



Finding Their Place, Working Through Uncertainty

Community-Engaged Research on Refugee Resettlement



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University of Wisconsin Oshkosh
CCWT SPRING 2021 WEBINAR SERIES:
Supporting Higher Education and Career
Success for Refugees in Wisconsin, February 23, 2021



PROJECT BACKGROUND

- ▶ Applied/Community-Based Research
 - ▶ “Local and community-scale practices show potential for addressing critical social and environmental problems, particularly in the absence of effective state or federal policy and programs.”
 - ▶ “Partnerships between community organizations, policy-makers, and academic groups can both inform community-level solutions and create opportunities for learning and empowerment.”
 - ▶ They can also be very challenging, **messy**, and transformative

RELEVANT LITERATURE

- ▶ Community-Based Learning and Applied Research
 - ▶ CBL considered a “High-Impact Practice” in higher education (Kuh 2008)
 - ▶ Community-based research should be more participatory, respectful, action-oriented, and impactful but often fails in one or more areas (Stoecker 2009)
 - ▶ “...the academy may be using communities to serve students, rather than engaging students in effectively serving communities” (Stoecker et al. 2010)
 - ▶ “Research can play a role at each stage of the process, but only as part of a broader strategy linking knowledge, action, and power” (Stoecker 2012)
 - ▶ Applied research typically viewed as inferior in the academy, but with the renewed emphasis on *public sociology* (Gans 1989, 2015; Burawoy 2005) this may be changing

RELEVANT LITERATURE

- ▶ Residents with Refugee Background (RRB) and the Landscape of Resettlement
 - ▶ Much in U.S. has centered upon large cities (Marks 2014)
 - ▶ Most has focused on individual choices of migrants and not on the organizations involved (Forrest and Brown 2014)
 - ▶ Much resettlement work is actually done by volunteers, given that the federal government contracts with voluntary, non-governmental agencies to carry out the process (Thomson 2014)
 - ▶ Impact of the landscape itself
 - ▶ Feelings of social isolation/exclusion exacerbated by specific characteristics of place
 - ▶ RRB interaction and opportunity limited by transportation and location (Shobha et al. 2011; Frumkin 2002)
 - ▶ For some RRBs conversations with locals did not reduce stereotypes (Covington-Ward, 2017), but
 - ▶ Improvements in cultural competency can provide a positive environment to encourage resettlement success and expand social capital (Mark 2015)
 - ▶ Can provide opportunities for RRBs as they are *re-placed* (Van Auken et al. 2016)

METHODS & PROCESS

▶ RRBs

▶ Survey

- ▶ Based upon themes and questions developed by Oshkosh area Resettlement Task Force
 - ▶ Workshop with large number of partners helped yield actual survey questions
- ▶ Asks 56 questions in seven categories: Basic Demographic and Background Questions; Migration to and Resettlement in the study area; Services; Economic Factors; Health; About Children (if applicable); and Experiences Related to Moving and Resettling
- ▶ Most conducted in person, while RRBs with strong skills in English had the option to complete it online via the Qualtrics program or on their own via a paper copy

▶ Interviews

- ▶ In-depth interviews with sub-set of RRBs about identity, resettlement stories, and outlook
 - ▶ Based upon photo elicitation with a portion
- ▶ Log entries for 155 RRBs, 100+ people interviewed and/or surveyed
 - ▶ 75 completed surveys, 40+ interviews

▶ Service providers

- ▶ Interviews about role in resettlement, what works well and what doesn't, etc.
- ▶ 30 total interviewees (subject of forthcoming paper)

▶ Exhibit

METHODS & PROCESS

▶ Challenges/Opportunities

- ▶ Language and cultural gaps
 - ▶ Translators and cultural gatekeepers
 - ▶ Forms translated into Hmong, Arabic, Swahili, Kirundi, Somali, Russian
- ▶ Sensitivity
 - ▶ Pre-participation forms, training
- ▶ Coordination
- ▶ Relationship building
- ▶ Funding



Greater Oshkosh Refugee Resettlement Study Intent to Participate

دراسة لدراسة اريكة في مدينة اوشكوش لدراسة اوشكوش الكبرى

Name: _____ Phone #: _____ E-mail: _____

الاسم: _____ رقم الهاتف: _____ البريد الإلكتروني: _____

Address: _____ Age: _____ Country of origin: _____

العنوان: _____ العمر: _____ بلد المنشأ: _____

1. Are you a "resident of refugee origin"? (please circle) Yes/No
*If not, please do not complete the rest of this form nor submit it.

1. هل أنت من أصل بلدان اللجوء؟ (يرجى تحديد) نعم/لا
*إذا لم تكن، يرجى عدم إكمال بقية هذا النموذج ولا إرساله.

2. Do you understand that the researchers will ask questions about your past life experiences, which could be unpleasant to discuss? (please circle) Yes/No

2. هل تفهم أن الباحثين سيطلبون منك أسئلة عن تجارب حياتك الماضية، والتي قد تكون غير مريحة؟ (يرجى تحديد) نعم/لا

3. I plan to participate in the following parts of the study (please check those that apply):

3. أخطط للمشاركة في الأجزاء التالية من الدراسة (يرجى اختيار ما ينطبق):

Survey (conducted face-to-face with UW Oshkosh students and a volunteer there to help)

التقصي (الذي يجريه فريق من طلاب جامعة اوشكوش وأحد المتطوعين هناك للمساعدة)

Interview (conducted face-to-face after the completion of the survey)

المقابلات (التي يجريها فريقنا بعد اكتمال التقييم)

I plan to take my own photos before the interview based upon the instructions

أود أن أجري صورتي الخاصة قبل المقابلة بناءً على التعليمات

I would like a disposable camera sent to me at this address:

أود أن أريد كاميرا قابلة للتخلص مني في هذا العنوان:

I plan to have students take photos the day of the interview

أود أن أشارك في المقابلات التي يجريها طلابنا يوم المقابلة

I would like to be interviewed, but without photos

أود أن أشارك في المقابلة ولكن دون صور

4. Will you need a translator? (please circle) Yes/No If yes, into what language?

4. هل ستحتاج مترجم؟ (يرجى تحديد) نعم/لا إذا نعم، فما اللغة؟

5. Would you prefer to be surveyed/interviewed by people of a particular gender (only males or females)? (please circle) Yes/No If yes, please specify:

5. هل تفضل أن يتم التقييم/المقابلة من قبل أشخاص من جنس معين؟ (يرجى تحديد) نعم/لا إذا نعم، يرجى التحديد:

6. Where would you prefer to be surveyed/interviewed? (please check the location that you prefer):

6. أين تفضل المشاركة في التقييم/المقابلات؟ (يرجى اختيار الموقع الذي تفضل به):

