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Barriers To Success: Refugee Mobility In The New South Immigrant Gateway City of Columbia, SC, USA

Alysha V. Baratta

University of South Carolina

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BARRIERS TO SUCCESS: REFUGEE MOBILITY IN THE
NEW SOUTH IMMIGRANT GATEWAY CITY OF COLUMBIA, SC, USA

by

Alysha V. Baratta

Bachelor of Arts
University of Missouri, 2009

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Accepted by:

Caroline Nagel, Director of Thesis

Amy Mills, Reader

Breanne Grace, Reader

Paul Allen Miller, Vice Provost and Interim Dean of Graduate Studies

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DEDICATION

To the 1 in 121 people on earth who are currently displaced:
may you find home someday.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my powerhouse committee of thoughtful and meticulous scholars: advisor Dr. Caroline Nagel whose red pen sorcery, careful insight, and always entertaining meetings made this thesis possible; member Dr. Amy Mills whose multiple seminars refined my writing to “Just Say It” and for endless personal encouragement; and to member Dr. Breanne Grace for the vast knowledge on resettlement and invaluable strategic training on interviews and research.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores mobility and service access of refugees who have been resettled in a non-traditional smaller-city immigrant destination of Columbia, South Carolina. I show that delivery of basic refugee social services varies based on support from individual states while federal expectations for refugees to reach economic self-sufficiency are applied equally across the US. I argue that mobility is a major challenge in obtaining these goals, further exacerbated in the context of a smaller resettlement site. Although redistribution to smaller metropolitan areas may provide refugees safer and more affordable housing, less spatial distance to traverse (Mott, 2010), they often lack access to services and resources such as public transportation, English language services, low-wage job markets, and similar ethnic communities compared to those in larger metropolitan areas (Singer & Wilson, 2006; Bose, 2014). Through participant observation and semi-structured interviews with refugees and service providers, I aim to answer how these federal policies play out at the scale of the local, and the degree to which refugees are able to satisfy neoliberal federal directives. This research has the potential to contribute to scholarship on refugee resettlement in the US and practitioner literature.

Key terms: refugee resettlement, policy, mobility, self-sufficiency

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------|---|
| DSS | Department of Social Services |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| IDPs..... | internally displaced people |
| IRC | International Rescue Committee |
| LFS..... | Lutheran Family Services |
| LIRS | Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service |
| LSC | Lutheran Services Carolina |
| ORR | Office of Refugee Resettlement |
| PRWORA | Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act |
| SMH..... | Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis |
| VOLAG..... | Voluntary Agency |
| UNHCR..... | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research investigates the provision of services to refugees in Columbia, South Carolina, and asks to what extent the current system of resettlement successfully aids refugees in a localized context. While in the past government-led resettlement mostly placed refugees in larger traditional immigrant gateway cities, in recent years resettlement agencies have dispersed refugees to smaller metropolitan areas, including to “New South” immigrant gateways (Winders, 2006; Brettell, et al., 2008) such as Columbia. On the one hand, dispersal to smaller cities may benefit refugees through features such as more affordable housing, less spatial distance to traverse, and lower crime rates (Mott, 2010). On the other hand, refugees who are resettled in smaller metro areas may have access to fewer services and resources such as public transportation, English language services, low-wage job markets, and similar ethnic communities compared to those in larger metro areas (Singer & Wilson, 2006). Voluntary agencies (henceforth known as VOLAGs) are contracted by the U.S. government to provide services for refugee populations, but many of these organizations are severely under-supported or unable to provide services due to limited state participation, as is the case in South Carolina. When services are provided, access may be limited due to a mismatch between refugee housing areas and areas with service providers and employment opportunities, and due to a lack of transport between these destinations.

When the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950, refugee resettlement in the US was administered at a local level and

church-based (Nawyn, 2006) and largely driven by cold war imperatives (Gibney, 2004). This process has since been restructured, owing to The Refugee Act of 1980. Motivated by the large numbers of Vietnamese refugees coming to the US, the act adopted the U.N.'s definition of refugee, standardized domestic services provided to refugees (by contracting VOLAGs, many of which are religious organizations), and authorized Congress to set annual ceilings for funding and the number of refugees admitted. Since 1980, over 3 million refugees have resettled in the US from over 40 countries, making the US the Western leader in refugee resettlement since World War II (Gibney, 2004). Aside from the U.S. government's humanitarian ambitions, much of the reasoning behind liberal refugee relocation policies were politically motivated by the desire to weaken communist regimes such as the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and Cuba. Anti-communist policy objectives were so closely tied with refugee resettlement that prior to 1980, refugees fleeing from non-communist countries had no status under U.S. law; even after 1980, those fleeing U.S.-backed regimes such as Haiti and El Salvador were far less likely to be granted refugee status than Cubans (ibid.)

In the decades since the end of the Cold War, resettlement policy has reflected the ability of the President to grant more or fewer acceptance slots from world regions depending on current crises and political impetus. The Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2016 states outright that overseas refugee applicants will "contribute to the foreign policy interests of the United States and designate such persons for this purpose" (Obama 2015). The annual cap is currently 70,000; in light of the Syrian refugee crisis, Secretary of State Kerry announced the 2016 minimum will be 85,000 and in 2017, increased to 100,000 (U.S. Department of State, 2015).

Not only have the numbers of accepted refugees and their regions of origins shifted, but so has the geographical distribution of refugees resettled across the US. Throughout most of the past century, immigrants were concentrated in five immigrant gateway states: New York, California, Florida, Texas, and Illinois. However, during the 1980s, residence patterns moved towards populating small and midsized communities across the nation, most notably in the South and Midwest (O’Neil & Tienda, 2010). Refugee resettlement has both mirrored the larger immigrant pattern as well as differed from it. While refugees have historically been placed in smaller cities on an individual sponsorship basis (Kelly, 1986), the formalization of this process has increased numbers of refugees distributed to smaller metropolitan areas across more states. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) influenced current settlement trends beginning in the 1980s when they placed Vietnamese refugees in smaller metropolitan areas and suburbs to more evenly disperse the burden on social service programs. Further, the transition away from an urban-manufacturing economy in the US has shifted the landscape of economic opportunity to more rural locations (Hardwick in Brettell et al., 2008), which presents more employment options for refugees placed in smaller cities and thus more impetus to remain where they are first settled. This shift in resettlement has placed refugees in areas that have less experience with diverse populations (Fennelly & Leitner, 2002; Singer & Wilson, 2006). As refugees continue to be placed in diversifying locations across the US, it becomes more important to study how refugees experience smaller cities and these locations’ capacity to effectively meet federal standards of resettlement.

There are approximately 59.5 million forcibly displaced people in the world, which includes refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and other ‘persons of

concern' to UNHCR, such as asylum-seekers and stateless people (Crawford, et al., 2015). Forty percent of displaced people live in refugee camps with an estimated average length of stay of 17 years (Loescher & Milner, 2006). This lengthy period of time in limbo, or “protracted displacement” (meaning being in displacement for at least three years) is the norm, rather than the exception. Over the past decade, nearly 80% of refugees worldwide were in a state of protracted displacement at any one time (Crawford, et al., 2015). After oftentimes lengthy stays as displaced people, the top-down process of refugee resettlement to the US begins when an applicant is referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for consideration as a refugee. Cases that are identified by UNHCR, a U.S. embassy, or a designated non-governmental organization are top priority and generally must be residing outside their country of origin (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2016). This is contrasted with asylum seekers, who apply for refugee status once they are already in the US and must prove themselves that they are, for whatever reason, unable to return to their home countries.

After the bureaucratic journey towards resettlement, if the Department of Homeland Security accepts a refugee’s application, the ORR in New York determines which one of nine national VOLAGs will be responsible for which refugees. These include: Church World Service, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Episcopal Migration Ministries, HIAS (formerly known as Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), International Rescue Committee, US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and World Relief Corporation (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, 2011). Representatives from these VOLAGs then choose to place a

refugee in a particular location depending on vacancies for new arrivals, country of origin, family size, religious preferences, and medical needs (Mott, 2010). Although aid workers seek to place refugees with family members, refugees do not have a choice in which state/city they will be placed. The intricate, opaque, and hierarchical nature of U.S. refugee resettlement is further complicated by the fact that VOLAGs generally do not interact with each other.

Given the tumultuous pathways that many refugees experience prior to their final destinations in U.S. cities, the question arises of how to best facilitate their transition into their new homeland. This transition involves navigating an entirely new way of life in a new place in a new language while simultaneously reaching “economic self-sufficiency” in mere months. This nationwide standard seeks to wean refugees off of any financial assistance as soon as possible, regardless of how impossible a standard it is to reach. Many resettled refugees have spent a considerable amount of their lives as displaced people in locations dissimilar to Western cities. Further, a large number of refugees come from agrarian lifestyles and must adjust to work within the rigid structure of a cash-based economy upon arrival to the US in order to survive. Success of acclimating to Western lifestyles and meeting the demands of an hourly wage job greatly depend upon a person’s ability to, first and foremost, simply show up at their job. Refugees with very limited English are able to find low-skilled jobs, but they first must be able to access transportation in order to keep these jobs. Beyond economic demands of getting to work, refugees must also find their way to buy food, go to essential physical and mental health appointments, and to access social services. Mobility matters; this “new American” population can only succeed if they can physically move about their new cities.

The question of refugee mobility within the context of smaller new Southern gateway cities is quite complex and layered. How do the spatial layout and less extensive public transportation systems in smaller cities like Columbia affect refugees' experiences? These inquiries can be linked to the Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis (SMH) (Kain 1968; Kasarda 1993), which connects poor employment outcomes among African American urban residents to racial discrimination in the suburban housing market, the decentralization of jobs to the suburbs, and limited transportation options. While there is significant evidence supporting this hypothesis with regard to African Americans, geographers have questioned its applicability to immigrants, especially those living outside the old industrial core (Parks, 2004; Painter et al., 2007; Ellis et al., 2007; Liu & Painter 2012). While not dismissing the relevance of spatial mismatch, I use refugees' travel narratives to explore what other barriers may exist specifically for refugees in terms of accessing resources. I also broaden the examination of mismatch to include more than just the distance between home and work, emphasizing the various locations refugees must access for basic household reproduction. This requires consideration not only of raw distance between place of residence and employment opportunities, but also access to the means of mobility.

1.1 The Research

Research on refugee resettlement in the US has grown since the 1980s, and has received increasing media attention. Recently, research on refugee resettlement in smaller cities has emerged, particularly in the Canadian context (Sherrell, et al., 2005; Hyndman, et al., 2006; Drolet & Robertson, 2011) and less so in the European and US (Wren, 2003; Cadge, et al., 2010; Bose, 2014). These studies have focused on economic adaptation of

refugees in smaller U.S. cities (Allen, 2009) and healthcare availability (Edward & Hines-Martin, 2014). Studies have also examined the U.S. South as a new context for immigrant incorporation (Winders, 2006) and as an evolving space of belonging in an historical context of racial segregation (C.R. Nagel 2013; Nagel & Ehrkamp, 2016). However, there has not been much in-depth research on refugee resettlement nor on refugee mobility in cities like Columbia, South Carolina. As resettlement is increasingly redistributed to smaller cities across the Midwest and the South, it is imperative that academics consider questions of what this resettlement looks like not just in theory or at a policy level, but on the ground. By examining both the positive and negative aspects of placing refugees in these new locales, policymakers will be able to anticipate and address the needs of this underserved population.

1.2 Organization of this Thesis

In the following chapters, I address my primary research questions by examining theoretical frameworks and then grounding them in qualitative research that expresses the lived experiences of refugees in Columbia. Chapter two provides a review of the literature focused on the neoliberal welfare state, geographical mobility, and then situates these themes within a smaller city context. In chapter three, I describe my methodological approach to the study and outline my data collection and analysis.

My analysis of the research is divided into two main chapters. Chapter four details the hierarchical scales at which policies are made and financial aid is distributed and how top-down processes play out in localities. I explain the various federal and state programs available to refugees in South Carolina. As LSC is in an intermediary position between

enforcing regulations and helping newly arrived refugees, I ask how this position affects service delivery and relationships with refugee clients. I also highlight refugee voices to express how these rules and their regulations affect their livelihoods and integration. Finally, I discuss the concept of “success” and contrast how various actors in the process define successful resettlement. Addressing how welfare state restructuring affects refugee success in a smaller city such as Columbia has implications for the multiple new immigrant gateway cities across the US.

In chapter five, I utilize Flamm and Kaufmann’s (2006) theoretical framework of motility as a basis for elucidating grounded refugee experiences. First, by commenting on the structural shortcomings of local public transit such as sparse and infrequent bus routes, I show how refugees struggle to utilize the few structural resources available to them. Second, I examine the necessary skills refugees must develop in order to become more mobile. This includes seeking training on how to navigate bus routes, acquiring competence in English, and possessing the physical ability to walk between bus stops. Also relevant is social and human capital, to which refugees have varied access. Those who are connected with a large social network are able to create alternative pathways to mobility (through co-ethnic bus training and carpooling) despite the complicated urban structure. Finally, I look at the appropriation of aforementioned infrastructural landscapes and skills – that is, how individual choice and positionality influence a person’s access to the structures and skills that make them mobile. By examining the limitations of structural transit and skills training in Columbia, I consider to what extent refugees are able to assert their own agency and fulfill government requisites.

Chapter six concludes this thesis by considering needed improvements to the U.S.

resettlement system. I address to what extent refugees are able to fulfill neoliberal demands by asserting their own agency in such an environment of a small city in an unsupportive state. Taking this into account, I focus on pragmatic avenues for working within current constraints. I also suggest avenues for future research in this site and similar contexts.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE

My research draws upon three main bodies of literature on the geographies of neoliberal service provision, refugee mobility, and refugee resettlement in smaller cities. In this thesis, these three areas are connected in order to interpret refugee experiences in Columbia. My objective is to highlight how the scale at which policies are made affects the provision of refugee services and refugees' access to these services. I detail federal standards of services that refugees receive and the varying degree that each state complies with these standards. The most important goal of the U.S. government emerges as getting refugees to obtain economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible. Ensuring delivery of social services, however, is evidently much less vital. As refugee support has been scaled back over time, refugees are being asked to do more with fewer resources. I then argue that one of the most important resources to obtaining self-sufficiency is mobility. I explore the multiple factors that contribute to a refugee's (im)mobility and highlight how unmanageable it is for refugees to fulfill neoliberal demands of self-sufficiency without being able to move freely about his or her city. I then contextualize these themes by discussing refugee resettlement in smaller U.S. cities. While there are positive aspects of resettlement in smaller cities, refugees face multiple challenges that further complicate the process of beginning a new life. Refugees also have the capacity to fill a void in declining small cities' workforce, and, by neoliberal standards, should be

welcomed for their economic merit. By combining these three subject areas, I establish a background for refugee resettlement in Columbia, SC.

