent of the Guardian newspaper to write The New Odyssey, a captivating account intertwining one family’s journey from Syria to Sweden with the larger picture of migration to Europe at the height of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015.

The book’s value is in offering a range of on-the-ground perspectives tracing the main character, Hashem al-Souki, in addition to shorter sketches of migrants on routes from West Africa and Eritrea through Libya, Egypt or along the so-called Balkan route. These snapshots are complemented by interviews with smugglers, representatives of military and NGO rescue operations in the Mediterranean, and volunteers reaching out to the migrants as governments repeatedly fumble for a solution that would offer protection and dignity to the people on the move and security to their home constituencies.

The testimony of Hashem al-Souki is an excellent answer to the oft-heard suspicious question: “Why do men migrate to Europe, leaving their wives and children behind?” Chronicling the al-Souki family life from 2012 to 2016, the account bears witness to the terrible choices that desperate and poorly informed people make between a range of bad and even worse options.

We see the al-Soukis’ comfortable middle-class life in Syria smashed to pieces as the civil war escalates, with Hashem repeatedly arrested until the family finally chooses to flee to Egypt. We follow the al-Soukis as their fortunes turn to worse with a regime change in Egypt and they determine that their only hope is to flee to Europe. Fully conscious of the possibility of death at sea (as well as the exorbitant price for the potentially deadly passage), the al-Soukis make the heart-wrenching decision: Hashem goes to Sweden - the one country they are aware of giving permanent residency to Syrians and allowing for a quick family reunification - and his wife and three children stay behind in Egypt, waiting until they can join Hashem legally and safely.

The central story of one family is extended by excursions into the life stories of others migrating towards Europe. The reader can appreciate the
limited but valuable attempts to show how a dictatorial regime in Eritrea, a civil war in Libya or a collapsing economy in Niger send people on the road and make hoteliers and fishers into smugglers. The book forces us to question our assumption about who are the “good” and “bad” characters in this complex global phenomenon and recognize the shallowness of repressive “solutions” to migration.

*The New Odyssey* is an excellent tool for undergraduate courses on migration and provides discussion material and case studies that can put faces to numbers and migration theories. In some places, the language used in the book might need additional refinement - “basic privileges” (p.289) are certainly not the same as “basic rights” of migrants. Nevertheless, even if some of the analytical passages and solutions proposed by Kingsley call for a bit more solid theoretical grounding, he is certainly in the company of distinguished scholars when he calls for a more extensive resettlement program out of the Middle East and an implementation of a common European asylum policy (pp. 287-296).

As the author himself acknowledges, the book does not capture as richly the experiences of women migrants. Although one can accept that it is more difficult for a male journalist to build rapport with women (p. 218), it is unfortunate that this book perpetuates the chronic invisibility of women migrants in mainstream research, media, and service provision. Readers can be advised to reach for Christina Lamb’s (2016) *The Girl from Aleppo* for a gripping account of two women’s journey from Syria to Europe.

*The New Odyssey* was perhaps compiled somewhat hastily in the frenzy of the year 2015 - but maybe exactly because of this circumstance, the book provides a vivid and deeply person-centered account of a migration trend that has since then shifted in its expression but maintains the underlying dynamic: desperate people make a life-threatening journey because they see staying as a certain death and moving as a possible life.

Reviewed by **Petra Dankova**, MSW, Policy and Advocacy Officer
**Fidel Götz Foundation**, pdankova@mailbox.org.
The world currently has more refugees and displaced persons than ever before, and there is a critical need for reasonable conversations to take place regarding how to handle this global crisis. With diverse yet complementary experience with refugee resettlement, the authors provide a comprehensive knowledge base suitable for writing an informative book explaining the refugee crisis in understandable terms. Stephen Bauman brings expertise as President of one of nine refugee resettlement agencies in the United States (World Relief), and an extensive history of equipping churches across the globe to welcome refugees and respond in an appropriate manner. Matthew Soerens became acquainted with refugees through a mentorship program and subsequently went on to provide legal expertise to refugees and focus on the intersection of faith and policy when responding to refugee needs on a national level. Dr. Issam Smeir brings the lived experience of a refugee, as well as nearly two decades of providing trauma-informed counseling services to refugees. Together, these three authors offer a wealth of information and insight into many aspects of the refugee experience.