Your home

بيتك

A meeting room at the Hooper Building near downtown Oshkosh (home to United Way and other local nonprofits)

غرفة الاجتماعات في Hooper Building بالقرب من وسط مدينة اوشكوش (مقر United Way وغيرها من المنظمات المحلية)

A meeting room at Sage Hall on the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh campus

غرفة الاجتماعات في Sage Hall في الحرم الجامعي - اوشكوش

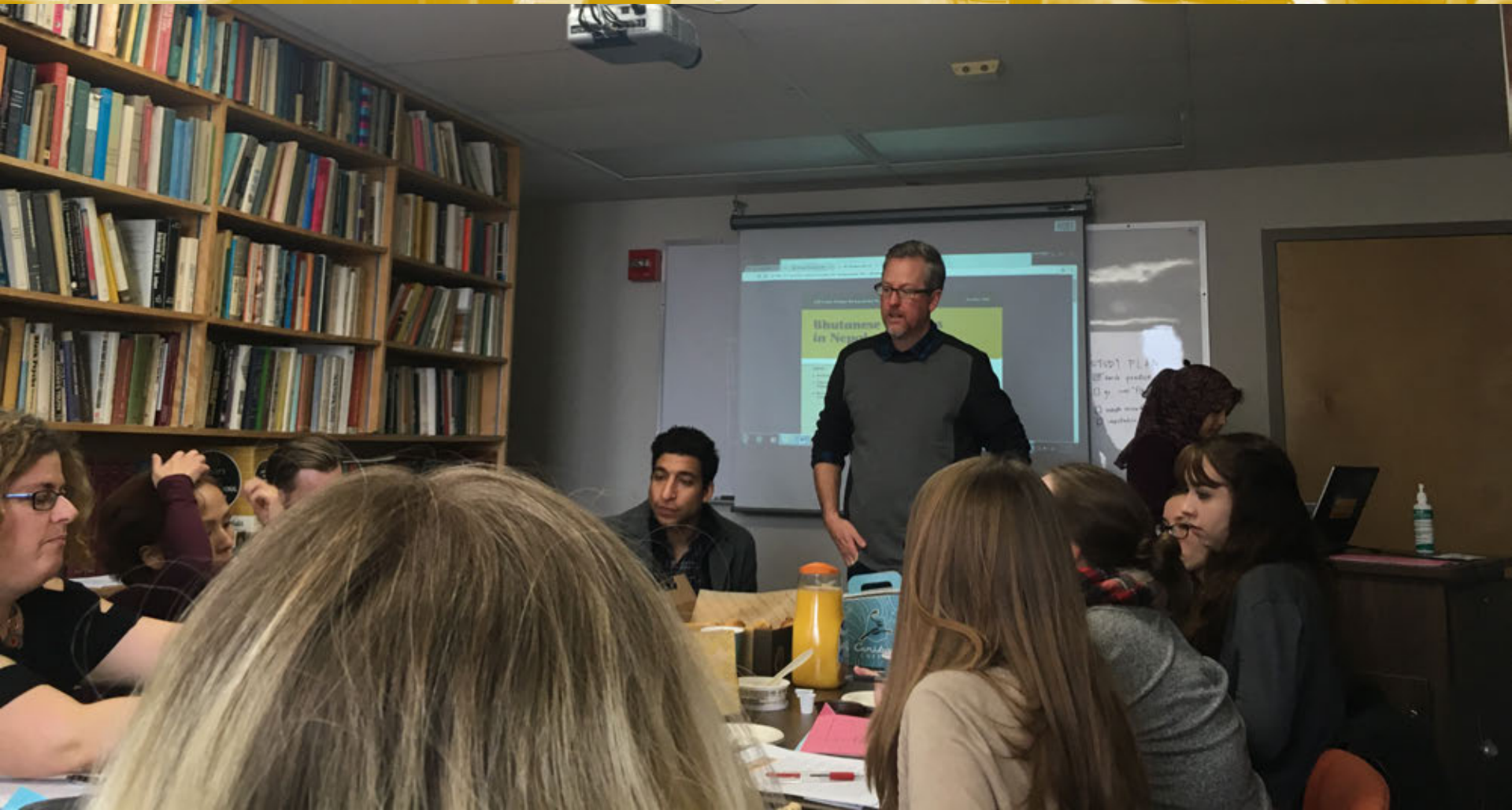
Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in this important study! Please return this form in the self-addressed and stamped envelope that we have provided, or it can be emailed and returned directly to someone from the research team. It should be mailed or emailed here:

نشكركم كثيرًا على استعدادكم للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة الهامة! يرجى إرجاع هذا النموذج في مغلف ذاتي العنوان ومختوم الذي قمنا بتوفيره، أو يمكن إرساله بالبريد الإلكتروني وإعادته مباشرة إلى أحد أعضاء فريقنا البحثي. يجب إرساله بالبريد الإلكتروني أو بالبريد إلى:

Dr. Paul Van Auken, UW Oshkosh Department of Sociology 835 High Avenue, 4611 Sage Hall Oshkosh, WI 54901; Email: vanaukep@uwosh.edu; Office phone: 920.424.2040

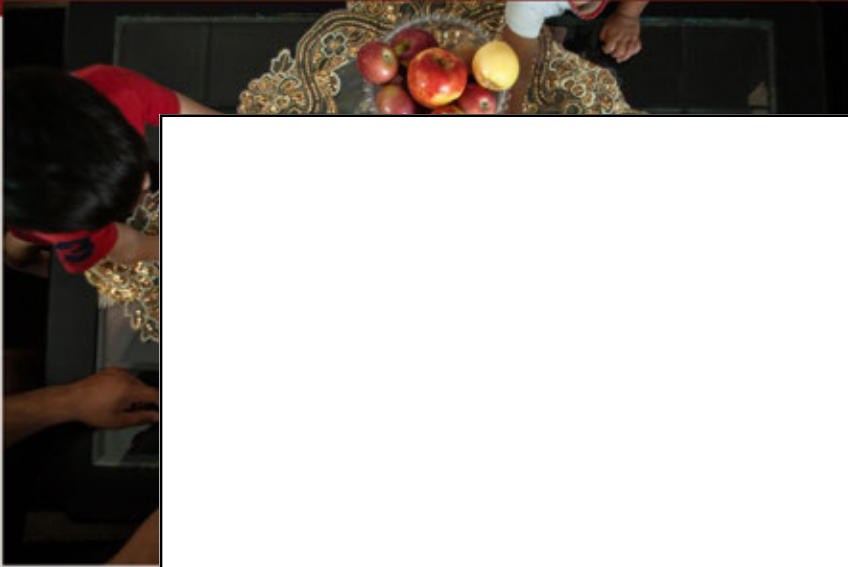
البريد الإلكتروني: vanaukep@uwosh.edu
رقم الهاتف: 920.424.2040