2.1 Geographies of Neoliberal Service Provision

In migration literature and policy, refugees have been situated as distinctive among immigrants because while they do not choose their placement, they do receive state support. In contrast to “voluntary” immigrants, who have little access to government-run social services, refugees are eligible to receive state services ranging from six months to five years, depending on the state (Nawyn, 2006). While this position is privileged relative to all other immigrants to the US, it is also the most scrutinized and regulated, with strict state expectations imposed on refugees in order to receive services. Understanding refugees’ circumstances thus requires an examination of federal resettlement policy and the ways that federal policies distinguish between more-or-less deserving newcomers.

American lawmakers have applied the notion of deservingness differently to immigrants and refugees. The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act restricted welfare services for both documented and undocumented immigrants, though preserved them for refugees due to their perceived merit (Anderson, et al., 2002). The 70,000 chosen few who are resettled in the US annually are labeled as deserving victims of undemocratic governments/regimes and are considered helpless and in need of Western protection (Nagel & Ehrkamp, 2016). Cadge, et al., (2010) explain that since many African refugees have histories of trauma as child soldiers and as victims of torture and political oppression or civil war and famine, they are placed higher in hierarchies of deservingness than are fellow dark-skinned African American recipients of

social services, who are often coded as “welfare queens” in contemporary neoliberal discourse (p. 9). Refugees are idealized as being in a malleable state of citizenship, and their fresh new start in America provides the opportunity to be molded into productive “New Americans” (Winders, 2006). The emphasis on productivity in order to be included in social citizenship is best described as the “neoliberal citizenship ratio”, or the proportion of able-bodied, employable adults relative to family members who need support (Grace, et al., 2016). That is, it is only by increasing work-eligible household members that refugees are able to make ends meet under neoliberal constraints.

Although refugees are viewed as deserving and thus earn more benefits than those considered economic migrants, they have more stipulations attached to those benefits. The federal government’s say in what an immigrant must do drastically increases when that immigrant is eligible for financial assistance. Assistance for refugees, in other words, is much deserved, much needed, and much regulated. This discussion of deservingness constructed at the federal scale is passed down through individual state narratives and finally dispersed at the local. On an individual level, a person’s worth and deservingness to access basic human services comes secondary to his or her aptitude to get a job.

Understanding refugee resettlement requires an analysis of the structure and geography of service delivery, and especially the devolution of service provision to the states and the voluntary sector. Refugee policy reform in 1980 corresponded with broader welfare reform efforts that involved a growing use of voluntary and faith-based agencies to deliver social services. The voluntary sector became more involved in delivering direct social services, now officially funded by the government instead of through agencies working independently. While responsibility for service delivery was offset to non-

governmental organizations forming a “shadow state”, the state sector’s role turned to greater policing of this provision (Wolch, 1990). The state has increased policing of the organizations that deliver services as well as the individuals who receive services through increased regulatory restrictions (i.e. drug testing, limiting eligible SNAP food items to bare necessities) (Trudeau, 2012).

This general devolution of federal welfare has led to greater responsibility at the individual state level, which has generated incredibly uneven and fragmented service provision from state to state. The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 coupled citizenship requirements with economic “personal responsibility”, a response to legislators’ concerns that welfare dependency was the cause of societal ills. Aihwa Ong succinctly describes how welfare state restructuring has made life in America “the civic duty of the individual to reduce his or her burden on society, and instead to build up his or her own human capital” (Ong, 2003 in Trudeau, 2012 p. 444). Even though it views refugees as deserving of social services, the federal government seeks to cap the charitable benefits it offers to refugees. The number of refugees admitted has declined from over 200,000 in the 1980s to 74,000 today (Allen, 2009), and the federal government has reduced cash assistance from 36 months to a minimum of 3 months. Supplementary Security Income (SSI) and disability is available to refugees by the same standards as the native-born population (over the age of 66). Those states who subscribe to the Affordable Care Act’s Medicaid expansion program allow refugees to access Medicaid for up to five years; because South Carolina does not, they are only able to access Medicaid for eight months (Wasem, 2014). Likewise, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is offered on a state level

basis; South Carolina does not offer TANF to refugees. PRWORA's effect on refugee welfare access is evident, as from 1994 to 1999 overall refugee utilization of TANF declined by 78%, food stamps by 53%, and Medicaid by 36% (Fix & Passel, 1999).

In writing this thesis, the difficulty in finding consistent information about the minimum standards for resettlement revealed how intentionally opaque the process is. While Wasem (2014) outlines the federal amount of time refugees are eligible for assistance, this does not represent the minimum amounts that individual states must provide benefits. Tricky wording in PRWORA introduces the term "qualified aliens", which basically leaves individual states to decide which noncitizens are eligible for federal benefits (Wasem, 2014). This loophole has allowed South Carolina to skirt responsibilities of providing basic services to refugees and have done less than what federal minimums dictate. Simply, some states are non-compliant in fulfilling refugee requirements, and there is little to no oversight in assuring these requirements are met. Not only are there disparities in the monetary amounts and length of assistance conflicting, but different states draw on different sources of funding. The federal government disperses refugee cash assistance (RCA) and refugee medical assistance (RMA) through one of three ways:

1. Private-sector/non-profit administered: After the 1980 Refugee Act that gave cash assistance directly to states, Congress passed the Wilson Fish Amendment in 1984 that enabled Office of Refugee Resettlement to make available funding for projects that test "alternative approaches" to cash assistance, medical assistance, social services, and case management. It is less bureaucratic than public programs and more outcome and performance-based, but refugees in this state are not eligible for Temporary Assistance

for Needy Families (TANF)/Medicaid because it would be considered repetitive funding (Hohm, et al., 1999). Essentially, Wilson-Fish grants a certain amount of funds to refugees which is distributed evenly over a given period regardless of their job status. This is the case for Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, and San Diego county, CA.

2. Public-private partnerships: These states are generally known as having superior resettlement, likely due to their dual funding. Their case management is funded from state money, so state level government prioritizes refugee resettlement as something worth funding. Structurally, they are able to provide supplementary programs such as EFL training for newly arrived refugee children. Unlike Wilson-Fish states, these states are able to access Matching Grant funds through the ORR for up to six months total (a program which I detail in chapter 4) and TANF/Medicaid for eight months. This applies to five states: Maryland, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Texas.

3. State administered program: These states could be considered the least supportive of refugee resettlement as a whole. They are able to access Matching Grant funds as well as TANF/Medicaid and receive standard Reception & Placement funds through the federal government. It also includes state programs, which are run by the Department of Social Services in the case of South Carolina. Unlike private-sector/non-profit administered resettlement, State-administered programs provide more cash assistance to refugees in the first month and wane the amount of monies over the following months. If a refugee gets a job before the cash assistance period is up, they will not receive the remainder that they are owed, which critics say provides little impetus for refugees to obtain employment

quickly. Also, since there are no private beneficiaries, resettlement is generally less funded and not a priority in these states. Resettlement is run this way in the remainder of states, including South Carolina.

The U.S. government's main goal in resettlement is to form employable and economically self-sufficient citizens first and foremost (Trudeau, 2012). This theme of self-sufficiency is evident throughout multiple documents and mission statements of the federal government, the ORR, and VOLAGs. The state department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration website features a header that reads: "Although refugees are eligible for public assistance when they first arrive, the U.S. Government emphasizes early economic self-sufficiency through employment to speed their integration into American society" (U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, 2011). This statement serves to assure worried taxpayers that their money is only providing the bare minimum welfare safety net and also suggests it is the most beneficial method to "integrate" refugees. The ORR claims that they aim "to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible" (Refugee Resettlement Program, 2012, p. 345). Like the federal government's message, the ORR emphasizes the haste to wean refugees off of the taxpayer dollar.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) also promotes this buzzphrase, stating on their refugee page, "Self-sufficiency is key to successful integration into American society. LIRS helps newcomers by engaging local churches and communities in the resettlement process and by promoting employment and providing training and support to local job developers" (Lutheran Immigration and

Refugee Services, 2016). Unlike the federal and state websites, LIRS does not mention efficiency and quickness of weaning refugees off of welfare, but rather focus on how they help refugees achieve self-sufficiency. Clearly the most important goal for refugee resettlement, self-sufficiency is a malleable term that may be thought of differently by different people, including refugees themselves.

The current overarching political debate concerning what constitutes a living wage in the US affects native-born poor and refugees alike. Can any person working a full-time minimum wage job be considered self-sufficient? Given the federal government's stipulation that refugees must accept the first "appropriate" job they are offered (i.e. small women are not expected to work in a position lifting heavy boxes), it seems the goal is not to become self-sufficient, but rather to have enough income to be disqualified from unemployment benefits. The kinds of jobs refugees are qualified for generally provide wages that make it impossible to be economically independent. Resettlement agencies across the US must follow the government's rules, and instead of working to incorporate newcomers into economies and communities by providing English language education and specific technical skillset training, they "serve to prepare them for minimum-wage, entry level jobs that provide incomes insufficient for paying bills and that provide few possibilities for long-term social advancement, economic stability, or educational opportunity" (Warriner, 2007 p. 355). What, then, does the provision of services for a population that is widely considered to be "deserving" but under supported look like on a local scale? And to what extent does it fulfill the aims set forth by the federal government and by VOLAGs?

Examining how VOLAGs interact with refugees and enforce higher-scale federal goals is getting to the heart of the question of how services are delivered in a specific site. As VOLAGs are forced to be intermediaries between the state's aims and the precariously placed refugee, their success in functionality and organization have much influence on how successful a refugee will be. On the macro level, VOLAGs directly make a difference in a refugee's life because refugees do not choose their primary resettlement city, but rather go where VOLAG decisions related to government policy may accommodate them. Thus, VOLAGs change the geographical settlement patterns of refugees broadly across the US through "directed migration" (Brown, et al., 2007). Once a refugee has been assigned to a particular city, VOLAGs then have a part in placing refugees within the city, typically guided by low-cost housing (Forrest & Brown, 2014).

VOLAGs shape refugee experience at a micro level through personal interactions and by implementing monetary, health, education, and career placement services (Mott, 2010; Yako & Biswas, 2014). They enforce federal regulations by making clear the rules the government has set forth as well as the consequences for non-compliance. As an intermediary between the state and refugees, VOLAGs are in a caretaker role that brings refugees to expect a certain amount of care (Brown, 2011). Refugees who do not have any prior connections to family or social networks in the US (known as "free cases") rely more heavily on VOLAGs than those who are placed through family reunification (Brown et al., 2007). Mott (2010) cited incidents where refugees decided to move due to shortcomings of VOLAGs in the primary settlement cities: they cut off aid earlier than promised, did not offer transportation to work, or simply abandoned the refugee after initial reception. In an interview with recently resettled Iraqi refugees, Yako & Biswas

(2014) found that the stress of resettlement was further exacerbated due to sentiment that “resettlement agencies make us feel like we were brought here and dumped here” (p. 139). In contrast to these negative VOLAG relationships, refugees may move to a city due to the local VOLAG’s reputation of providing a high quality of services (Mott, 2010). Thus, while VOLAGs may create a spatial mismatch by placing refugees in poorly located housing, a well-organized VOLAG staff’s guidance about navigating the city can help empower refugees with their own mobility.

VOLAGs directly shape a refugees’ experience, but the crux of these rules are state mandates that dictate how much support a refugee receives. Refugee welfare policy in South Carolina skirts the line between helping “worthy victims” and begrudgingly providing requisite support. Service delivery varies by the willingness of particular states to provide support for refugees. If welfare benefits and social services are available, one must question, in a localized context: what other hindrances are there to refugees receiving services? On a basic level, are refugees able to physically access these services and ultimately meet neoliberal demands of economic self-sufficiency?

2.2 Mobility

The multi-scalar nature of the process that directly affect refugees’ lives complicate their capacity to be included in a community, navigate urban environments, and access the services they need to fulfill federally mandated “self-sufficiency” goals. The ability to move about a city are especially salient in new refugee resettlement cities and require further inquiry. In order to gauge to what extent traversing these spatial barriers is a challenge, I consider the applicability of a theory previously used in a different context: Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis (SMH) (Kain, 1968). Spatial mismatch

attempted to name the geographic disconnect between low-income African American household locations and available employment. Kain hypothesized and found empirical support that poor employment outcomes among African American urban residents could be explained by racial discrimination in the suburban housing market, the decentralization of jobs to the suburbs, and limited transportation options.

Although this study was based in mid-fifties Detroit and Chicago and focused only on job attainability of African Americans, it echoes mobility issues prominent for refugees today. Kain details how African Americans were “forced to choose between buying a private automobile and thus spending a disproportionate share of their low incomes on transportation, making a very long and circuitous trip by public transit (if any service [was] available at all), or foregoing the job altogether” (p. 181). Besides sheer lack of transit access, Kain noted the lack of information about jobs distant from African American housing as well as increased discrimination from suburban employers, which still merit discussion.

Gobillon, et al. (2007) reasserted the relevancy of Spatial Mismatch in application to African Americans but called for more studies with a comparative perspective amongst minority groups. Geographers, likewise, have questioned the applicability of the concept of spatial mismatch to immigrants (Parks, 2004; Painter, et al., 2007; Liu & Painter, 2012). Liu & Painter (2012) examined immigrant demographic changes in sixty metropolitan areas in the US from 1980-2000 and concluded that as jobs continue to suburbanize, so do immigrant residential locations, creating a “closing the gap” effect. This concept, while accurate in pointing to general immigrant and immigrant job settlement patterns, ignores the fact that these jobs tend to be decentralized in suburb

settings. That is, just because both jobs and immigrants are both in suburbs does not mean they are close by, or, given the infrequency of bus routes from one suburb to the next, accessible. The authors also failed to differentiate between high skilled and low skilled immigrants, therefore ignoring social class, which is a key factor in spatial mismatch. Similarly, the authors did not measure unemployment rates of each population, which would further illuminate patterns of settlement and employment opportunities among various groups. One useful conclusion from Liu & Painter is that there are no sweeping conclusions that can be made across U.S. cities. Local contexts are far too specific to expect similar patterns, accessibility, and rates of “success”. This localization makes it important to consider SMH in a smaller city, which introduces a host of various other issues.