Building upon personal anecdotes, refugee stories, and factual data, this book seeks both to educate readers on the realities of the refugee experience and dispel common misunderstandings. This information is interwoven with a Christian perspective and biblically-based guidance on how to respond to the refugee crisis. After a brief overview of the current refugee crisis and political challenges, as well as some personal background introducing the reader to the authors, the writers immediately remind us that Jesus was a refugee. For the Christian, this serves to reframe the issue into relatable terms and create an instant sense of compassion as the story of the Holy Family’s flight to Egypt is recognizable by Christians worldwide. From there, the authors address myriad aspects of the refugee crisis ranging from technical terminology to responsible church outreach to policy setting. The book is a decidedly comprehensive primer on the subject, and thoroughly within the bounds of Christian morals.

Within 11 effortless chapters, Seeking Refuge synthesizes the heart-wrenching yet politically charged topic of welcoming refugees into an issue that’s relatable on an individual level, and provides realistic action items for individuals and churches alike. Readers will gain knowledge about the process used to screen refugees, the myths that often perpetuate fear and rejection of refugees, and the lasting emotional and mental effects of enduring trauma. There is a beautiful graphic on page 139 which effectively illustrates the “fear cascade” experienced internally by a post-
traumatic stress disorder sufferer when painful memories are triggered by ordinary events, which simplifies a complex and easily misunderstood clinical concept. The use of graphics and large pop-out text to highlight key points throughout the book offers key insights into the fundamental aspects of the subject matter.

Despite the overwhelming merits of this book, there are a few drawbacks as well. There is heavy emphasis on providing evangelical outreach to refugees, and several examples of non-Christian refugees who have converted to Christianity after their interactions with the church or her followers. World Relief is very clear that it is an evangelical organization; however, some may feel uncomfortable with this as vulnerable populations are easily swayed by those who provide assistance. The authors do make the distinction that proselytization is not acceptable and refugees are never pressured to seek Christianity, but it is conceivable that some readers will leave with the impression that successful refugee resettlement includes those resettled finding a desire to follow Jesus. Caution should be exercised to ensure that this is not the takeaway. Furthermore, while dispelling myths about Islamic terrorist concerns, the authors quote a Christian scholar who states that “violent ideology...is indeed rooted in Islamic texts,” (p. 74) yet they miss an opportunity to inform the reader that Christian terrorists are indeed a very real threat as well. The authors do, however, mention that terrorism occurs at the hands of “white supremacists and anti-government extremists” (p. 80) while urging readers not to “punish the victims of ISIS for the sins of ISIS” (p. 77). While these are excellent counter points, highlighting the fact that terrorists also commit horrible acts in the name of Christianity would provide readers with the opportunity to consider that members of their own faith act in terrible ways, and allow further connection to the experience of many refugees.

This book is specifically written for a Christian audience, and as such it provides invaluable recommendations for scripturally sound reception of refugees. Those who read Seeking Refuge will undoubtedly understand that it is their Christian duty to hold a “refugees welcome” stance upon completion of this work. The authors underscore the importance of the Golden Rule in several instances, which is the ultimate message of this reading. For the Christian social worker, this book provides the opportunity to understand several refugee-related issues simultaneously, and offers guidance on ways to support refugees on their journeys. This also equips the practitioner with a deeper understanding of refugee needs and can enhance cultural competency regardless of the area of social work practice.

As a former refugee resettlement worker and current Ph.D. student focused on understanding the lived experiences of refugees, I was very pleased with the overall content of this book. I feel strongly that church leaders everywhere should encourage their congregations to read Seeking
Refuge and hope that readers will share within their community that Christians everywhere should take tangible action to assist our refugee brothers and sisters. For the Christian social worker, this book should be required reading in classrooms and part of continuing education efforts for all practitioners as we are increasingly in contact with, and engaging in, support work for refugee clients. Seeking Refuge helps empower social workers to connect with and advocate for refugees. And as Christian social workers, it is our duty to ensure that refugees everywhere are welcome here.

Reviewed by Kayte Thomas, MSW, LCSW, doctoral student, Baylor University.
While many authors can address a controversial topic by framing the problem and addressing the nuances, they often remain within the bounds of easily imagined solutions. In his new book, Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move, author Reese Jones challenges readers to resist jumping to solutions for violence at border zones as he breaks down the physical, contextual, and moral meanings of borders in the first place. His thesis develops around the philosophical possibility that borders themselves are man-made mistakes.

Upon first glance, the book’s title and its caution-orange jacket imply a harsh review of physical violence of border guards on refugee families. Depicted below the title on the jacket, a young parent is pictured gripping her traumatized child after being pulled from a boat. However, upon reading the first few pages it quickly becomes clear that refugees’ plight is only part of the larger story of structural and physical violence at border zones. Throughout the eight chapters, Jones provides historical context for the physical and psychological harm borders have caused all of humanity over time. He expands this message by discussing the dangers of psychological borders that disconnect people groups cognitively and how they have been established in parallel with borders that separate us physically.