FINDING THEIR PLACE:

RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES IN WISCONSIN AND BEYOND



OCTOBER 8TH - 19TH, 2018

**STEINHILBER GALLERY
3RD FLOOR | REEVE MEMORIAL UNION
UW OSHKOSH**







EMPLACEMENT FRAMEWORK

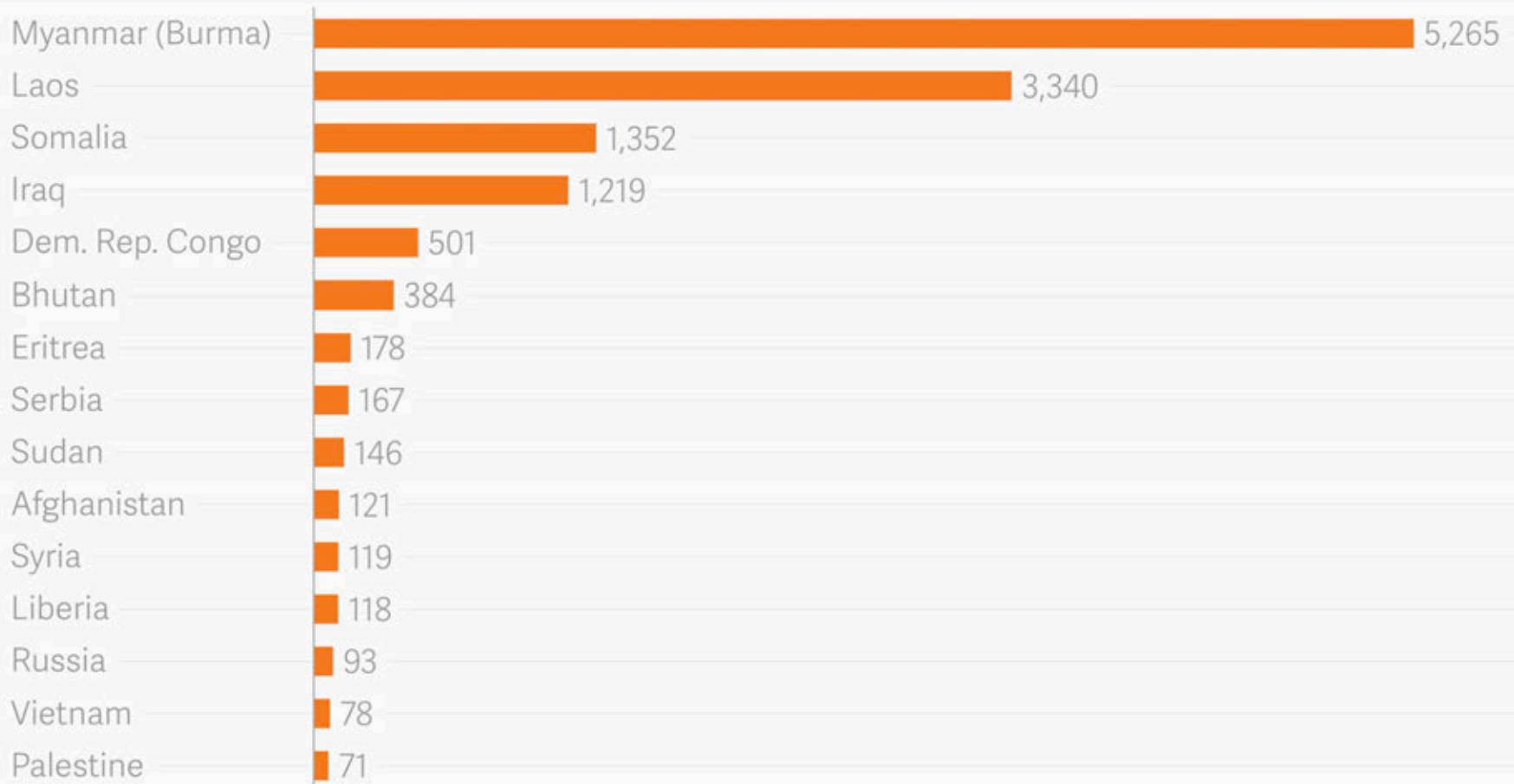
- ▶ A unified conceptual framework to systematically understand human-environment relationships by examining changes “in place” is lacking, so:
 - ▶ *Displacement:*
 - ▶ Displacement refers to exclusion and expulsion. Questions of displacement focus on **what** and **who** was **uprooted** in the past or is being uprooted currently.
 - ▶ *Misplacement:*
 - ▶ Equally important to what was uprooted are the processes of uprooting. “Mis” suggests **negative consequences**, including the placement of misaligned entities, which can often be determined only in hindsight.
 - ▶ *Replacement:*
 - ▶ Replacement, the process of determining **what and who should be in place, and how to root it there involves significant negotiation**. From local environmental action to resettlement of refugee human communities, replacing intact and functional biotic and human communities requires significant consideration and study of environmental, political, economic and socio-cultural systems.
 - ▶ *Emplacement:*
 - ▶ We use the concept of emplacement to examine the effects and consequences of displacement, misplacement, and replacement. The word choice—an adaptation of a geological term—is designed to be encompassing of the processes related to the other elements of the framework and suggest a synthesis, as we examine **the state of what has been put in place**.

Van Auken, Paul M., Elizabeth S. Barron, Chong Xiong*, and Carly Persson*. 2016. “‘Like a Second Home’: Conceptualizing Experiences Within the Fox River Watershed Through a Framework of Emplacement.” *Water* (special issue on Watershed Protection and Management) 8(8), 352; doi:[10.3390/w8080352](https://doi.org/10.3390/w8080352).

*UWO undergraduate students at the time of their primary contributions

DISPLACEMENT - WHO OR WHAT HAS BEEN UPROOTED?

Countries of Origin for Top 15 Refugee Groups in Wisconsin, 2002-2016















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DISPLACEMENT - WHO OR WHAT HAS BEEN UPROOTED?