If a person can travel to his or her destination in a cost-effective, timely manner, distance matters less. Kain’s (1968) original hypothesis does identify limited transit options as a small part of spatial mismatch, but modern applications focus solely on mobility challenges as the root of the problem. Blumenberg & Manville (2004) look beyond the spatial mismatch and consider other obstacles that working poor face. Although they assert spatial mismatch still has merit for some, poor and nonpoor populations generally live similar distances from their workplaces. The difference is that traveling between the two distances is much more difficult for the poor, and that transportation modal mismatch is the true plight of the poor. The need to increase mobility by more effective transit modes is about more than convenience; it has larger implications for acculturation, self-empowerment, and community building (Bose, 2014; Fan, 2012). Even if refugees are able to access jobs, they are often low-waged; however,

mobility offers the opportunity to work more than one job during various shifts that may help accumulate savings. Beyond access to place of employment, a person's mobility has implications for their broader access to the city and overall well-being.

While SMH offers a compelling theory as to why marginalized groups face challenges accessing employment, I argue that it is only a minor part to explain a broader phenomenon of refugee mobility. It focuses solely on employment, which mutes the importance of access to social services, education, and other daily activities a person fulfills. My thesis seeks to build upon previous mobility studies that expand the definition of what makes a person mobile (Kaufmann, 2002; Flamm & Kaufmann, 2006; Uteng, 2009; Cresswell, 2010; Cresswell & Merriman, 2011; Kaufmann, 2011). Limiting the study of mobility to transport and focusing solely on structural aspects of mobility as SMH does ignores the contextual reasons that lead to variations in mobility across populations. Uteng (2009) considers trips that were not made due to other constraining social, cultural, technological, infrastructural, political, and financial factors (p. 1056). For example, Uteng's gendered mobility study of Middle-Eastern women in Norway suggests that many immigrant wives feel unsafe and are less apt to make trips without their husbands. While social fear of navigating the city played a role, cultural norms often dictated that immigrant women were far less independently mobile from their husbands than their Norwegian counterparts. Transit data may reveal the difficulties of traveling from one locale to another, but a lack of trips made suggests a complete absence of mobility that must be interrogated.

The framework I consult is from Kaufmann's (2002) concept of motility, which encompasses a focus on interactions, structures, and contexts as a way to provide a more

holistic view of what makes a person mobile or immobile. He defines motility as “a way in which an individual appropriates what is possible in the domain of mobility and puts this potential to use for his or her activities” (p. 37). This potential may or may not be transformed into travel. Kaufmann later expanded in Flamm & Kaufmann (2006), which outlines three determining factors shaping the mobility levels and patterns of an individual:

- 1) Access to mobility scapes (representing transport and communication infrastructure as potential opportunities) including both the availability and the usability (such as the price level, schedule, etc) of these;
- 2) Skills: referring to the 'skills and abilities' necessary to use the accessible mobility scapes;
- 3) Appropriation, meaning behavioral components, such as the need and willingness to make use of the aforementioned scapes and skills.

The first aspect of motility asks the most basic of questions of being mobile: do the vehicles to transport people exist? Aggregate travel data, used in traditional city transport studies address mobility with this question alone (Shaw & Wang, 2000). Flamm & Kaufmann (2006) not only ask if public transit structures are available on a map, but if people have access to various other mobility resources. For example, the most common access right is a privately owned automobile. Beyond that, the authors consider rights to parking spaces which render the private vehicle useful or a burden; privately owned “light” vehicles such as motorcycles, mopeds, scooters, and bicycles; membership in an individual public transport company such as day-long on-the-go car or scooter rentals; and public transit passes to specific geographic zones.

If this transport does exist and users have access to it, one must consider if it is effective in getting people where they need to go. Blumenberg & Manville (2004) argued that although SMH has merit, policymakers must move beyond conventional notions that public transit is necessarily the solution to meet transportation needs of low-income people. Fixed-route transit often does not successfully move people outside of city centers, as they mean long commutes that often do not get the riders close to their destinations (Garasky, et al., 2006; Blumenberg, 2008; Bose, 2014). While improvements in public transit such as buses are not a detriment to low-wage immigrants and refugees, they may not be the most efficient and appropriate mode as traditional spatial mismatch frameworks have suggested. Overwhelmingly, the literature suggests private transportation as the most viable solution to low-income immigrants in addressing spatial mismatch. This is particularly applicable to non-city centers and in smaller cities with sparse transit networks; Blumenberg & Smart (2010) assert while transit may function well in dense urban centers, many trips in transit-limited locations are better suited to travel by car. For instance, in rural Iowa, Garasky, et al. (2006) found fixed-route public transportation was not cost effective, and “incentives for organizing vanpools, carpooling, or car sharing should be explored” (p. 84). Fan (2012) suggests, as well, private transit is the most viable solution because low-income populations travel outside of standard commuting hours for job search and work and face greater family caregiving obligations than higher-income groups.

Besides the structural aspects and access to transit as a primary factor in mobility, the skills that refugees have in order to navigate such transit has great impact on their success. These skills can be described as human capital, or the skills and knowledge that

an individual acquires and uses for future returns (Coleman, 1990). Flamm & Kauffmann (2006) delve into the varied aptitudes one requires to access mobility aside from owning a driver's license and having learned how to drive. These considerations are: acquired experience behind the wheel, as novice drivers are considered to need 30,000 kilometers to be considered experienced with driving an automobile; spatial mastery of the area through hands-on experience in that particular space and secondary sources such as maps or verbal directions; skills in timing their travel, such as the capacity to plan an appropriate timetable for desired travel; knowledge of practical skills such as customs in transportation spaces, least expensive fare options, mechanical functioning of a vehicle; and self-control one develops with personal experiences, such as controlling road-rage, staying focused in frightening situations, ignoring distractions from passengers and other drivers. The authors stress that learning a master of travel mode requires accumulating experience over a medium to long-term learning process.

Before an individual can master travel experiences, someone else must teach him or her how. A great number of skills, such as informal driving lessons or knowledge of how to swipe a bus pass, are learned from examples of friends and family. Therefore, the amount of social capital, or the benefits accrued from relationships between individuals (Coleman, 1990), that a refugee has affects their individual skill levels. While human capital solely refers to the skills and education an individual possesses, social capital is always relational, involving social networks and relationships. Evidence suggests that social capital affects job outcomes positively (Lamba, 2003) and may mediate spatial mismatch as well. This means the larger a person's social network, the more likely they are to find jobs and transport to those jobs.

To examine this inquiry further, one must consider how immigrant and refugees use co-ethnic networks to increase their own mobilities. Along with Garasky, et al. (2006)'s claims that fixed public transport is not suitable for those in poverty, refugees and immigrants seek to utilize private transport via their own social networks. Social capital, such as access to carpooling, is a strategy often used by immigrants to increase mobility. Blumenberg & Smart (2010) discuss how immigrants utilize carpools more than native-born populations, and they also utilize carpools twelve times as much as they use public transit. This could be because co-ethnic immigrant networks are tighter-knit than the much larger general native population. Certainly, as Cvitkovich & Wister (2001) find in their study of 174 elderly adults in Vancouver, those tapping a larger social network for rides, including friends and neighbors in addition to family, were significantly more likely to report fulfilled transportation needs. The importance of social networks on increasing mobility is more apparent in a smaller city where large co-ethnic networks are not available to all refugee populations.

Even when skills and social networks are available, a third factor, appropriation, plays a role in motility. This factor brings human agency into the mobility equation; while urban structures and absent skillsets limit a person's usage of transportation modes, individuals ultimately make the choice to assert mobility or not. Flamm and Kaufmann (2006) ask: which criteria are people likely to apply when evaluating a particular means of transportation to satisfy their needs (p. 17)? The authors find people make decisions to travel based on functionality and safety of the transit mode: does it protect the rider from weather conditions, accidents/attacks? They also consider individualized appropriations of what transit means as a social marker. Automobiles or any form of motorized

transportation can become a status symbol, or for a taxi driver, a professional tool. Cresswell (2010) notes that human mobility is practiced mobility that is enacted and experienced through the body, and, therefore, subject to anything the body is feeling at a given time. When tired, moving can be painful; when forced out of one's home, mobility is traumatic. In everyday lived experiences, nuanced individual feelings and behavior influence mobility.

Lovejoy & Handy (2011) explore the mobility of recent Mexican immigrants in California who used social networks of friends, co-workers, and neighbors as a transportation resource. They found that many recent immigrants navigate a complicated system of favors, both formal (economic) and informal (cooking, cleaning, etc.) Those who seek rides worry about bothering the people they ask such as neighbors or friends, and thus sometimes simply choose to stay home despite the fact that transit modes are available. Immigrants who were uninsured, did not have a license, or were undocumented experienced fear of being stopped by police, which influenced their decision to take a risk to become mobile or not. These immigrants had structural access to rides, but they still sought alternatives due to their lack of comfort and, ultimately, decision to not take the opportunity.

2.3 Situating Policy and Mobility in a Small City Context

Refugees' experiences, including their mobility and access to services, hinge on specific local contexts constituted by labor markets, transportation options, and the openness of receiving societies to foreigners. These specific facets pertaining to the locality of Columbia are important to consider as they are in many small cities across the US with a burgeoning immigrant population. Thus, it is important to ask how smaller

cities can accommodate refugees and how the characteristics of small cities affect a refugee's economic self-sufficiency. Previous literature shows the main advantage of living in a smaller city is lower cost of living (Drolet & Robertson, 2011; Mott, 2010). In Mott's (2010) study, refugees relocated from Chicago and Washington D.C. to Columbus, OH seeking more affordable housing and lower crime rates. In addition to these benefits, Drolet & Robertson (2011) find that immigrants and refugees in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada move there due to spatial, environmental, and cultural reasons such as proximity of basic amenities, clean air and surroundings, friendlier appeal, and pace and lifestyle. Respondents also enjoyed being an intriguing foreigner in a small city, rather than a face in the crowd in Vancouver, where 45% of the population is foreign-born.

Conversely, disadvantages to living in smaller cities include issues of mobility, lack of economic opportunities, lack of services, and lack of diversity. Since most refugees cannot afford a car and rely on public transportation, their mobility decreases in smaller cities, which typically have less reliable transportation networks (Bose, 2014; Edward & Hines-Martin, 2014; Sherrell, et al., 2005). According to Bose (2014), refugees in Burlington, VT, find the bus schedules fail to accommodate second-and-third-shift work times. In addition, Bose found 75% of respondents had a job opportunity but no way to get there. One bus route stops a half a mile short of the medical center, creating an inconvenient and sometimes impossible gap for those seeking care (Bose, 2014 p. 157). Both Sherrell, et al., (2005) and Mott (2010) find refugee complaints regarding the lack of economic opportunities for low English proficiency employees. Kosovar refugees in smaller British Columbia cities lament that they left hometowns with multiple

manufacturing industries to come to towns too small to provide such opportunities. One refugee woman in Columbus, OH expressed a desire to relocate because quality jobs were unavailable, and that she is over-qualified for available jobs (Mott, 2010). Other refugees struggle with transitioning from agrarian lifestyles to urban ones (Hume & Hardwick, 2005). These cases suggest not necessarily a complete lack of jobs, but rather the wrong kinds of jobs due to small cities' lack of a diverse industrial base.

Other pitfalls of small cities are a lack of English as a Foreign Language education and lack of spiritual leadership and facilities for non-Judeo-Christian religions (Drolet & Robertson, 2011). Lack of religious diversity may be especially contentious in the context of regions that are less accepting of non-Judeo-Christian faiths such as the U.S. South. Many Southern Christian churches assert narratives that transcend national boundaries towards welcoming Christian immigrants of various legal statuses and ethnic backgrounds (albeit through assimilationist perspectives) (Nagel & Ehrkamp, 2016). There are also multiple religious institutions that provide social services such as English language training and citizenship classes regardless of a refugee's religious background. HIAS, formerly known as the Hebrew International Aid Society, recently launched a slew of programs that would help to incorporate refugees across cities in North Carolina ("New Initiatives Aim to Create Welcome for Refugees in North Carolina," 2015). These measures of inclusion vary due to the localization of resettlement and size of a given Southern city; larger cities have a longer history of immigration and therefore acceptance towards foreign "others", while smaller cities have had a lack of demographic diversity until recently.

However, faith-based independent services tend to benefit Christian refugees more than others; Mott (2010) cites various incidents in North Carolina that led to clashes between the Muslim Somali Benadir people and native-born U.S. populations that eventually caused many in the Somali community to leave. A similar story transpired in a city within Columbia's metro area, when a city official protested Somali Bantu resettlement because they did not feel they "should be the dumping ground" (Goffe, 2004). Due to the lack of a robust Somali or Muslim community, there were few positive voices to counteract the negativity, which led to out-migration. Finding those of the same religion is difficult in a smaller city; even more challenging is finding a co-ethnic network. Refugees in these areas may have experiences with co-ethnic social capital that differ significantly from the experiences of previous waves of refugees (Hein, 2006) and thus put more responsibility on VOLAGs to locate employment.

Aside from what refugee needs are or are not met in smaller cities, one must consider the benefits refugees bring to smaller cities. Refugees' social service needs do not exclude them from being part of a conscious economic strategy in some smaller cities experiencing population decline. Hyndman, et al. (2006) discuss the narratives surrounding refugees and their potential to benefit city economies. While European governments conceptualize refugees and asylees as a "share-the-burden proposition", Canada and some U.S. cities have shifted the narrative to a "share-the-wealth opportunity" (p. 4-5). Some smaller new immigrant gateway cities that seek increased capital flows view refugees as an investment of capital that yields returns. A salient example is Dayton, Ohio's successful rebranding from a post-industrial wasteland to an "Immigrant Friendly City" (Welcome Dayton, 2016). Dayton's mayor has initiated

community conversations emphasizing the need for growth through immigrants and how best to welcome these immigrants.

Another rust belt city, Utica, NY (population 58,000), has seen refugees play an important role in re-growing the population (Singer & Wilson, 2006). There, proponents of resettlement indicate refugees have revitalized declining neighborhoods by buying and renovating low-priced vacant housing and revitalizing the city by opening restaurants, hair salons, grocery stores, coffee shops, and places of worship. They have filled previously empty jobs at a local medical equipment manufacturer, which now has a workforce that is nearly half refugees (who are legally able to work, unlike their undocumented immigrant counterparts). Refugees should not only merit assistance based upon their ability to revitalize economies; but for those who hold refugees to neoliberal citizenship, they can be an economic asset if properly supported in smaller cities.

2.4 Conclusion

For refugees in smaller cities in the South, successfully navigating the physical and cultural landscape while striving to become economically self-sufficient is a process complicated by challenges of mobility on a daily basis. The literature demonstrates that the welcome refugees receive and the availability of welfare and resources varies widely across U.S. states. Undoubtedly, states with anti-refugee sentiment as well as smaller cities with limited transport options make it substantially more difficult for refugees to thrive, and yet the goals and guidelines for economic self-sufficiency are standardized at the federal level. My study provides an opportunity to explore this terrain and question the capacity of a small Southern city such as Columbia, SC to incorporate foreign “others”.