A helpful introduction situates the context and emotional undertones for the following chapters. Readers should have a clear understanding of the book’s purpose and path after reading only the introduction – a hallmark of an excellent nonfiction argumentative thesis. The first two chapters explicitly confront stories from borders in the European Union and along the USA-Mexico border. Jones expertly weaves historical references with pointed arguments and philosophical challenges to how humans assign value and make assumptions about one another. Each chapter thereafter takes on different points related to physical and structural violence, including the abuse of power, commerce and trade, and the environment. Chapters are infused with photos, maps, and lengthy references to sources and clarifications found in the helpful “Notes” section. Jones concludes by juxtaposing the very human elements of bounded space among people with the reality of how borders today do not reflect natural identifications of groups of people.

This book is stocked with criticism for borders and assigning people arbitrary identities, but Jones finally begins to offer suggestions for philosophical solutions in the last few pages of the conclusion. Perhaps his intention was not to offer solutions but rather to present the framework that prepares readers to think about borders differently. What are our assumptions for borders, and how do we rationalize the thoughts and judg-
ments that accompany these assumptions? As a reader who has practiced Christianity as my guiding faith, I appreciated this book as a tool to help me consider my own traditions – both in faith and in thought. There is no outright discussion of religion in addressing the violence of borders, but it is clear how the institution of religion has played a harmful role in how borders are established by those in power.

Without giving too much away, I was most struck by the way this book made me check my own assumptions about pride and patriotism. As an American, I was taught patriotism is a good thing and that a good citizen of the world is also a good citizen of his or her nation. Unfortunately, while this may or may not be true on an individual basis for many Americans like me, this book made me realize it is certainly not the case for most of our world’s global citizens whose nations’ borders feel arbitrary and imposed on them by foreign powers.

Due to the conquest for power and resources, humans have consistently taken advantage of each other in terms of space, culture, and wealth. Potential readers should prepare for an intellectual challenge of their assumptions and pride. Social workers, leaders and practitioners of religious faith, academics, and anyone seeking insight into the implications of borders on our human family would benefit from reading and thoughtfully considering the arguments and references Jones presents in Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move.

Reviewed by Savannah S. Young, PhD, Ethnographic Researcher at Point Forward, Inc., Redwood City, CA. Email: savannahespivey@gmail.com.
PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM NACSW

CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL WORK: READINGS ON THE INTEGRATION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH & SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE (FIFTH EDITION)
T. Laine Scales and Michael S. Kelly (Editors). (2016). Botsford, CT: NACSW. $55.00 U.S., $42.99 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

At over 400 pages and with 19 chapters, this extensively-revised fifth edition of Christianity and Social Work includes six new chapters and six significantly revised chapters in response to requests by readers of previous editions including chapters on evidence based practice (EBP), congregational Social Work, military social work, working with clients from the LGBT community, human trafficking – and much more! The fifth edition of Christianity and Social Work is written for social workers whose motivations to enter the profession are informed by their Christian faith, and who desire to develop faithfully Christian approaches to helping. It addresses a breadth of curriculum areas such as social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and practice at micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Christianity and Social Work is organized so that it can be used as a textbook or supplemental text in a social work class, or as a training or reference materials for practitioners and has an online companion volume of teaching tools entitled Instructor’s Resources.

WHY I AM A SOCIAL WORKER: 25 CHRISTIANS TELL THEIR LIFE STORIES
Diana R. Garland. (2015). Botsford, CT: NACSW. $29.95 U.S., $23.95 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more copies. For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

Why I Am a Social Worker describes the rich diversity and nature of the profession of social work through the 25 stories of daily lives and professional journeys chosen to represent the different people, groups and human situations where social workers serve.

Many social workers of faith express that they feel “called” to help people – sometimes a specific population of people such as abused children or people who live in poverty. Often they describe this calling as a way of living out their faith. Why I Am a Social Worker serves as a resource for Christians in
social work as they reflect on their sense of calling, and provides direction to guide them in this process.

*Why I Am a Social Worker* addresses a range of critical questions such as:

- How do social workers describe the relationship of their faith and their work?
- What is their daily work-life like, with its challenges, frustrations, joys and triumphs?
- What was their path into social work, and more particularly, the kind of social work they chose?
- What roles do their religious beliefs and spiritual practices have in sustaining them for the work, and how has their work, in turn, shaped their religious and spiritual life?