- ▶ 68.5 million newly displaced people in 2017 alone (another new record)
- ▶ Our participants were born in 20+ different places, including the U.S. and:

Laos	Burma
DR Congo	Ethiopia
Iraq	Kyrgyzstan
South Sudan/Sudan	Kurdistan
Syria	Lithuania
Somalia	Malaysia
Afghanistan	Poland
Burundi	Russia/USSR
Pakistan	Thailand
Bosnia	Ukraine

DISPLACEMENT

- ▶ “I am a mother with 4 kids. 3 boys and 1 disabled girl. I had to leave my country, I had to leave my family because I want to provide safety for my kids. I want them to live in peace and I don't want them to experience bloodshed and I don't want them to learn to hate. I do not want them to see what I had to see and go through in my country. I also wanted to find a place where it will accept and care for my daughter... In Iraq, there was no help provided for her disability. No one respected her, no one accepted her. **..I always felt like I was going to lose my kids, whether it was because of a bombing or a because of a gunshot.** My husband was more at risk than I am. I am a women staying at home but my husband was the one who had to be out there where he could be targeted because he was Sunni Muslim.” (Iraqi RRB)
- ▶ **“The best time of my life when I got that email from U.S embassy saying your application has been approved,** your visa has been issued... So I got that visa and I didn't go back to where my parents were because a lot of people knew that you know I was going to come to the U.S. so I stayed the whole month in *Kabul*, the capital, until I came to the U.S Because I couldn't go over there. I could go over there, a lot of people knew I had the visa in hand, **they would have killed me.** So the journey was really tough.” (Afghani man)



MISPLACEMENT

WHAT HAS BEEN LOST? WHAT IS MISALIGNED?

▶ Livelihoods

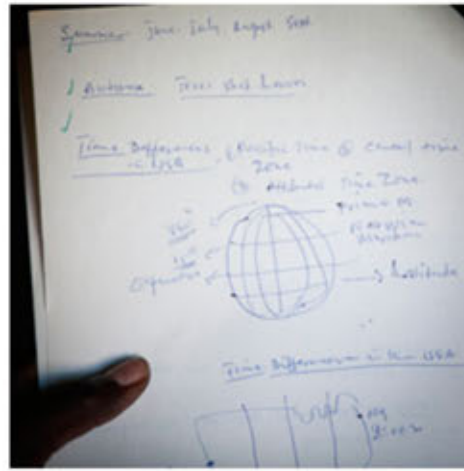
▶ Skills/work ethic not aligning well with local labor markets

▶ E.g. Iraqi lawyer, Sudanese mom, Bosnian sales director

▶ **“I never would have come to America...I had a good job, car, everything I needed...I’d just like to find a job with benefits in my last five years of working.”** (Bosnian woman)

▶ **“I can’t talk of having a better future if I’m not working. If I’m not working, if I’m just there.”** (Congolese man)

MALUAL



Malual fled civil war in Sudan in the late 1980s and sought refuge in Liberia until a civil war in that country led to him being granted refugee status in the United States in the mid-1990s. He is pictured here sitting at home with his three daughters, holding a page of notes he wrote as part of a course he took in Liberia to prepare for life in the U.S., and with his college diploma.

Note: Malual gave express written permission for their photos and quotes to be used in in this manner.

MISPLACEMENT

▶ Education

- ▶ Some (19 respondents, 26%) who had little to no education (less than HS) in their home country haven't completed any education in the U.S.
- ▶ Some who completed a Bachelor's in home country are retaking college courses in U.S.
- ▶ Some RRBs with a Bachelor's from the U.S. (4/9) are earning less than \$2,000 a month

MISPLACEMENT

- ▶ “For citizenship, it was very expensive at 250 dollars a person and the consultation was 50 dollars. Even though we have been here for 5 years they [resettlement agency] expects us to have a good paying job but we don't. I feel like [resettlement agency] forgets about us [RRB families] after they are done working with them. They also won't help secondary migration individuals and it was hard for my family.”

MISPLACEMENT

▶ Education

▶ Children

- ▶ Kids who remember life from home country and the resettlement process may struggle more in school
 - ▶ “Oldest child remembers life back home and is [struggling] to adjust. He doesn't like authority figures or following rules. He could do so much better but he doesn't apply himself. He also has the additional stress of taking care of his siblings. In my country [Kyrgyzstan], schools took care of everything and parents are not involving. They suspend him a lot, and he doesn't learn from it. I feel like the principal is not good, and is not patient and rude.” - RRB 101, arrived 2012

MISPLACEMENT

▶ Life Satisfaction

- ▶ Feelings of sadness, worry, and hopelessness highest among newer RRBs
 - ▶ Inverse relationship with citizenship status (significant result - chi sq at <0.05 level)
- ▶ Negative perception of economic standing/standard of living in the U.S. compared to previous residency most common among newer RRBs

Where is the patriotism?

We rise together and we climb together.

We speak one language. We believe one religion

Where is the patriotism?

We have one culture.

We fought each other, we fell together.

We destroy our land, we lost our dignity.

Where is the patriotism?

We lost our mother, we lost our fathers.

We buried our brothers and sisters,

We lost our generation.

We fought between large tribes.

We fought between small sub tribe.

We cried and bled rivers.

Where is the patriotism?

We drown in to the large ocean with our blood and tears,

We destroy our government

We didn't think a head.

What did we benefit and what impact did we get.

Where is the patriotism?

We fled to the world we spread across every country.

We were forced to accept costumes that were against our value.

Where is the patriotism?

We come to new land with different languages different cultures

We used to be called ^{in our country} the lion of Africa.

below of the Hero

MISPLACEMENT

▶ Doctor Visitation

▶ Only 10 of 75 RRBs could tell us where they could find a doctor if needed

▶ “[We] do not have all info that we are supposed to have, we are uninformed. To get the time to sit down and get all information is very difficult for me, it takes a lot of time. ... Dr. is very needed [by] us, but I don't know where to find it.” - RRB 47, arrived 2014

▶ 43% (29 RRB) have avoided the doctor's at least once because they were worried about cost

▶ 19 of them experienced this more than once a year

MISPLACEMENT

- ▶ What has been lost? What is misaligned?