My research seeks to illuminate the experiences refugees have in this increasingly common new resettlement context using an expanded definition of mobility to examine the hindrances to resettlement success. Further, I seek to interrogate what the various definitions of “success” look like at multiple scales and how federal-level policymakers, service providers, and refugees themselves work towards reaching their goals. The question then becomes what the government’s expectations of this population are and how refugees attempt to fulfill those expectations. My first research question asks: how does the scale at which policies are made and enforced affect the efficacy of service delivery? My second research question is: to what extent do the spatial locations of refugee resources and services such as public transportation, English language training, and healthcare influence usage and access in Columbia? And finally, what techniques must refugees utilize in order to resolve the various mismatches they might experience?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research examines refugee resettlement in the context of a small city and connects federal resettlement policy with city-level refugee livelihoods. To begin to understand the complexities of refugees' everyday lives in Columbia, one must start by examining the services, rules, and regulations set for them on the federal level. First, I ask: how does the scale at which policies are made and enforced affect the efficacy of delivery of service (both from the perspectives of service providers and refugees)? Moving within a vertical scale from top to bottom, I then examine Lutheran Services Carolina's position as an intermediary between the federal and state governments and refugees, asking, to what extent do refugees, service providers, and the state share the same vision of "successful" refugee resettlement?

After discussing the written policies, I move to how these policies take shape in everyday life and how they create particular spatialities. My second set of questions thus asks: to what extent and in what ways do the spatial locations of refugee resources and services such as public transportation, English language training, and healthcare influence usage and access in Columbia, SC? As a casual observer, I noted that spatial distance and a lack of ability to traverse it was the most common barrier to "economic self-sufficiency" that the U.S. government and refugees themselves seek. Within that question, I want to know: to what extent are refugee housing locations and refugee services spatially matched or mismatched, if at all? Can the theory of Spatial Mismatch

be applied in this city context with this refugee population? I dive further into questions of spatiality by looking at how refugees are able to traverse this space over time. What are the various hindrances to refugee mobility that influence an individual refugee's access to services and ability to meet self-sufficiency goals and how do they overcome challenges? Ending at the most local scale of the individual, I see how a person's access to transit, skills, and social capital affect their mobility and, ultimately, quality of life.

Approach

My study is a qualitative mixed-methods investigation involving participant observation, interviews, and data mapping (Clark & Cresswell, 2011). I conducted this study in two parts: Part 1 entailed data collection through participant observation, interviews, sketch mapping, travel diaries, and document analysis, conducted Fall 2015; Part 2 was the qualitative Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-based spatial data analysis of refugee service providers and refugee housing areas also enhanced by participant observation, completed Spring 2016. Engaging in qualitative GIS allows me to go beyond conventional analysis of aggregate-level data that foregrounds spatial location and accessibility. Kwan (2013) states that although these traditional measurements of space and distance are valuable, scholars must also account for time, human mobility, and barriers to accessibility. Further, Shaw & Wang (2000) assert that understandings of individuals' travel behavior using aggregate models is limited, as those models focus on more static demographics. For example, conventional four-step urban travel demand models developed in the 1950s utilize land use, demographic data, and socioeconomic data aggregated to the traffic analysis zones to estimate the amount of traffic in each zone. Although aggregate data is easier and less expensive to collect, it

ignores the realities of changing transportation services and everyday travel experiences. Rather than focusing solely on structural aspects of public transportation, I sought to explore the varied factors that lead to refugees' mobility or immobility. Therefore, I utilized individualized accounts of travel through sketch mapping during interviews and travel data that showed where refugees went on a daily basis and how long it took them to get there. I then incorporated this spatio-temporal data into a GIS to reveal the difference in travel scope for car versus non-car owners and the weekly travel paths and the time each trip takes.

The qualitative portion of my study is a basic interpretive study focusing on how participants make meaning of a situation, in this case resettlement in Columbia, SC. Basic interpretive studies utilize an inductive strategy, which calls for collecting data such as interviews and document analysis and then identifying patterns or common themes (Merriam, 2002). Borrowing from Uteng (2009), in my data collection I sought to explore what travel maps do not show, such as trips that were not made due to constraining factors beyond limited bus lines. I explored the reasons behind these trips or staying at home in order to provide a more comprehensive view of what refugees' daily experiences are. This form of study allowed me to provide a rich descriptive account of the everyday lived experiences of refugees in Columbia and thus uncover the interrelated nature of barriers to access.

Because I am coming from a qualitative geography background, I assume that place shapes and mediates social action (DeLyser, 2010). Characteristics of Columbia such as spatial size, historical development, and locations of services constitute the spatial context in which refugees develop livelihood strategies. This study focuses on

service access and mobility of refugee populations as a whole and does not examine a particular ethnic community; although prior studies have found characteristics such as gender, education level, and national origin influence an individual refugee's resettlement experience (Potocky-Tripodi, 2004), these characteristics are not the focus of my study, but my research is sensitive to differences among these axes. I wanted to hear the experiences of refugee populations across these lines and, rather than compare between them, take the whole of their experiences to comment on the provision of services and mobility. Drawing from individualized data, this research focus aims to produce practical recommendations regarding how to adjust federal and city-level structures and services to better accommodate refugees regardless of their individual characteristics.

Site selection

Many studies have focused on immigrant and refugee transitions to the US are set in larger cities; however, refugees in smaller cities have distinctive experiences (Hyndman, et al., 2006; Drolet & Robertson, 2011; Bose, 2014) which greatly influence my site selection. Smaller metro areas have been faced with the task of incorporating refugees in accordance with federal demands (as opposed to historical resettlement, which resettled refugees in smaller cities willingly through independent faith-based agencies). The selection of Columbia was largely influenced by Patton's (1990) strategy of critical case sampling. Critical case sampling shows one case may be applicable to other cases, and provides observations that can be investigated in similar locales.

Columbia, a smaller city with a variety of structural issues for refugee service access, may produce results that are applicable to other smaller cities, especially similarly sized cities within the South. Columbia's status as a new immigrant gateway in the South

makes it a representable site that aligns perfectly with my study site criteria.

Columbia has many qualities that make it an ideal study site for exploring refugee resettlement and mobility in smaller metropolitan areas. The American South is a particularly interesting site to explore the experiences of minorities due to its history of slavery, de jure racial segregation, and white supremacy (C.R. Nagel, 2013). Race relations between African Americans and Whites across the US and particularly in the South remain contentious long after the Civil Rights Acts of 1964; no more salient recent example stands than the 2015 massacre of nine African American churchgoers in Charleston, SC committed by a white supremacist and subsequent controversy over removing the confederate flag from South Carolina's state capitol. Increasing immigrant populations over the past few decades have challenged the traditional binary of Black or White. The Black/White binary was apparent in the 1990 South Carolina census, which reported the state to be 99% Black or White. By the 2010 census, the population was reported as 94% Black or White, and 5.3% Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Latino immigration has become more pronounced due to the increase of low-skill farmworker and manufacturing jobs (because of low tax rates for companies) across rural South Carolina. Refugees add to this diversifying context and challenge the current narrative that foreigner equals Latino (Winders, 2006). Winders suggests refugees "encounter a racial and cultural terrain whose contours are not equipped to include [them] and whose transformations to accommodate Latino/as may still leave refugees somewhere outside the boundaries of community" (431).

Recent local controversy surrounding refugee resettlement in both Columbia and the Upstate of South Carolina highlights on-going resistance to racial and cultural

differences among some in the South. Despite protest, the number of refugees resettled by Lutheran Services Carolina (LSC), the only VOLAG in Columbia to serve refugees, has been steadily increasing and receiving refugees from diversifying regions of origin. In 2015, LSC received 160 newly arrived refugees, and in the upcoming fiscal year have been approved to receive 200 (this number may rise slightly with President Obama's plan to accept 10,000 additional Syrian refugees). LSC caseworkers work to arrange housing, facilitate access to social services and public benefits, arrange health screenings and immunizations, and assist with school enrollment. They also offer educational classes that address local cultural norms and job development, and provides ongoing support for employment skills by helping with job placement, job upgrade support, interpretation support, and employment and skills trainings.

3.2 Data Collection

Part of the evidence for this thesis comes from extensive participant observation thru my position as a volunteer with refugees in the community. I conducted interviews with both refugees and the service providers who interact with them. The majority of service provider interviews were conducted before refugee interviews, as they provided an overview of resettlement in Columbia. Although the interviews were not extremely in-depth, they guided the investigation I then supplemented with my enormous breadth of direct observation and innumerable informal conversations over the course of a year. I also collected pertinent documents such as federal guidelines for resettlement, paperwork/guides refugees receive upon arrival from service providers, and bus route schedules to which I refer in this thesis.

Participant Observation

I first became involved as a general volunteer with LSC and later transitioned to a weekly employment readiness class teacher. From June to December 2015, I volunteered over 100 hours providing childcare, driving clients to and from doctor and social service appointments, filing paperwork, delivering mail and documents to clients, and teaching. Not only did this intensive volunteering help gain the trust of LSC staff and refugee clients, but by becoming engrained in the structure, I was able to observe how refugee resettlement workers function organizationally and the messages they seek to deliver. In January 2016, I launched a refugee gardening program at the University of South Carolina to provide a space for refugees to grow their own food and practice English in a safe, community-engaged environment. On average, I spent 20 hours a month with refugee participants. I experienced firsthand the rewards and challenges of being a service provider to refugees (personally driving them 60 miles a week for the gardening project), and conducted further informal interviews with participants I came into contact with. I estimate that I have met over 100 refugees in Columbia and have become a recognizable figure throughout the refugee community.

Refugee Interviews

Similar to my site selection strategy, I used critical case sampling to obtain refugee research participants. Four of the ten interviewees were suggested by caseworkers at Lutheran Services Carolina. Another four participants were refugees I had met directly through volunteering, and I met the two remaining participants after asking previous interviewees if they knew anybody who would like to talk with me. I was explicit in telling LSC I wanted a wide range of opinions from various nationalities from

both men and women. In some cases, the caseworkers forewarned me that certain participants may not have many good things to say, and they were transparent in providing more than just ‘exemplary’ cases. Due to a lack of available translators, my participants were limited to those who were conversant enough in English to answer interview questions or had a spouse who was able to translate. Government cash assistance is usually available for the first 3 months and in emergency situations up to 6 months post-arrival, and Medicaid benefits are available for the first 8 months post-arrival. For this reason, I interviewed refugees who had lived in Columbia from a period of 6 months to a 1 year and 2 months (with an average of 10.5 months), and thus were able to recall and contrast life with more government support versus without. For individual details of each interviewee, see Table 3.1, *Refugee Interviewee Demographics*.

Table 3.1, Refugee Interviewee Demographics

| Code | F/M | Origin/Ethnicity | Car | Months |
|-------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|---------------|
| R1 | F | Eritrean | N | 14 |
| R2 | M | Eritrean | Y | 14 |
| R3 | M | Iraqi | Y | 14 |
| R4 | F | Rohingya | N | 6 |
| R5 | M | Rohingya | N | 6 |
| R6 | F | Congolese | N | 9.5 |
| R7 | M | Karen | Y | 9.5 |
| R8 | F | Karen | Y | 9.5 |

| | | | | |
|-----|---|------|---|----|
| R9 | F | Chin | Y | 11 |
| R10 | M | Chin | Y | 11 |

Although all refugees are individuals who have unique experiences that also vary by country of origin, their ease of mobility and access to services in Columbia are generally of similar quality. For example, if one refugee is unable to work later shifts due to limited transit routes and hours of operation, then other refugees in Columbia are likely to face similar challenges. While I did not do a representative survey, similar themes arose repeatedly in my observations and informal conversations. I conducted semi-structured interviews with ten refugees. I interviewed five women and five men in order to represent gender equally. Six of the interviewees were husband and wife pairs, which allowed for valuable contrast within household experiences. My sample represented nationalities in proportion to resettlement rates in Columbia solely for diversity's sake. Although there are no statistics on the exact number of refugees in Columbia due to outmigration, I used LSC's resettlement statistics from the 2015 fiscal year, which saw 178 refugees resettled total. The breakdown of nationalities are: 45% Burmese¹ (81), 16% Eritrean (29), 14% Congolese (26), 22% Near East including Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Bhutan, and Egypt (39), and 0.01% Cubans (3). Thus, my sample consisted of two Eritrean, one Iraqi, one Congolese, and six refugees originally from Myanmar. Those resettled from Myanmar are an especially heterogeneous ethnic group; I interviewed

¹ This label refers to people originally from the nation of Burma, now known as Myanmar. "Burmese" often refers to the ethnic majority of the government, which served to violently oppress the numerous ethnic minorities. My participants do not identify as "Burmese", but rather as their own specific language and ethnic groups, in this case, Karen, Chin, and Rohingya.

Karen, Chin, and Rohingya refugees from Myanmar with religious affiliations of Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist. Six participants had a car and four did not.

Formal interviews ranged from 25 minutes to 1.5 hours (on average, 40 minutes).

My interview questions addressed:

1. *Locations*: Where they go on a regular basis (to be drawn on a map); how spatial distance and other barriers influence location choice; where they find to be the most important locations to get to; the distance they usually walk to arrive at locations;
2. *Mobility*: How they get around and participate in transit; what experiences they have had on public transit and how it has influenced their decision to ride subsequently; what access to private transportation they have, if any;
3. *Aid*: who helps them and in what ways do they help; how they find help navigating the physical environment and social context; if these relationships are interpersonal or organizational; what they gain from service providers such as LSC; what problems remain or are created due to service providers;
4. *Challenges*: What challenges they face in terms of pursuing economic self-sufficiency, mobility, and general well-being in Columbia; if those challenges have gotten better or worse since arrival; how they work to overcome those challenges;
5. *Success & Future*: What refugees envision as successful resettlement and what could help in their goals; what their current goals are and how they are attempting to reach them; whether or not they view integration into Columbia versus repatriation as a goal

During each interview, I employed sketch mapping in order to illuminate individual-level narratives and real-world aspects of job/service access such as how transit service affects job choice (Boschmann & Cubbon, 2014). Using Google Earth software, I designed and printed a 2.5' x 3.5' map of Columbia. I added locations I knew were already important (such as: Lutheran Services Carolina, apartment complexes where the majority of resettled refugees are placed in Columbia, grocery stores, libraries, etc.) and frequently serviced bus routes. I asked respondents to indicate where they work, live, shop, seek resources, and, in combination with city data on fixed bus routes as a guide, mark which bus routes they take (if any). I then used sticky notes to write the name of the place they go, stick it in the location, and take multiple pictures of each map. In addition to providing meaningful spatial location and transit data that I later entered into a GIS, sketch mapping was a helpful supplement in improving conversation and dialogue.