Dr. David Sherwood, recently retired Editor-in-Chief of *Social Work & Christianity*, says about *Why I Am a Social Worker* that:

> I think this book will make a very important contribution. … The diversity of settings, populations, and roles illustrated by the personal stories of the social workers interviewed will bring the possibilities of social work to life in ways that standard introductory books can never do. The stories also have strong themes of integration of faith and practice that will both challenge and encourage students and seasoned practitioners alike.

**VIRTUE AND CHARACTER IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE**

*Virtues and Character in Social Work Practice* offers a fresh contribution to the Christian social work literature with its emphasis on the key role of character traits and virtues in equipping Christians in social work to engage with and serve their clients and communities well.

This book is for social work practitioners who, as social change agents, spend much of their time examining social structures and advocating for policies and programs to advance justice and increase opportunity.
**Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives**

Congregational Social Work offers a compelling account of the many ways social workers serve the church as leaders of congregational life, of ministry to neighborhoods locally and globally, and of advocacy for social justice. Based on the most comprehensive study to date on social work with congregations, *Congregational Social Work* shares illuminating stories and experiences from social workers engaged in powerful and effective work within and in support of congregations throughout the US.

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**Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work**
Terry A. Wolfer and Mackenzie Huyser. (2010). $23.75 ($18.99 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

Grappling with Faith: Decision Cases for Christians in Social Work presents fifteen cases specifically designed to challenge and stretch Christian social work students and practitioners. Using the case method of teaching and learning, *Grappling with Faith* highlights the ambiguities and dilemmas found in a wide variety of areas of social work practice, provoking active decision making and helping develop readers’ critical thinking skills. Each case provides a clear focal point for initiating stimulating, in-depth discussions for use in social work classroom or training settings. These discussions require that students use their knowledge of social work theory and research, their skills of analysis and problem solving, and their common sense and collective wisdom to identify and analyze problems, evaluate possible solutions, and decide what to do in these complex and difficult situations.
On Becoming a Christian Educator in Social Work
Michael Sherr. (2010). $21.75 ($17.50 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

On Becoming a Christian Educator is a compelling invitation for social workers of faith in higher education to explore what it means to be a Christian in social work education. By highlighting seven core commitments of Christian social work educators, it offers strategies for social work educators to connect their personal faith journeys to effective teaching practices with their students. Frank B. Raymond, Dean Emeritus at the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina suggests that “Professor Sherr’s book should be on the bookshelf of every social work educator who wants to integrate the Christian faith with classroom teaching. Christian social work educators can learn much from Professor Sherr’s spiritual and vocational journey as they continue their own journeys and seek to integrate faith, learning and practice in their classrooms.”

Spiritual Assessment: Helping Handbook for Helping Professionals
David Hodge. (2003). Botsford CT: NACSW. $20.00 U.S. ($16.00 for NACSW members or orders of 10 or more). For price in Canadian dollars, use current exchange rate.

A growing consensus exists among helping professionals, accrediting organizations and clients regarding the importance of spiritual assessment. David Hodge’s Spiritual Assessment: Helping Handbook for Helping Professionals, describes five complementary spiritual assessment instruments, along with an analysis of their strengths and limitations. The aim of this book is to familiarize readers with a repertoire of spiritual assessment tools to enable practitioners to select the most appropriate assessment instrument in given client/practitioner settings. By developing an assessment “toolbox” containing a variety of spiritual assessment tools, practitioners will become better equipped to provide services that address the individual needs of each of their clients.
GIVING AND TAKING HELP (REVISED EDITION)

Alan Keith-Lucas’ Giving and Taking Help, first published in 1972, has become a classic in the social work literature on the helping relationship. Giving and taking help is a uniquely clear, straightforward, sensible, and wise examination of what is involved in the helping process—the giving and taking of help. It reflects on perennial issues and themes yet is grounded in highly practice-based and pragmatic realities. It respects both the potential and limitations of social science in understanding the nature of persons and the helping process. It does not shy away from confronting issues of values, ethics, and world views. It is at the same time profoundly personal yet reaching the theoretical and generalizable. It has a point of view.

SO YOU WANT TO BE A SOCIAL WORKER: A PRIMER FOR THE CHRISTIAN STUDENT

So You Want to Be a Social Worker has proven itself to be an invaluable resource for both students and practitioners who are concerned about the responsible integration of their Christian faith and competent, ethical professional practice. It is a thoughtful, clear, and brief distillation of practice wisdom and responsible guidelines regarding perennial questions that arise, such as the nature of our roles, our ethical and spiritual responsibilities, the fallacy of “imposition of values,” the problem of sin, and the need for both courage and humility.

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