- ▶ Community

- ▶ Isolation and disconnection come up repeatedly, e.g.:

- ▶ " Life here is great but I do miss my community. I miss having to go out and see people and stay out late and talk to people. Here (Oshkosh) we just go to work and come back to the house and not do anything else because everyone else is busy. Back in Syria everyone knows each other and everyone is out of the streets greeting each other... The kids can go out and play with other neighbor kids. But here (Oshkosh) we do not do that. However, **it is so safe here and the education is great but I don't feel like there is a loving community.** I miss my family, I miss communicating with others. I miss going out with family members on picnics and eating my country's food." (Syrian woman)



MISPLACEMENT

- ▶ What has been lost? What is misaligned?
 - ▶ Family
 - ▶ Identity
 - ▶ “I’m from two places but still looking for a home.”
 - ▶ Language
 - ▶ **“I don’t think it’s getting better. I think once they go to higher education they see the need of the language.** Before then, I think they prefer to speak English. Even in my house, my older ones understand Hmong. They read a little bit, they write a little bit. My youngest ones really have a problem with Hmong. Even comprehension. She has a problem with that. If we ask her in Hmong to give us something, more than likely, we wouldn’t have the item that we ask her. I think that is a problem. After sometime I kind of lecture my kids: ‘Your language is important to you. I think when you go to college, and definitely with **your kids, they’re gonna ask you, mom and dad where are we from?** What language do my grandparents speak?’ At that point they’ll be like gee, I wish I studied Hmong when I had the opportunity. Or listened to dad or when my Hmong cousins said I should learn Hmong.” (first generation Hmong male)

MISPLACEMENT

- ▶ What is misaligned?
 - ▶ Cultural practices and language



That's actually underneath a bridge on Hwy 10 by New London...What I like is that they translated it into Hmong and people can understand. The reason that I don't like it is that that part of the river a lot of Hmong people fish. They do litter a lot. What I tell myself, from any minority perspective, is that it just takes one person to ruin it for the rest of the people. If you see one Hmong person littering, every Hmong person gets the label of littering...But I like the way that they're using these signs and translating them to Hmong. They acknowledge us as a minority group. We do like to go fishing out in the state of Wisconsin. We like to get out there and interact, and I see the sign as a positive thing. With the Department of Natural Resources, it's a positive thing. (Participant 3)

MISPLACEMENT



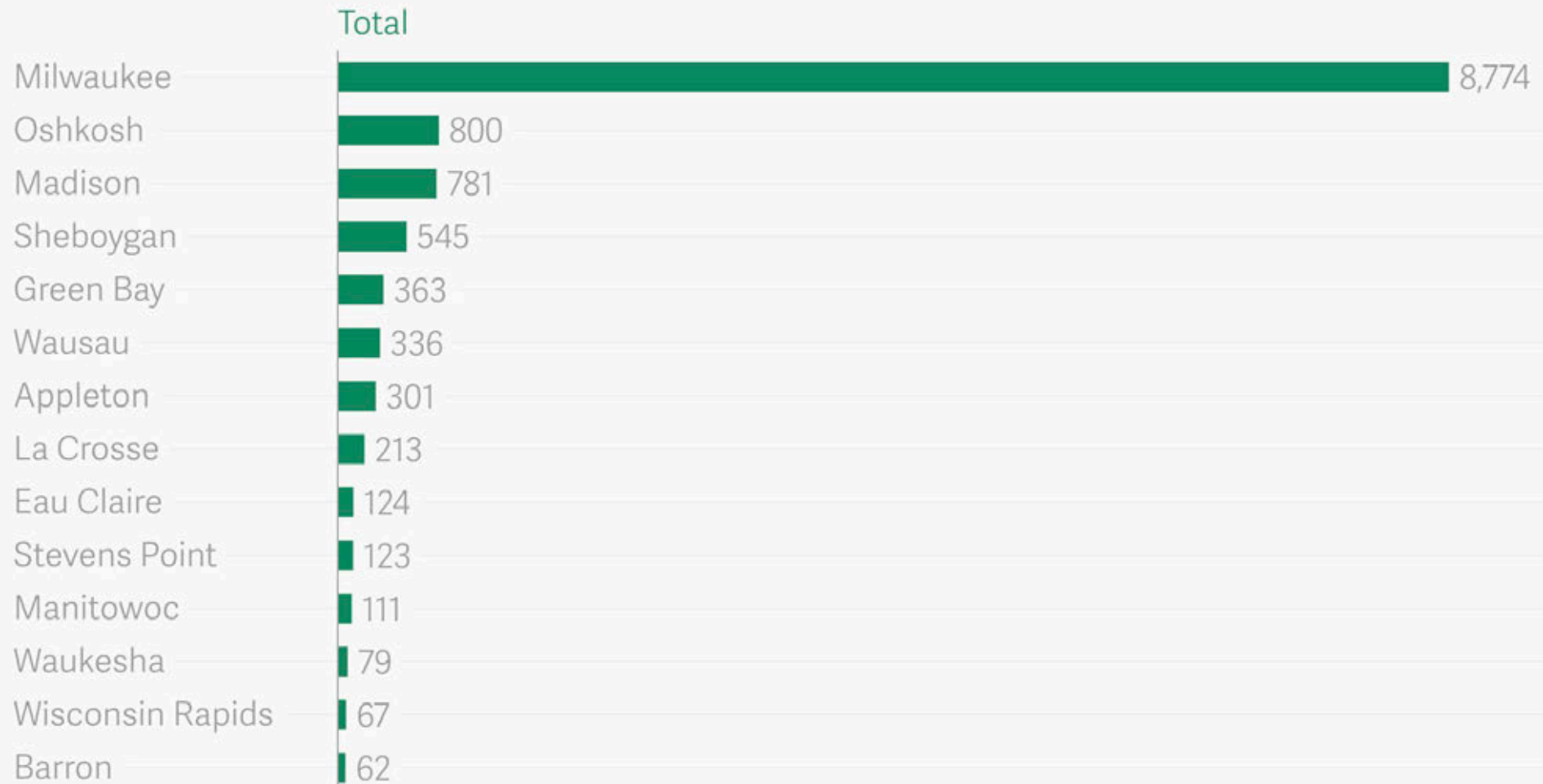
My knowledge and understanding of Hmong culture and traditions...It's kind of tunneled! I don't know much about it. There's a lot more to it. I know that traditionally we see almost anything can have a spirit. That might be a religious aspect but that sometimes ties in with the traditions and cultures. And um, I feel like there's another world that I don't understand, which is the spiritual world. A bush can have a spirit and sometimes it doesn't depending on your luck. This tunnel vision is kind of like my small understanding. ..It's very little that I know about Hmong tradition or culture.

MISPLACEMENT

- ▶ What is misaligned?
 - ▶ RRBs and recent political currents
 - ▶ Seemed to trickle down to local level
 - ▶ Increasing distrust, lack of cooperation between service providers, and between them and our project team members
 - ▶ Goals of project, local service providers?
 - ▶ Research incorporated into broader strategy linking knowledge, action, and power?