In addition to interviews and sketch mapping, I asked participants who used public transit to keep a travel diary over the period of one week. Borrowing from Rogalsky's (2010) methodology, I asked respondents to record the origin and destination location as well as the start and end times, purpose of travel, and mode. Their answers provided insight far beyond what census-level data or even widespread surveys could tell me about travel data: it showed the temporal restrictions of when they can access certain locations, how long it takes them to arrive there, and how those factors affected their travel plans. When respondents finished their diaries, I followed up with each participant to discuss the diary, address any gaps in the data, and find out how representative the trips are of a "normal" week or if they have any additional out-of-the-ordinary trips. I wanted these diaries to show how a person got around without a car, so I was limited to

four participants. Of the four, one participant was not literate in English and could not write a diary, and one declined because she never leaves her house. For these reasons, I ended up obtaining only two diaries, both of which served to highlight an individual refugee's travel path in Columbia.

Refugee Service Providers

In the case of refugee service providers, I used snowball/chain sampling to find out who is involved in the network of refugee services. Patton (1990) notes snowball or chain sampling “identifies cases of interest from sampling people who know people who know people who know what cases are information rich” (p. 243). Through this method, I determined who works directly with refugees, who might be actively shaping refugee experiences, and who could share knowledgeable insight into refugee experiences. I obtained many suggestions from LSC caseworkers, and the health service workers also gave suggestions of who worked most directly with refugees. I met some interviewees through events such as World Refugee Day celebrations and Quarterly Refugee Stakeholders meetings, hosted by the Department of Social Services. My parameters were to find service providers who had worked/volunteered in their respective positions in Columbia for at least a year. In the end, only one of my service provider interviewees had worked for just one year, but the remainder had worked in their positions for 4-7 years (for more details on service provider jobs and length of stay, see Table 3.2, *Service Provider Interviewee Demographics*).

I interviewed six individuals in varied refugee service industries, including: two healthcare providers, one health center coordinator, an LSC caseworker, a Department of Social Services refugee services representative, and a pair of volunteers affiliated with a

Table 3.2, Service Provider Interviewee Demographics

| Code | Job | Length at Job |
|------|---|---------------|
| SP1 | Health Center Coordinator | 5+ years |
| SP2 | Volunteer English Teachers | 1 year |
| SP3 | Lutheran Services Caseworker | 4 years |
| SP4 | Clinical Research Coordinator | 7 years |
| SP5 | Refugee Immunization Nurse | 6 years |
| SP6 | DSS Ref. Resettlement Program Coordinator | 4 years |

local church. My questions sought to build a picture of the extensiveness and quality of services provided for refugees in Columbia. Most of these interviews were conducted prior to my interviews with refugees, which provided a clear contrast between service provider versus refugee responses. The questions I asked service providers were similar to the refugee questions and revolved around the following themes:

1. *Locations*: Where refugees go and how spatial distance influences choice; where they expect refugees to go; how far they expect refugees to walk to certain locations;
2. *Mobility*: What they have observed in terms of challenges to refugee physical mobility; How they see refugees mobilize and how they work to increase mobility; how they have worked with local transit agencies to increase mobility; time spent
3. *Aid*: How their organization helps refugees and other refugees help each other; what services they believe help refugees the most; how they consider relationships

with refugees, as either interpersonal or strictly professional; what documents they distribute to refugees in order to help them;

4. *Challenges*: What challenges their organization and refugees face; how both groups work to overcome these challenges; if the challenges they face improve or worsen each year;
5. *Success*: What they envision as successful resettlement and what they think they do to help; what they prioritize as the most important goal; how the state's expectations shape their goals and services offered; if they aim to permanently integrate refugees into Columbia versus repatriate to country of origin.

These questions drew out responses that showed both what service providers see firsthand from their organizational side and their conceptions of the challenges refugees face. In keeping with identical themes between refugee and service provider interviews, I was able to contrast and compare what service providers sought to provide, the success or failure of those provisions in their opinions, and the expectations/ actual success of service delivery from refugees' perspectives. They also provided a vast amount of background information that helped to guide later refugee interviews and that shed light on service providers' understandings of their clients' daily lives.

3.3 Data Analysis

I began my analysis by conducting semi-structured interviews with people I identified as being involved with Columbia's refugee population. I utilized NVivo Qualitative Data Analysis software to thematically code my interviews. I observed the most frequently used terms and issues that refugees and service providers identified as

challenges and successes. In my analysis of these interviews, I examined the difference between refugee and service provider respondent answers in terms of their aims, intentions, and perceptions of resettlement. I compared how these groups, along with the federal and state governments, prioritize goals for resettlement, which has implications for how they work towards those goals. These discrepancies further serve to highlight the fragmented nature of policy and practice at the national, state, and city-scale.

In addition to interviews, I analyzed various documents: for example, the paperwork/guides refugees receive upon arrival from service providers; any government documents that refugees are required to fill out; and bus route schedules. As a volunteer Employment Readiness class teacher at LSC, I not only observed the weekly reminders and lesson plans refugees heard, but I was assigned the task of delivering them myself. In order to gauge the usefulness of the given information, I asked: what languages are the documents in? Are they clearly printed and in color? Is the text layout and format accessible or discouraging? By examining these documents, I learned what role voluntary agencies play in integrating refugees into Columbia. Close reading of the content and structuring of the documents also sheds light on what the state and Lutheran Services Carolina perceive to be the most important information for refugees to have in order to function in Columbia. I examined the information that was actually available and how refugees receive that information, revealing how Lutheran Services Carolina attempts to fulfill state mandates and direct refugees to what they consider to be successful integration.

Through sketch mapping and participant diaries, I collected address locations that refugees access and divided responses into a “Cars” group (6 participants) and “No Cars”

group (4 participants). I then separated responses into six categories: 1) Live (two apartment complexes near each other where the majority of refugees in Columbia live); 2) Work (specific locations of interviewed refugees' jobs); 3) Worship (mosques, Islamic centers, Christian centers, Greek Orthodox church); 4) Shop (main grocery stores and specialty ethnic shops), 5) Social/Medical Services (Lutheran Services Carolina; Hospitals, Clinics, Pediatric Centers) and 6) Leisure (Parks, arcades, and arrows indicating out-of-town locations). I then geocoded these spatial locations (slightly modifying residential addresses for privacy) and produced a "Cars" map and "No Cars" map. In comparing these two maps, it becomes more apparent how a car affects both the number of locations refugees are able to go to, the extent of their travel distance, and the types of activities they are able to access.

Researcher Reflexivity

Various personal and professional experiences have led me to this research. I taught English abroad for four years, and initially did not know the national languages or how to navigate the country-specific systems (of healthcare, transit, education, etc.). However, I recognize how much more difficult my experience would have been if I were disadvantaged, in poverty, lacking racial privilege, and having faced recent trauma from forced migration. The years I spent teaching English have improved my visual communication skills with people who have limited English proficiency; I feel at ease and patient in these instances. In the US, I lived in Columbia, Missouri (population around 100,000) without a car and experienced difficulties using public transit in a smaller city. There I also volunteered with Refugee Services and drove refugees to doctors and social service appointments and witnessed firsthand the mismatch between

services for refugees, public transit, and refugee housing sectors. My positionality as a White middle-class educated female working with disadvantaged populations plays into an inherent power structure of researcher/researched. Further, my engrained position with my study population as teacher and garden program coordinator always positioned me as in charge or more knowledgeable than participants. Throughout my program activities and research, I always aimed to allow refugees maximum agency; in the garden, I asked them to show me how they do it rather than telling them how. When discussing English or American job customs, I asked what they did in their country and how they feel about adjusting to American life. I always brought food or gifts for my interviewees, and I try to keep in touch to ask how they are doing or deliver donated items. Although inherent power dynamics cannot be controlled, I tried to use my unique and empathetic perspective to hear and respect the voices and narratives of participants in my study.

CHAPTER 4: THE STATE AND SCALES OF SUCCESS

“Lutheran don’t know. We are weak. We are weak when we [come] here. We don’t have any power. We are like the blind. I need someone to take my hand and talk with me, “this your way. This right way, and this wrong way”. The Lutheran, they [don’t] take us to the right way.” -Interviewee R3

The federal government’s requirements, regulations, and demands of refugee resettlement hinder the local voluntary agency’s (VOLAG) ability to integrate refugees into local labor markets and institutions. Enforcement of state objectives without regard to local context or to refugees’ lives affects VOLAGs’ relationships with refugees and ultimately degrades quality of service provision. Wolch’s (1990) concept of the shadow state examines how drastic welfare state cutbacks became a central factor in determining how voluntary agencies function. The federal government’s formalization of existing networks of faith-based refugee resettlement VOLAGs in the 1980s changed the way these agencies deliver services by redefining their purpose; instead of aspiring to provide general aid and assistance, federal guidelines suggested more outcome-oriented goals, placing economic self-sufficiency at the forefront. Trudeau’s (2008) relational view of the shadow state, which conceptualizes nonprofits as liminal spaces between the government and civil society, suggests that nonprofits are able to influence state policy. In the context of South Carolina, however, the local refugee resettlement agency Lutheran Services Carolina (LSC) wields little power to impact regulations because of the way their own “success” is measured, as well as because of chronic underfunding, and a hostile, unsupportive government at the state level.

To examine these power relationships, Wolch (1990) calls for a “deconstruction of local structure, institutional process, and individual routines, and also the ways in which social structures, institutions and agents operating at higher spatial scales simultaneously impact local situations” (p. 33). I examine the multiple scales at which regulations are made and how, at various scales, actors implement different definitions of successful refugee resettlement. Human geographers draw upon varied definitions of scale ranging from the horizontal, which concerns transnational networks that span space and territorial boundaries, to vertical relations, which refer to nested territorially defined political entities (Leitner, 2004). For the purposes of this thesis, I utilize the latter definition that considers levels of authority that are hierarchically organized across space. While the theory of fixed hierarchical scales can oversimplify the socio-territorial real-life complications that exist, hierarchical divisions of scale help to contextualize how institutional directives shape everyday experiences. Power operates from the top-down, starting with the federal government, to states, then to VOLAGs, and finally to individuals. Additionally, over time actors at the institutional level have created Columbia’s racially polarized urban environment that continues to influence everyday life at the local scale.

4.1 The Federal: National Refugee Resettlement

Although the 1996 U.S. welfare reform scaled back social services for non-citizens, the federal government does still fund a range of basic services for newly arrived refugees (Wasem, 2014). Monies are awarded to VOLAGS in order to aid in resettlement through a federal 90-day (3 month) program called Reception and Placement (R&P). These services include: picking refugees up at the airport; giving cash assistance from

federal government; providing housing and basic necessities; helping them access public benefits such as food stamps, Medicaid, social security; aiding in school enrollment; providing cultural orientation and employment classes; basic case management assistance which focuses on setting up doctor's appointments, initial health screening, and the first round of immunizations (which must be administered as soon as possible to guarantee all rounds can be completed within the eight-month period a client has Medicaid).

VOLAGs are also able to apply for another federal resettlement program called Matching Grant (MG). Codified by the Refugee Act of 1980, MG is an up to 6-month program focused on refugee self-sufficiency to help them avoid utilizing public assistance. It offers more benefits, but also imposes more limitations for the client. The refugee "client" must agree to live in their particular state for 6 months; enroll in the MG program within 31 days of receiving notice of eligibility; have one employable member in the family unit; and accept the first appropriate job he or she is offered. Unlike refugees who are enrolled only in the R&P program, MG clients may apply for additional emergency cash assistance after their initial 3-month benefit period for an additional 3 months. Cash assistance is more heavily front-loaded and tapers throughout the 6-month period; once a member of the family unit earns a job, however, the cash assistance monies decrease gradually. Although ideally the aim is to encourage refugees to earn jobs and save the federal government money, the contradictory waning of cash funds after they earn a job gives little to no impetus to become employed within the first six months.

The federal government and the Office of Refugee Resettlement are clear in their emphasis on self-sufficiency by including the term on the front pages of their websites and official documents. They also require meticulously recorded deliverable numbers that

express how many employable refugees obtained jobs in what amount of time. Any refugee who is resettled in the area and moves out of the state counts against LSC's "self-sufficiency" percentage, which has hovered around 80% in recent years. LSC reports these statistics about R&P and MG directly to Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services (LIRS), who then reports it to the federal government.

While the government sets a clear outcome-oriented agenda, they are less direct in providing guidelines for how the resettlement process should look. Interviewee SP3, a caseworker at LSC, identified the "Operational guidance" document as the main protocol for refugee arrivals (U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, 2007). Last updated in 2007, this vague 4-page document intends to describe the minimum standards VOLAGs must follow for the R&P program. It addresses housing standards, furnishings, and food/clothing required upon a refugee's arrival. It also notes health screenings and immunization requirements. The guide suggests VOLAGs should conduct a home visit and complete health screenings within 30 days of a refugee's arrival; evidently more pressing, however, is referring refugees to employment services and EFL within 10 working days of arrival. The document reads, "the Department of State expects Agencies to undertake best efforts to ensure that housing for refugees meets locally accepted standards for health and safety, and that other minimum service standards are met, but also recognizes that compliance with some aspects of this guidance may not always be possible" (p. 1). Curiously, there are no further examples about what would make compliance of guidelines impossible, or any retribution for VOLAGs who do not follow the protocol. It seems they are not concerned with the conditions on the ground for newly arrived refugees, only the outcome of self-sufficiency by the end of the 3-month

resettlement period. In this sense, the federal government's lack of oversight does not ensure that refugees are being delivered the services they are owed. Hierarchical controls are much more strongly applied – arguably only applied – to ensure that refugees obtain employment and reach economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible. This structural coercion provides little incentive for VOLAGs to focus on anything other than their hardline self-sufficiency numbers, which allows lackluster service provision for newly arrived refugees.

4.2 The State: South Carolina

Aside from working to reach the federal government's self-sufficiency outcomes, VOLAGs must also function within statewide constraints. Some resettlement programs are offered on the individual state level through the Department of Social Services in addition to the federal government's direct programs. Within DSS, the Refugee Resettlement Unit falls within the category of Economic Services Division and funds the position of state resettlement coordinator plus two aids. LSC has contracts with DSS for these programs and report statistics to DSS, who then report to the ORR, who then reports to the federal government. Statistics DSS must report include number of newly arrived refugees, percentage of refugees that got jobs within 3 months, and the time period in which refugees completed medical screening. The extra refugee-specific services the state funds are for extended case management, refugee assistance employment programs, and unaccompanied alien children (UAC). Some states may offer more or fewer supplementary programs, so in contrast with aforementioned R&P and MG programs, LIRS is not involved in these particular types of contracts.

South Carolina consistently ranks towards the bottom in numerous economic and educational measures, and the state lacks welfare support even for its native-born population. This general opposition towards social spending is compounded by the vocal anti-refugee sentiment that many state leaders express. The possibility of national VOLAG World Relief branch opening in upstate Spartanburg in 2015 caused much protest from citizens and leaders alike. Trey Gowdy, Representative of the 4th District of South Carolina, wrote a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry demanding answers to accusatory questions that suggested DSS was misappropriating funds and that refugees were criminals. In it, he requested resettlement in Spartanburg be halted until his constituents receive answers to the letter and further “be comfortable with the information provided” (Gowdy, 2015). World Relief opened in mid-2015 and continues to settle refugees in Spartanburg, none of whom have participated in criminal activity.

As part of a larger national anti-refugee narrative in response to recent terrorist attacks in Europe, in March 2016, some South Carolina legislators concentrated their efforts in halting resettlement in the state. The Senate passed a bill that would require refugees’ sponsors to register them in a DSS database, and hold VOLAGs accountable if a refugee commits a terrorist or criminal act (Posner, 2016). Although this bill was ultimately defeated, the support for the bill reflects a less-than-welcoming political climate towards refugees in the state. Essentially, those involved with resettlement in South Carolina have spent their limited time and resources explaining themselves for offering services considered standard and acceptable in most other states. This unfounded and unnecessary political backlash not only causes more personal stress on refugees, but inhibits street-level bureaucrats from fulfilling their job duties of service provision.

Service providers within South Carolina also struggle to serve refugee populations due to the lack of established infrastructure to accommodate refugees. Although refugees have been resettled in Columbia since 1992, many state agencies still do not account for the needs of refugee populations. DSS officially has contracts for refugees to freely obtain driver's license training, English as a Foreign Language services, and classes at a local technical college. Refugees must register for these services shortly after they arrive, but SP3 states that the paperwork often takes so long to process that refugees are no longer eligible to benefit from these classes by the time they are approved. Many faith-based independent volunteers have valiantly worked to fill in the gaps where the state fails to provide basic services; two separate churches within walking distance of refugee apartment complexes have recently begun EFL classes. While it is surely helpful and much appreciated by refugees, it should be the responsibility of the state to provide accessible and professionally taught EFL classes from beginner to advanced levels.

Even more basic services, such as public education for refugee children, appear to be incredibly lacking. Time and time again, refugees I spoke with who arrived as children reported sitting in classes without understanding English for years, as their schools did not even offer EFL programs. Another recent example of inept service access is the trouble state benefits managers have had in filling out forms for the refugees to receive cash assistance and/or Medicaid status. Because there is no box to check to identify as a refugee, many people would check "immigrant", which again, is a status not eligible for state benefits (B. Grace, personal communication, May 24, 2016). This created an error within the system, which required added hassle and communication to fix, and ultimately delayed and shortened the period of time that refugees could access these services.

Even after Medicaid benefits are officially delivered, LSC struggles to find doctors' offices who both accept Medicaid and provide interpretation services. Medical providers are legally obligated to provide interpretation via a subscription to a language hotline, but many in South Carolina simply do not. Interviewee SP3 discussed the back-and-forth between medical providers and LSC, both insisting the other should be the one to provide interpretation. Oftentimes LSC, desperate to help their clients see a doctor after months of trying to schedule an appointment, pays their own contracted interpreters who are not medically trained to translate. This creates further dependency on LSC every time a client needs an appointment; rather than direct interaction between a refugee and the medical provider, LSC strains its time and resources to serve as the intermediary.

Some compliant offices and hospitals offer language lines, yet still many providers lack "culturally competent healthcare" as Edward & Martin (2014) discuss. I witnessed this firsthand when I drove a heart patient in for surgery early one morning. When I explained to the provider that he needed the language line for Rohingya, she audibly stressed that she had never heard of the language, which served to remind the patient (and weary South Carolinians in the waiting room) that he was an outsider. It is not expected for every nurse and doctor to be intimately familiar with refugee languages, but a shocked demeanor translates well past the language barrier to make refugees feel unwelcomed. An emergency room visit that an Afghani woman made exemplifies how medical providers' cultural incompetency makes a horrifying situation even worse. Because she was wearing a hijab, the medical staff assumed she spoke Arabic, and insisted she listen to the language line, which was instructing her in a language more foreign to her than English. Accommodating the specific needs of refugees calls for a

heightened level of sensitivity and patience that some caring office staff and doctors do provide, such one nurse, SP 5, who specializes in setting up and reminding refugees of their immunization appointments. Still, these few compassionate actors are constantly working within a system that seems to be pitted against them and their goals of providing services to refugees.

4.3 The Organizational: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

Although resettlement policy is implemented through hierarchical levels of scale, not all of the nine national VOLAGs function in the same way. For example, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) was founded specifically for the purpose of responding to humanitarian crises. With a network in over 40 countries and 26 regional offices across U.S. cities, IRC's main purpose is to aid refugees in resettlement towards self-sufficiency (International Rescue Committee, 2016). This is contrasted with the way that Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS) and all faith-based resettlement agencies such as Catholic Charities and HIAS function. Lutheran Family Services is an agency that has offered broad family support such as adoption and pregnancy counseling, older adult and caregiver services, foster care, homeless help, etc. since 1948. Some but not all of these established agencies now house refugee resettlement programs that are sub-contractors of LIRS, not independent branch offices specifically for resettlement (as IRC functions).

The difference may be subtle, but has implications that change the way these VOLAGs are formed as well as their power dynamics. Instead of the agency forming where refugees were already living, refugee resettlement through Lutheran services began in specific cities where there was already an established Lutheran Family Services

office (B. Grace, personal communication, May 24, 2016). This explains why LIRS tends to be the only refugee resettlement agency available in smaller cities such as Casper, Wyoming; Huron, South Dakota; Greeley, Colorado; and Battle Creek, Michigan (See Figure 3, RY2014 Reception and Placement Program Affiliate Sites). Although LIRS functions in larger cities across America, its strong geographic dispersal across the Midwest is related to the history of Lutheran immigrants. It is through these avenues that refugees have come to resettle in small communities that offer Lutheran services but not many other forms of support.

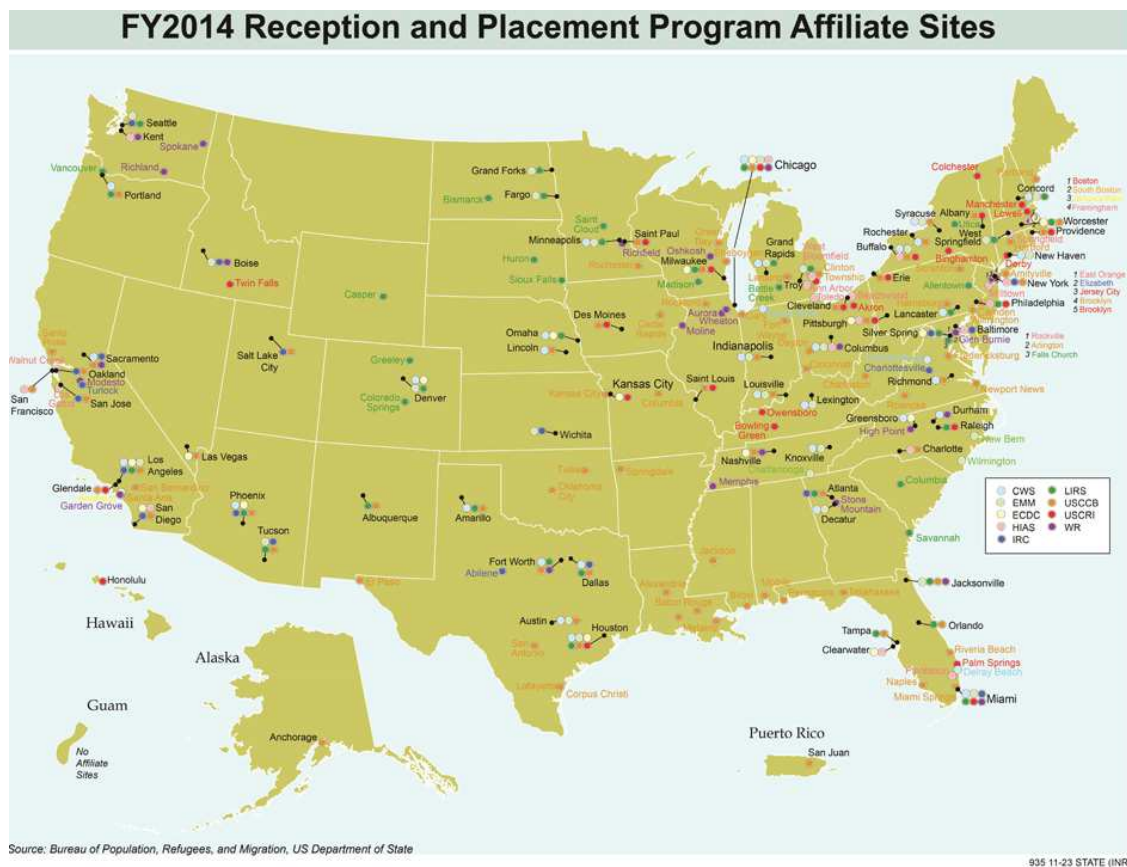


Figure 4.1, Fiscal Year 2014 Reception and Placement Program Affiliate Sites. LIRS (green) appears in smaller cities across the Midwest while IRC (dark blue) has settled intentionally in cities for easier refugee integration. Source: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, U.S. Department of State

While volunteering with LSC, I viewed firsthand their relationship with LIRS. LIRS provided many educational materials for employment classes such as PowerPoint presentations and interactive videos. They asked LSC to report back if they had used the educational modules in employment class, and if so, how many people attended. While some of the materials were useful, many were vague theoretical lessons that introduced confusing acronyms as motivational tools. When I utilized these slides, refugees expressed confusion (acronyms are not handy for illiterate people who are using interpreters). The employment developer before me (whose position I filled as a volunteer after he left LSC) found it important to use these tools and report back to LIRS to stay in the good graces of LIRS; but as a volunteer who had no motivation to please anyone except my pupils, I often taught direct and simple lessons that I valued to be effective. At one point, a LIRS Cultural Orientation Coordinator traveled to Columbia to get a sense of how their affiliates run things and how they can better aid in program development. This visit exemplified the non-hierarchical relationship LIRS has with LSC. It was not for program monitoring, but rather to discuss trainers' challenges and best practices. At the same time, however, the LIRS coordinator fully expected job class to be taught through their specific educational module, showing some degree of control over LSC's daily operations. This particular relationship exemplifies LIRS's broader relationship with LSC and suggests, again, that the oversight of service delivery matters little compared to the federal standards of refugees obtaining 'self-sufficiency'.

4.4 The Local: Lutheran Services Carolina

This incredibly complicated system of federal, state, and organizational directives materialize at the site of the local – LSC. The deconstruction of institutional processes

that Wolch calls for reveal what is happening on the ground beyond the government's required statistical breakdown of "self-sufficient" cases. By observing at LSC and interviewing refugees directly, one is able to see the final outcome of this long bureaucratic process, what LSC is able to deliver, and what refugees expect. Oftentimes when I taught employment classes, we discussed how America was different from refugees' home countries and what they had learned about America previously. As UNHCR camps train refugees to go to the entire country of America, they certainly do not cover the discrepancies of service among states. Many refugees commented that their friends in cities in California and the Pacific Northwest were offered a much wider network of support via VOLAGs as well as stronger ethnic networks. Those who were better educated (oftentimes from Egypt, Iraq, and Iran) fled Columbia to join their family members in other cities. Those with less education often remained, working menial factory jobs alongside their family members.

One of the main goals LSC sought to deliver during employment classes was to manage refugees' expectations. At the beginning of every employment readiness class, I was required to read a list of welcome announcements as well as program expectations. After years of seeing refugee hopes dashed, LSC employees found it crucial to provide a realistic view of what to expect from life in Columbia. Among those realistic facts were: clients are not "given a job" but LSC puts in 20% of the work at helping them find a job, and refugees put in 80% of the work; work history and references are important for future jobs; non-compliance, i.e. not accepting the first job offer a person gets, results in termination from LSC employment services program; each state has a minimum wage and refugees can expect \$8 - \$12 per hour; and it is vital to search for jobs straight away.

One interviewee, R2, was let down not due to his unfairly high expectations, but his previous experiences in Norway, Sweden, and Malta, where he lived for a total of five years. He explained that he, as well as many of his friends and family, experienced superior care in these second-party resettlement countries. The starkest difference between Norway and the US was the educational opportunities offered. In Norway, the refugee has a choice throughout his first six months to invest in skills classes such as how to be a cashier, how to cook, driver's and CDL license, et cetera. Interviewee R2 claims not even a six-month period is necessary, but even three months could make a huge difference in preparing a refugee for more highly skilled labor. He shares:

“In these 3 months, when you give him some course, you can change his life. But when he's coming the refugee, you take him, you put him in the chicken or vegetable [factory]...you know, you kill him. For [the] future, this person is nothing. He don't learn nothing... They just get his money, he pay for rent, he eat, he drink, that's it. We don't have nothing. They don't have nothing, you know.”

Poignantly stated, Interviewee R2 identified the flaws with the current U.S. resettlement system focused on self-sufficiency. Although these directives are set by the U.S. government, this refugee client expressed frustration with LSC directly for their insistence on early employment. This lamentation against the extreme focus on getting a job instead of learning English was common. Many times employment readiness pupils asked how it was possible to get a job before learning English. LSC employees explain that is just the way it is and they must do both at the same time. This aligns with Trudeau's (2008) research showing the ORR reprimanded a local non-profit for placing refugees in EFL class that met during the day (because they should be free during the day for work).

Interviewee R1, an Eritrean woman, has three children in Ethiopia whom she left behind nine years ago to lay the foundation for family reunification in the US. Understandably, her main focus is working enough hours to send remittances to her children, and to begin the bureaucratic process to bring them here. She realizes that she needs to increase her English proficiency to get a better job, or even a second job, in order to support her children abroad. She commented that many of her friends in Columbia are taking English classes, but she is not. The reason is because she took the first job opportunity she was offered after a month of living in Columbia, but when she asked her caseworker about English class, she was told registration was closed and she missed the deadline for classes. She was one of many refugees who told me about missing the deadline or not having time to attend class at Richland One Education Center, which is contracted by DSS to provide free EFL classes. This service may be technically available, but it is evidently under-utilized due to its difficulty to obtain.