REPLACEMENT

Refugee Resettlement in Wisconsin by City, 2002-2016



REPLACEMENT

Refugees resettled

Wisconsin

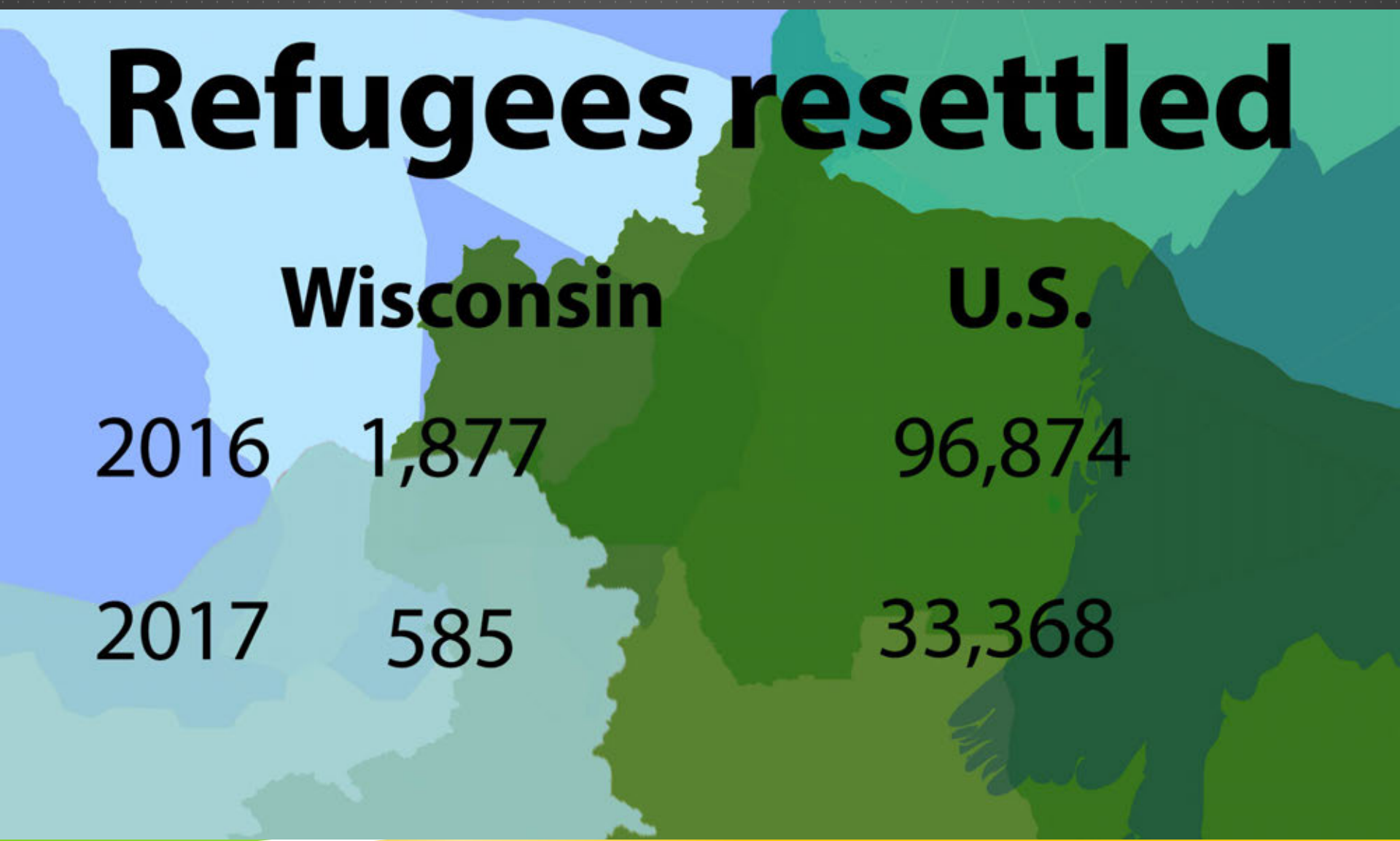
U.S.

2016 1,877

96,874

2017 585

33,368



REPLACEMENT

WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

- ▶ “Resettled is very short term; mostly surviving mode and what we initially desire but not where we want people to stay. Safe housing, employment that covers expenses, beginning to advance to next level of English and can do most day to day without assistance. Pay bills, buy groceries, transportation, etc.” - Service provider
 - ▶ Many issues with language barriers experienced in project and discussed by RRBs
- ▶ “Integration is what we would hope for and takes a longer adjustment but people move from surviving to thriving. Better employment, accomplished at language, socially involved and feels as though they are welcome and making contribution to the community.” – Service provider
- ▶ Short-term (independence) vs. Long-term (integration)
 - ▶ Sarah Reed’s (undergrad research assistant at the time) published paper (with Paul as co-author) focused on the Oshkosh/Fox Valley case points to the need for a new framework that encompasses both (e.g. Maslow’s hierarchy + Flora & Flora’s community capitals)

REPLACEMENT

▶ Process of negotiation

- ▶ RRBs generally report satisfaction (service providers more critical)
 - ▶ Most agreed with survey statements that:
 - ▶ “I felt welcomed upon my arrival here”
 - ▶ “This is a nice place for me and my family to live”
 - ▶ “My own culture is accepted and understood here”
 - ▶ Some reported feeling like they were expected to change their culture and discouraged from speaking their own language in public
 - ▶ Resilience
 - ▶ “You lose everything physically, but then you have pride...you want to make it....and I found that there are so many good people in the world that are willing to give without asking anything in return.”

REPLACEMENT

▶ Jelka



- ▶ Jelka is holding a photo of herself when she was 11, the only object she still has from her childhood home. Jelka took up yoga with the help of an instructional book from her home country.
 - ▶ Note: Jelka gave express written permission for their photos and quotes to be used in in this manner.

REPLACEMENT

▶ Process of negotiation

▶ Several participants had criticisms, though, e.g.:

- ▶ **“I feel like the refugee family should get assistance for more than 3 months from W2 and World Relief.** They need to help for at least a year so that we can learn the language and get better jobs instead of having to quit learning to work and make ends meet because they cut the stipend at 3 months. 3 months help is very short and is not fair. They need to help for a year. Think of it this way, when a refugee family comes here and they are super scared of the uncertainty and all of the sudden they want them to start working and what not. They should definitely focus on having the refugees studying the language first before working. Also, they should have a program for refugees to be able to buy a house later on so that they are not renting for a long time.”

REPLACEMENT

▶ Process of negotiation

- ▶ Several RRBs also shared stories of vulnerability, racism, and conflict
 - ▶ Wives being paid substantially less for the same work
 - ▶ Sexual harassment and depression that followed
 - ▶ One had the most direct experience with this issue:
 - ▶ “Well, I think, um, there was an earlier case where my first cousin was beat up and killed by one of his high school bully. **It was prejudiced and he was killed.** This was the one that happen in Green Bay on the parking ramp. It was in a documentary (*Being Hmong Means Being Free*), and the girl talking in the documentary was (my cousin).”