Another complaint refugees gave regarding their lack of agency involved signing documents. Because the federal government requires such a well-documented paper trail, LSC must obtain refugees' signatures in many different instances such as accepting matching grant conditions and upon receiving rent checks and cash assistance. As many refugees are illiterate in their own native languages, it is impossible that every refugee has full understanding of the documents they are signing. Even with translators explaining these documents, the Western-bureaucratic nature can be overwhelming and confusing upon arrival. Interviewee R7 dealt with confusion about the lease for his family's apartment unit. His LSC caseworkers told him there was only had a 1-bedroom apartment available at the time, but that when a 2-bedroom became available his family

could move. He wanted to see the apartment before signing, but the caseworkers insisted it was not a problem and he did not need to see that. When the family moved into the supposed 1-bedroom, they were surprised to see the apartment did not have a complete full bedroom. Rather it had an upstairs loft, one side of which opened into the downstairs ten feet below. The couple found this layout to be very unsafe for their two-year-old daughter who could easily slip through the railing that had foot-wide gaps. He shared with me his conversation with LSC:

“So I say, I don’t want to stay in this house because it’s not safe for my daughter. But they say, no choice because you already sign for this. I don’t know that, actually. I already told them, ‘you already told me if you got 2-bedroom, I can change. But now you say no.’”

Nine months later, interviewee R7 and his wife were still living in the apartment, with a makeshift sheet of plywood serving as a cover to prevent their daughter from slipping through the railing.

Refugees have also complained of being locked into a lease for one year in an apartment they do not like. One refugee single mother whose five-year-old daughter I babysat also was dissatisfied with the permanence of the lease she did not realize she was signing. The apartment carpet emitted a rather strong food odor, and her daughter seemed to be having congestion and allergic reactions to it. Caseworkers attempted to use carpet cleaning spray, but it did not make much of a difference. This woman was very unhappy and said if she had known the problems this unit had, she would not have signed the lease. But given the conditions for affordable housing, it seems this woman and her child were not offered much choice. Interviewee R3, a proud father, was upset to find out that the best schools in the area were in a different suburb than where his family had been placed. Seeking the best education possible for his children, his plan was to move to this

suburb as soon as their current lease was up. LSC pre-selects an apartment for a refugee to occupy before they arrive, and, barring extreme circumstances, expect the refugee to stay there for the length of their lease.

Oversight of an individual refugee's personal dignity is not an intentionally cruel act, but rather, a matter of the VOLAG simply focusing on basic service provision and nothing more. LSC is so understaffed that even with an outpour of community support in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, they are not in a position to organize and utilize volunteer labor efficiently. LSC supports and appreciates volunteers who form their own programs, but does not have the capacity to take part in such programs. The thin volunteer safety net is mostly church-based, and is made up of local congregants, community members, and students from the University of South Carolina. These dedicated people work to fill in the gaps that formal service delivery failures leave, by setting up EFL classes in various locations at different times, providing small citizenship classes, or even 'adopting' one family to whom they provide special support. While their help is invaluable, it is not enough to make up for the structural barriers to service delivery refugees face. Formal services such as obtaining Medicaid in a timely manner, providing integrative EFL classes for children in public schools, and giving an option for re-certification of former jobs cannot be offset to the voluntary sector.

Ideally, LSC would be able to focus on more than just basic services and aim to create true "success", the definition of which varies by scale. It is obvious that the federal and state level policymakers view success as "the refugee no longer uses public money". However, to SP 3, the LSC caseworker, successful resettlement is defined as integration into the community. This integration entails functioning in society in a way that they feel

comfortable and knowledgeable about their community. To this caseworker, success is getting past the point of just surviving to the point of focusing on enjoying life and participating in community events or traveling to explore new cities. Interviewee R4 expressed a similar definition, hoping to tour America someday. She also hoped to own her own online business selling Malaysian clothes to people in the US. This interviewee, along with all the other interviewees who did not have cars, commented that their personal success would be to own a car. Interviewee R1, whose three children are still in Ethiopia, views success as being able to bring her children to the US and reunite after nine years. Refugees cannot focus on aiming for success in the future when they are so focused on getting by in the meantime.

On multiple scales beyond their cramped offices, LSC's one task is to assure refugees become economically self-sufficient within 3 months. This is no easy feat even in a well-supported state, but the complete lack of infrastructure at the state level and the shortage of largely established ethnic networks leave LSC the only remaining entity to help newly arrived refugees. Their contracts that focus on self-sufficiency do not account for the daily tasks that fall into LSC's lap, such as helping a lost refugee navigate their way home over the phone, or attending judiciary committee meetings to defend the concept of refugee resettlement itself. In Columbia, LSC is the safety net who has to compensate for the shortcomings of state services. This setup is inefficient and strains resettlement processes as well as client relationships, and brings in refugees who are set up to struggle.

CHAPTER 5: HINDRANCES TO MOBILITY

Considering the disjointed and wholly inadequate nature of refugee services and guidance at various scales, it is unsurprising that what is expected of refugees also varies widely at each step of the settlement process. Throughout a refugee's journey towards third-country resettlement, she experiences conflicting expectations of mobility. International organizations and temporary resettlement camps prefer migrants remain within the areas to which they are restricted. The federal government likewise prefers those who have exerted less agency and mobility (already placed refugees) vs. those who have exerted more by crossing a border, seeking asylum. Mountz (2011) notes Bosnian migrants to Canada were "chosen by authorities from the country where they would be resettled, rather than having chosen mobility themselves, acted upon in a humanitarian fashion, rather than choosing to exercise their own mobility" (p. 189). The welcome extended to these refugees contrasted with the treatment Chinese boat people who arrived uninvited on shore and who were turned away.

The "ideal" refugee citizen is paradoxical; prior to and upon arrival, she is an agentless, passive body to be placed. Once settled, however, this citizen must mobilize to meet state demands of self-sufficiency in mere months. Refugees are expected to use their own agency to forge their own paths with very little support. The only way refugees can possibly become "economically self-sufficient" within 90 days is by getting a job as quickly as possible; the only way refugees can get a job is by having access to

transportation that will bring them there. This is a catch-22: the state wants refugees to become economically stable through their own volition, yet the tools and infrastructure to do so simply do not exist. Limited mobility within Columbia is a structural factor that makes it extremely challenging for refugees to be wholly independent and fulfill both the government's and their own goals. By examining this process as it unfolds in Columbia, I highlight concepts of structure versus agency: how do refugees navigate the structural constraints that are part of refugee resettlement? To what degree are they able to finally assert their own agency and mobility with the resources they are given in a small city such as Columbia?

The framework I use to explore refugee agency is Kaufmann's (2002) concept of motility, which encompasses a focus on interactions, structures, and contexts. As discussed in the literature review, he defines motility as "a way in which an individual appropriates what is possible in the domain of mobility and puts this potential to use for his or her activities" (p. 37). This potential may or may not be transformed into travel. Kaufmann later expanded in Flamm & Kaufmann (2006), which outlines three determining factors shaping the mobility levels and patterns of an individual:

- 1) Access to mobility scapes (representing transport and communication infrastructure as potential opportunities) including both the availability and the usability (such as the price level, schedule, etc) of these;
- 2) Skills: referring to the 'skills and abilities' necessary to use the accessible mobility scapes;
- 3) Appropriation, meaning behavioral components, such as the need and willingness to make use of the aforementioned scapes and skills.

5.1 Structure

To understand the structural hindrances to mobility that refugees face, it is important to examine the setting in which they live. A majority of refugees are resettled by LSC in the northeast area of Columbia seven miles from downtown, in one of two apartment complexes located on the same city block, Creek Crossing Apartments and Pines Place (names changed for anonymity). Creek Crossing, which evokes the feeling of a safe clearing surrounded by trees, has an open design with 10 2-story apartment buildings, 8 units per building of 1 and 2-bedroom apartments. Immediately upon entering, one may be inclined to refer to it as “Little Myanmar”; over half of its residents are originally from Myanmar and they are often gathered outside, or even perched in one of the multiple trees present. There are also multiple Eritrean tenants, generally “free cases” (a single person who is placed randomly in Columbia, as opposed to those who are placed for family reunification) or families of 2, that hesitantly reside at Creek Crossing; they do not express contempt towards the majority of refugees from Myanmar, but rather annoyance towards what they view as a lapse in standards of personal cleanliness. Although there are grocery stores and gas stations within walking distance, the road the apartment is on has steep ditches, no sidewalks, and it is extremely hilly and curvy; I am reminded of drivers’ limited visibility each week I visit. For this reason, many refugees take a shortcut to the bus stop through the wooded area that presumably belongs to someone else.

Pines Place offers single-story 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom options, and is, in general, newer and nicer than Creek Crossing. It has more non-refugee clients, and contrary to Creek’s open concept, is a winding maze of speed bumps for any driver to

navigate with a multitude of dead ends. There is a laundry room and playground, but no central location for large groups to gather. LSC maintains a close relationship with the apartment offices, as they are in charge of providing the requisite amount of furniture for newly resettled refugees and delivering rent checks from the federal government for the first three months. LSC identified these apartment complexes as a good place to resettle refugees as they are affordable, close to bus lines, and most importantly, are owned by patient people who understand refugees' needs. At one apartment complex, a lady who works in the office oftentimes sits down with refugee tenants and helps them write checks or helps them understand various bills they have to pay. Interestingly, this particular apartment complex has long served as housing for newly arrived immigrants. A colleague whose family emigrated from Southeast Asia in the mid-80s recalls moving to Creek Crossing where there were many other immigrant families. For whatever reason, this long

To assume Columbia's urban landscape and sparse public transportation is simply a product of being a small town would be to ignore the role of social and racial politics that has left substantial imprints on the landscape. Columbia once had extensive streetcar services for Whites and, to a lesser extent, Blacks, prior to desegregation. Weyeneth (2005) discusses the streetcar that ran in a Beltline around the city – clockwise carried only Blacks, while Whites rode in cars moving counterclockwise. The history of Atlanta lends explanation to the diminishment of public transit and development of such an auto-centric region across the South. Prior to desegregation, public goods such as transit, parks, recreational spaces such as golf courses and swimming pools were predominantly utilized by lower and middle class White citizens (upper class Whites utilized private automobiles and country clubs). Mayor Hartsfield was a prominent civil rights supporter

and sought to bring peaceful resolution to desegregation, in contrast to white supremacist narratives of other southern White leaders. Many Whites resisted desegregation, both on a policy level from city and state leaders who supported White suburbanization and White individuals who chose to suburbanize themselves. Lower class Whites felt that “their” space was being encroached upon and essentially boycotted these public amenities (physically and financially), asserting that they would rather find alternatives than share with Blacks (Kruse, 2005). As lower class whites realized privatization could be used to perpetuate racial separation, they invested in private cars. Coined as “secessionist automobility” (Henderson, 2006), the race-based secession from urban space and urban ideologies equated urban with Blackness and suburban with a bastion of modernity and White escape from the encroaching “Other”.

Immigrants and refugees today inherit a landscape shaped by White resistance to racial integration. It is fascinating to note that the pattern of lower to middle class White aversion to Others still rings true today, as richer Whites in Columbia seldom have reason to share spaces with refugees. Not only has White secession affected the public transit means by which refugees move about the city, but also the actual structure of the city itself. The city lacks a strong industrial core, social services are disjointed throughout, there are pockets of poverty interspersed due to section 8 housing, and there is a massive extent of sprawl that exhibit pathways of White flight. Columbia’s low population density attests to this sprawl – its population of 133,803 people divided over its 132.2 square miles averages 1,012 people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). In comparison, Atlanta (a large city considered to have considerable sprawl) has 3,360 people per square mile, and Minneapolis has 7,417 per square mile. Low population

density in Columbia and other smaller cities mean the number of people who seek transit are fewer and more spread out.

As well, Columbia offers rural manufacturing jobs outside of the suburbs rather than concentrated industrial opportunities. Ranked as one of the most “business-friendly” states in the US, South Carolina offers some of the lowest corporate tax income rates in the nation (5%), highly competitive wages for workers, and low unionization rates (South Carolina Department of Commerce, 2016). Governor Nikki Haley has intentionally sought to draw businesses seeking low operating costs to SC, as it levies no state property tax, no local income tax, no inventory tax, no sales tax on manufacturing equipment, industrial power, or materials for finished products, no wholesale tax, and no unitary tax on worldwide profits. It is interesting to contrast these fiscally charitable business tax rates with the state’s protective stance on tax money when it is spent towards aiding refugees. This corporate haven has drawn the manufacturing sites of auto companies BMW and Michelin and well-known food manufacturing corporations of Kraft, Nestle, Pepperidge Farm, Perdue Farms, and Tyson Foods. This abundance of low-skill jobs has contributed to the growth of the state’s foreign-born population, drawn undocumented and documented migrants alike, and provides hard-to-reach opportunities for refugees.

Flamm & Kaufmann’s (2006) examination of structural hindrances to mobility asks similar questions as Kain’s (1968) Spatial Mismatch Hypothesis. Kain mentions high automobile costs and long, circuitous or non-existing transit routes as prohibitive of gainful employment in the inner-city populations he studied in 1950s Chicago and Detroit. Given the vastly differing layouts between Columbia and Kain’s sites, can spatial mismatch hypothesis be applied when examining refugees in Columbia?

Columbia's refugee population does not have a particular spatial concentration of "migrant jobs" as did Kain's African American economic opportunities. Refugee workplaces in Columbia vary from restaurant jobs in the suburban area around their homes, USC's campus near downtown, or vegetable and poultry processing plants in outlying rural areas (see *Figures 1 and 2* for a visualization of refugee home, work, and service locations). This lack of a clear urban-to-suburban commute means refugee placement in suburban areas does not make access to jobs any easier, as it would have in 1950s Chicago for African Americans. Along with housing location, measuring distance as a main prohibitive measure does not provide much explanation for the challenges faced by Columbia's refugee populations. Distance is not as important as mode of transport, in line with Blumenberg's (2008) conclusion. Blumenberg & Manville (2004) argued that although the spatial mismatch hypothesis has merit, policymakers must move beyond conventional notions that public transit is necessarily the solution to meet transportation needs of low-income people.

This finding is obvious to Columbia's refugee population; all six non-car-owning participants said they plan on saving for a car. The six who already have cars made it a priority to buy a vehicle as soon as they could afford it. The disparity between what locations refugees have access to with vs. without a car is obvious in the maps below. Refugees with cars were able to enjoy leisure time and travel to various other cities, while refugees without cars never participated in leisure activities. The maps show that refugees take jobs where they can get them regardless of if they have a car or not, but individual interviews illuminate the hassle and coping strategies that non-car owners must participate in in order to get to work.