REPLACEMENT

▶ Process of negotiation

▶ Some mention of direct experience with race-oriented conflict:

- ▶ “I think it (DNR pamphlets in Hmong) really comes from the Chai Vang case. The Hmong hunter who shot those Caucasian hunters. Stuff like that really opened the eyes for many Hmong hunters as well...I know that that year when it happened I went hunting as well up in Crivitz. I saw this bumper sticker that said ‘Save a deer, kill a Hmong.’ It was a redneck guy. He had two big Confederate flags on his big truck. As you can see, there’s that racism and hatred out there.”
- ▶ “Well, I worked for (the DNR) and when I was working I inspected this one guy’s boat. The next day **I accidentally inspected his boat again and he really got mad at me and called me a ‘g**k.’** I kind of got mad, too, but then hey I am just doing my job and helping everyone in the long run. I backed off and he got into my face even more and I believe that was right after the Chai Vang incident as well. So I had to talk to my manager about it and he had someone work with me for a while so I would feel more comfortable. It was my first day of work and we worked on the weekends as well and it usually busy during the weekend. After this, it got better and it was one of the most rewarding thing in my life. I would help people who couldn’t read and there were more people who harassed me at work but not to the point where they would call me ‘g**k’”

REPLACEMENT

WHAT DO YOU WANT LOCAL PEOPLE TO KNOW ABOUT YOU?

- ▶ “People should know that we didn't just jump into this country. We came through legal process. We're not bad people as the world believes today that people with refugee background are causing problem in this country. **People should know that we want this place to be our home** and we're ready to contribute to the thriving of our communities by living under laws and regulations of our new country.”
- ▶ “**I wish they knew about me** in general.”
- ▶ “I have an accent, but **I know more than I have a chance to show.**”
- ▶ “We all may be of different culture or origin but in the end, we are all human and those who are of the minority **would just love to be accepted.**”
- ▶ “**All people of color are not bad**, just like all Americans are not bad.”
- ▶ “People to know that we are Muslims, but **we are good Muslims.** We don't hurt anybody.”
- ▶ “**The story of my life.**”

EMPLACEMENT

THE STATE OF WHAT HAS BEEN PUT IN PLACE



This one with all the people fishing. I have such a big family and we all like to fish. That's what it looks like when we go fishing, just a whole line of us. It's so funny to me...I guess that we love fishing so much, despite the weather condition. It was a very, very cold day. Despite the weather, we're willing to be out there, interacting...we bond, we have friendly competition against each other... I guess it's just the family (bonding) that we create together. We're always together doing the same activity with the same interests. It just creates a stronger (bonding) between the siblings and the parents. (Do you see this as something unique to Hmong people?) I do. Hmong people just love fishing and since we have such big families...



EMPLACEMENT

- ▶ Among people have in some ways produced a *reconstructed landscape* in Wisconsin
 - ▶ Has played an important role in their cultural reproduction
 - ▶ And perhaps in changing some practices:
 - ▶ Gender identity
 - ▶ Education and progress:
 - ▶ New opportunities
 - ▶ E.g. “Lost Boys of Sudan”
 - ▶ 73.7% (14/19) of people with less than HS prior to resettlement completed HS or higher in U.S. (26.3% Bachelor’s or higher)
 - ▶ Can others follow?





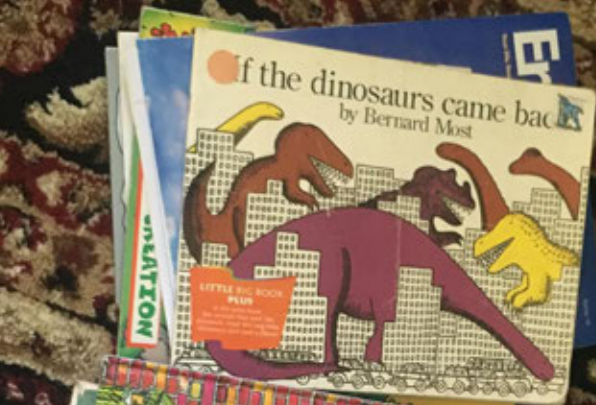
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1651

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EMPLACEMENT

- ▶ Resiliency and hope

- ▶ “My experience brings me encouragement every day.” (Congolese man)
- ▶ “I’m just a regular American Joe.” (former “Lost Boy” of Sudan)



EMPLACEMENT

- ▶ Resiliency and hope
 - ▶ Jawad



- ▶ Jawad* worked as an interpreter for the US military in his home country of Afghanistan. He was allowed to resettle in Wisconsin by the US government due to his service to this country's armed forces. **Jawad's name has been changed and his identity hidden out of respect for his family's security.*
 - ▶ Note: Jawad gave express written permission for their photos and quotes to be used in in this manner.

EMPLACEMENT

► Policy, Service, Relationship, Learning Implications

► Community-based learning outcomes reached by UWO team

► Valuable experience in conducting research

► Greater cultural competence

► “I have learned much about the culture of other people specifically because of the time I spent with the RRB family. I was able to sample some treats from their culture and that was something I will take with me because food is something that everyone can relate to, and it was very cool that they were willing to share it with me. I learned a little about what makes up my own culture too. **When I live within the norms and values of my culture I can't really see it because I am so used to it...**As common courtesy, we were instructed to take off our shoes and set them by the front door. The interview took around one hour and ten minutes. My partner and I were given a cultural treat that I ended up doing some extra research on. This treat was called Nazook and is traditionally served during Ramadan... **We were asked if we were directly responsible for bringing the rest of our RRB's family to the United States.** It was very sad to report that no, we were not the ones who were able to do anything about bringing them here. **It was very powerful.**”

► Transformation in thinking

► “I have learned to see past pre-conceived notions about the world that I live in. Coming from a small town and almost exclusively white neighborhood I was exposed to very little diversity and primarily shared one common view of the world. **Now that I can see beyond what lies in front of me I feel that I have a new take on life.** When I originally came to this major, I was looking for a way to complete my schooling and get my degree but now I see that it was one of the best choices that I could have made in my college career. Sociology is a very flexible degree that opens doors for me that I didn't know existed. I see that sociologists can do many things that I had no idea were important to the world.”



EMPLACEMENT

- ▶ Policy, Service, Relationship, Learning Implications
 - ▶ Community-based learning outcomes reached by UWO team
 - ▶ Social capital and career development
 - ▶ “I am **learning how to develop strategic partnerships** and the importance of maintaining those relationships... I have learned how to work with people of different cultures and wide range of backgrounds. Because many RRBs come from war torn areas, I am learning how to work with people who have come from traumatic situations. Many of the people we interviewed have limited language skills, so **I am learning how to overcome language barriers by asking questions in different ways and developing patience as these interviews take longer.** The ability to work with diverse populations is useful for me as I am pursuing careers that work with sensitive populations.”



- ▶ Q5. General Implications for Supporting Refugees
 - ▶ Concerns about support for fundamental issues in initial stages:
 - ▶ Combating isolation
 - ▶ Mental health issues and access to professionals
 - ▶ Opportunity to focus on language development prior to feeling forced to work
 - ▶ And ensuring classes/mentoring is widely accessible
 - ▶ Mentoring of youths and adults
 - ▶ Vulnerability to harassment, inequity on the job
 - ▶ Skills/opportunity mismatches
 - ▶ Paths to homeownership
 - ▶ Recognizing and building upon strengths and talents



- ▶ Q6. Communication and Feedback with RRBs
 - ▶ Primary focus of paper

Q6. CER PROCESS FINDINGS



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IK

Working Through Uncertainty: The Perils and Potential of Community-Engaged Research on Refugee Resettlement

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Soc. Sci. 2019, 8(3), 73; <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8030073>

Received: 22 January 2019 / Revised: 19 February 2019 / Accepted: 21 February 2019 / Published: 28 February 2019

(This article belongs to the Special Issue [Engaged Scholarship for Resilient Communities](#))

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Abstract

What can be learned from the process of community-engaged research (CER) on refugee resettlement? In the following, we share experiences, reflections, and lessons from implementing such a project. We begin with background on refugee resettlement and recent resettlement dynamics in the United States and Wisconsin, as well as literature on the study of refugees and this type of research more generally. Results and discussion are presented through our understanding of, and involvement with, the process via a framework of CER desired process outcomes, which we both propose and utilize to encourage effective efforts with marginalized populations going forward. CER is challenging and must be undertaken thoughtfully. One of the paper's primary contributions is to share successes and failures in a transparent and unvarnished fashion. In particular, researchers need to share power and listen deeply, actions that will reverberate throughout such a process. Doing so comes with certain risks, and may be tangled, but also has strong potential to produce useful data, deep learning for researchers and participants, as well as empowerment of marginalized populations and relationship building that can yield future collaboration towards resilience.

Q6. CER PROCESS FINDINGS

- ▶ In comparison to traditional research, CER has the potential to be more:
 1. Participatory
 2. Respectful
 3. Valid
 4. Action-oriented
 5. Impactful
 6. Reflexive

Q6. CER PROCESS FINDINGS

- ▶ Success in many ways, but also many challenges and lessons
 - ▶ To obtain valid data there has to be some distance
 - ▶ “Aside from a handful of informal service providers who were involved with the research team on a limited basis, service providers did not help collect the data from RRBs directly. This would have blurred the lines, raising ethical concerns about coercion while also raising questions about validity (due to heightened social desirability bias)”
 - ▶ This is key concern with this type of research in any case
 - ▶ CER elements introduce additional sources of error

Q6. CER PROCESS FINDINGS

- ▶ If truly about community and widespread participation,
 - ▶ Requires intentionality, coordination, time, trust, powersharing
 - ▶ Distance can hinder recruitment
 - ▶ “The key service provider quoted above highlighted complications when agencies were asked to assist recruiting RRBs for the survey, arguing that in ‘some cases, this could compromise the refugee/service provider relationship’”
 - ▶ Informal service providers and other RRBs yielded more participants than formal, along with team members attending events
 - ▶ RRB lives are highly complex and RRBs often lack social power
 - ▶ Sharing power is difficult
 - ▶ Is building community a goal? What does this mean?

Q6. CER PROCESS FINDINGS

- ▶ PDPE enhanced engagement on the part of RRBs
 - ▶ And opened doors to wider collaboration and dissemination
- ▶ Most RRBs seemed ready to tell their stories and help other RRBs
 - ▶ How can this potential best be harnessed?
 - ▶ Involving RRBs in meetings and such can be beneficial to both parties
 - ▶ Moving from interesting anecdotes to more generalizable data is trickier

Q6. CER PROCESS FINDINGS

- ▶ Need to find balance in quest to “build local constituents’ capacity to create knowledge that will lead to lasting change”
 - ▶ Research fatigue + competition for scarce funds + political landscape = suspicion of researchers
 - ▶ Additional complications noted above
 - ▶ Service providers must buy into the process
- ▶ Focus should perhaps be on *authentic relationship building* with RRBs
 - ▶ RRBs have a lot to offer and we have a lot to learn from them
 - ▶ For data, develop a process that works reasonably well that can be replicated
 - ▶ Relatively brief survey (“thin” data) + adapted PDPE interviews & service provider interviews (“thicker” data)?
 - ▶ Carried out by trusted outside partner, with cultural liaisons?
 - ▶ Culminates in public exhibit with community-building elements?

Q7. RESOURCES, INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS, OR POLICY CHANGES TO INCREASE ACCESS AND SUCCESS TO COLLEGE AND PROFESSIONAL CAREERS FOR RRB?

- ▶ Stoecker (2009) presents four basic types of research output, explaining that,
 - ▶ A “community change process begins with diagnosing some condition, prescribing an intervention, implementing that intervention and evaluating its effectiveness” (p. 390)
 - ▶ “Action” is often just through forms of reporting
 - ▶ Our CER project is in the first stage of working towards community change:
 - ▶ Designed to diagnose the state of refugee resettlement, to identify successes and challenges, strengths and gaps to fill, and point towards possible interventions (the second stage)

Q7. RESOURCES, PARTNERS, POLICIES

- ▶ That stated, some thoughts:
 - ▶ Key predictor of child success is parents' educational level
 - ▶ Can get lost in shuffle of resettlement + lots of barriers to adult ed.
 - ▶ Direct mentoring for this purpose
 - ▶ Examples from our study sites include Write Your Life workshops, mentoring of middle and high schoolers, and partners (school district, technical college, university) providing higher ed mentoring
 - ▶ Further partnership/advocacy with higher ed
 - ▶ Badger Promise, scholarships
 - ▶ Focus for recruitment
 - ▶ Partner with employers to develop workforce development programs
 - ▶ To develop skills and help socialize, eliminate skills/opportunity mismatches
 - ▶ As discussed, need to figure out timing and info retention issues for RRBs
 - ▶ Develop multi-purpose gathering/cultural/community centers that can provide social infrastructure for such activities (a la best elements of settlement houses, well-functioning Third Places)
 - ▶ Key need seems to be natural, ongoing social interactions that can help RRBs build bonding social capital amongst themselves and bridging social capital with non-RRBs
 - ▶ Develop best practices toolkit for places engaged in resettlement?

THANKS!

- ▶ Questions?

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