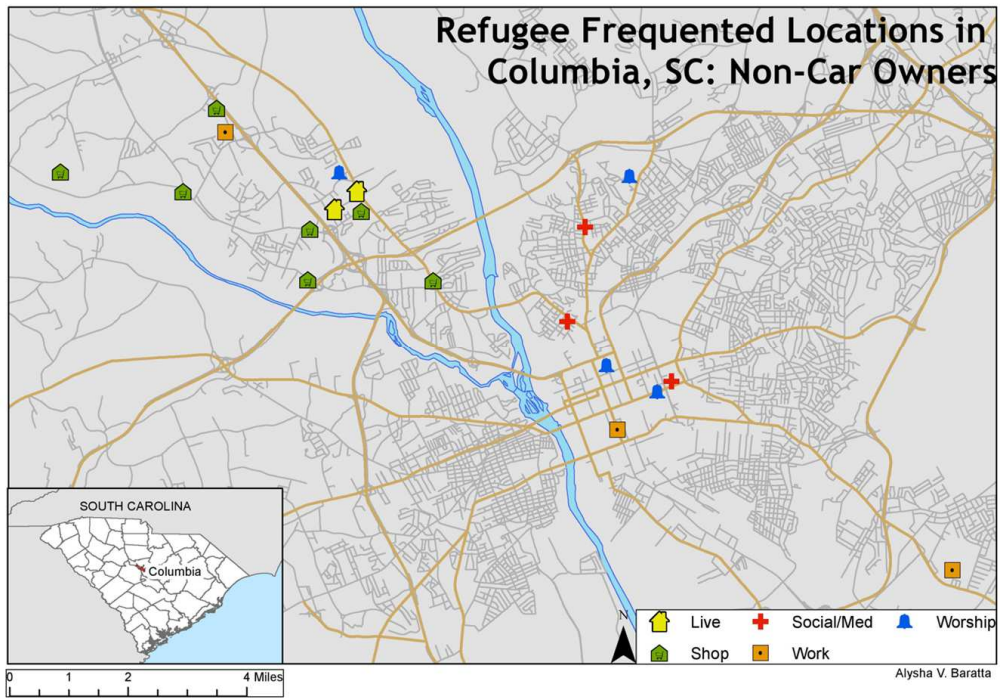


Figure 5.1, Refugee Frequented Locations in Columbia, SC: Non-Car Owners

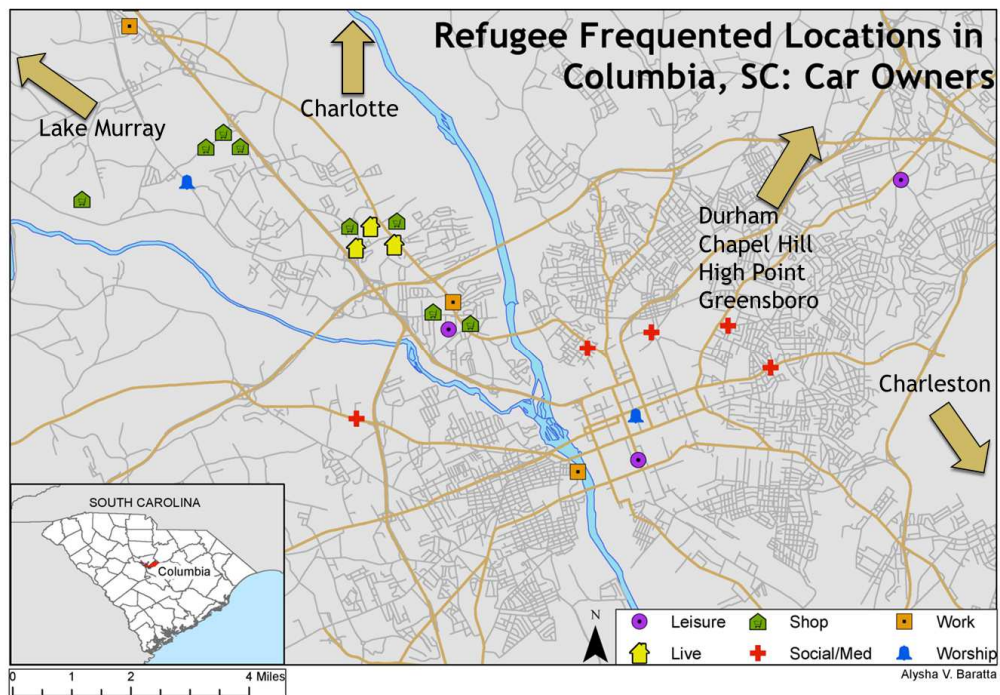


Figure 5.2, Refugee Frequented Locations in Columbia, SC: Car Owners

My research shows that while in general it would be easier if refugees lived closer to jobs, transit mode rather than distance determines a refugee's ability to get to a particular location. If it is beyond walking distance, distance does not matter. Out of ten interviewees, a woman (R6) who works packaging produce travels farthest to get to work (15 miles one way). She does not own a car, but the plant provides transportation specifically for refugee employees. No bus routes that connect her home and the plant exist, and other interviewees who work at a similar plant without transportation pay \$20/week to carpool with coworkers. Another interviewee works for campus dining at the University of South Carolina, the largest employer of refugees in the area. The dining facilities are only 7.5 miles away from her house, but she has no car, nor friends who can give a ride, so she uses public transit. According to her travel diary, her daily commute is:

5:40am: leaves house, take daughter to daycare

6:02am: catches first bus to bus station

6:32am: catches connecting bus

7:00am-3:30pm: works

3:45pm: walks to bus station

4:45pm: takes bus to daughter's daycare

5:30pm: pick daughter up and finally,

6:00pm: arrive at home.

She spends an average of 3.5 hours commuting 15 miles, traveling 4 miles per hour. This time includes walking to and from the bus stop, waiting for undependable buses (that may add to her commute), and walking slower after picking up her 5-year-old child from daycare.

For the first eight months that refugees are eligible for Medicaid, they have the option of booking free transportation to appointments via the Medicaid van. Newly arrived refugees have multiple healthcare needs; besides addressing any medical needs that have been ignored prior to arrival in the U.S., they must go to requisite health screenings and immunizations that must be spaced out over time. Interviewee SP 2, a nurse who often helped refugees, discussed the van but mentioned the necessity to speak English or Spanish to reserve the van. Although this van is technically an option, caseworkers at LSC claim many refugees would rather find their own way than attempt to take the Medicaid van. Transportation must be booked via phone more than three days in advance, which is a challenging feat for Limited English Proficiency clients, especially considering local Medicaid service providers have less exposure to foreigners than those in a larger, more diverse city. Many refugees who have managed to book the van find it terribly unreliable, with negative experiences of being late to their appointments or of the van never coming at all.

Only six of the ten interviewed participants owned a car (the purchase of which was aided by family and friends, which I will discuss later). Price is an obvious barrier to purchasing a private automobile; despite the high cost, all four refugee interviewees without a car listed it as their most pressing immediate goal. Fan (2012) noted the modal mismatch of lower socioeconomic status populations; although they are the least likely group to own cars, they are the most likely to need cars to accommodate nontraditional work schedules. Refugees understood what a necessity a car is and they make other financial sacrifices accordingly. Interviewee R5, who lived many years in Malaysia and sent remittances to his family in Burma, is attempting to save for a car – but as he already

is not sending as much as he was able to from Malaysia, the choice is between helping his family eat or saving for a car. Even when refugees have enough for a down payment, insurance, and monthly payments towards a car, a lack of credit history to obtain loan often works against them. This is yet another example of needing social networks to aid in finding sellers who will work out a deal for people with a lack of credit history. Larger cities with longer established and larger immigrant and refugee networks are likely to have more credit and car dealership options than a city of Columbia's size.

Although LSC takes into account bus line access before placing refugees, even the most connected bus stop locations suffer from long intervals between pick-up times. Columbia is a sprawling small city that attempts to offer extensive bus lines. This means that completing a full route takes a long amount of time and most lines offer the frequency of one bus per hour. Another consequence of longer bus lines is there is more opportunity for delays from traffic, accidents, lag, etc. Across the board, refugees reported that buses are often ten to twenty minutes late, and sometimes do not come at all (although some of these no-show incidents could be explained by a miscommunication about bus cancellations due to holidays, weather, and other delays). Again, how far away refugees live does not necessarily affect their ability to get to work. Even if refugees live closer to their work place, they still only have the opportunity to access transit once per hour. Many interviewees also discussed having to complete lengthy route loops before reaching their final destination. Finally, bus service times fail to accommodate refugees working second and third shift jobs. On weekdays, the last bus pick-up time to make it home is around 11:30pm; on weekends, it is 8:30pm. Any refugees in the service industry would likely not be able to catch a bus home after restaurant shifts. Interviewee R5, who

works in the kitchen of a local Sushi restaurant, takes the bus to work but receives a ride home from his work friend.

The temporal aspects of Columbia's public transit options not only inconvenience refugees in their daily commute to work, but they prohibit refugees from accessing services offered. The most salient example is English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. Although technically free EFL classes are offered at the adult education center in the evenings, the time it takes to ride the bus there and back consumes a person's entire schedule. These times also overlap with when many refugees are working (second and third shift times) so it is impossible to attend. Interviewee R6 started taking English classes when she first arrived, but as soon as she started working (six days a week) she realized she does not have time to attend.

5.2 Skills

Transit infrastructure available to refugees is of little use if they do not have the skills required to access it. As many refugees are coming from rural backgrounds, it is likely that this is the first time they have had to regularly utilize public transit. As newcomers to the city and technology alike, it is imperative that refugees receive adequate training showing how to ride the bus. Subtleties that may be obvious to a native-born transit user such as which door to enter, how to pay, where to sit, and which stops to get on and off at are highly intimidating for many refugees. Lutheran Services had provided bus training via a volunteer who was carless herself and thus knew the ins and outs of Columbia public transit. When this volunteer left, caseworkers took over training when they could find time, which led to inconsistent and ultimately undelivered training. On more than one occasion I witnessed refugees who had been living in Columbia for 2

weeks to a month asking about their bus training; some were told it would happen soon, others were told to look for a friend or family member who could show them around. Of course, due to the government's strict regulations on finding employment within three months of arrival, most friends and family were busy at work during the day. This brief period makes adequate bus training as soon as possible even more valuable, as a month without knowing how to use the buses translates to less time to search for jobs on foot.

Another component of skills to motility is physical ability: can the person walk long distances to and from bus stops? One older male refugee who had a prosthetic leg from the knee down due to amputation walked slowly with a cane. In his late 50s, he was not old enough to be considered retired and draw social security, so he was required to search for a job. Even with bus training, the amount of time it took him to use the bus was excessive and this complication made it impossible for him to find work. A few months after coming, he left Columbia to join family in Michigan, citing a lack of jobs as the reason.

If a refugee is trained and physically able to access buses, another skill required is a basic understanding of English language and literacy. Identifying bus numbers, understanding route schedules and times, and following instructions of the bus driver are all necessary to successfully ride the bus. Columbia's transit offers a useful smartphone application that tracks the buses in real time; however, those refugees who are fortunate enough to have a smartphone must also be able to navigate the English-only application to use it. Another form of mobility that requires English language and literacy is driver's license tests. Many refugees said they were working on their English specifically so they could take the test. One interviewee, R1, laughed when I asked if she had a license,

saying of course not, because it requires English to take the test. Another interviewee, R2, had a driver's license, but failed the test the first time. He stated, "first time, yeah, I stopped because I became confused. I was 2 weeks here, I was new, I don't know nothing. I go there, I try, and when I try, you know, I said, it's too difficult." He then went home, reviewed the questions and studied for a week, and was able to pass the test the second time.

Those who speak English fluently enough to pass a written driver's license test must then also have the training of how to pass a driving test. Interviewee SP6, who worked for the Department of Social Services (DSS) under refugee resettlement, explained that the department contracts certain companies to fulfill driver's training. DSS pays for 12 hours of behind-the-wheel training and a road test for refugees, and they are eligible for this service up to five years after their arrival. Once they apply for the training with DSS, they technically have a 3-month period to complete the training, although often this period is shortened due to lengthy paperwork processing times. After DSS receives their application, they send a letter to the refugee stating where the provider is located, the number of the provider, and that it is the refugee's responsibility to call and set up an appointment. DSS also sends a letter to the provider to let them know the refugee is going to be calling and how to set up the invoice, etc. Although this training is technically available, Lutheran caseworkers commented that this service is rarely administered due to the bureaucratic steps involved in realizing it.

Accessing human capital and taking advantage of networks to increase mobility is a skill that many refugees utilize. It stands to reason that the larger one's ethnic network, the more opportunities for rides they find. Undoubtedly, interviewees from Myanmar

(who constitute around 50% of Columbia's established refugee population) benefited the most from rides from co-ethnic networks. Through running the Carolina Survivors Garden program, I have experienced that it is much more likely that Karen participants can find somebody to give a ride to the garden, while Congolese and Eritrean participants are not able to do so. Interviewee R1 discussed all the rides and help she got from her friend when she arrived to Columbia, but that friend has since moved to Maine, leaving R1 immobile. When questioned if he ever charges his friends for gas money, interviewee R2 responded incredulously that he would never ask money from his friends, for that would bring shame – they help each other at different times in different ways, no scores kept. However, one Congolese woman I spoke with who has lived in Columbia around eight months and works in a vegetable factory told me she gets to ride via Burmese carpool. They charge her \$20/week to travel 30 miles round trip per day, five days a week. When I shared this story with another Eritrean man, he reported his son got rides to the same vegetable factory via Burmese coworkers when he arrived five years ago. This may explain the feeling of tension/accusations of favoritism between Burmese and other refugees; however, the scope of this thesis cannot explore those intricacies.

Not only do friends give rides to friends of similar ethnicities, but friends help friends find and purchase cars. The six interviewees with cars always found them through social networks. Interviewees R7 & R8 received ample gifts from their pastor, who is a well-established figure in the Christian Burmese community in Columbia. The pastor gifted the couple a bicycle immediately upon arrival; when that bicycle was stolen, he gave them another one. He also helped them to find car, as he has done for multiple members of his congregation. Couple R9 & R10 had family living here that fronted the

money for them to buy a car upon arrival. Interviewee R2 was able to find his car by making friends with Arab immigrants who own a convenience store located immediately next to one of the main refugee apartment complexes. Interviewee R3 skirted around the issue of needing a license to purchase a car (he was still in his six-month permit waiting period). His friend, who is also Iraqi, told him about an African friend who had access to a special auction. “Nobody, even you, you cannot go to the auction and buy the car,” he ominously told me. He simply told the secret auction member which car he would like, and his friend purchased it for him.

5.3 Appropriation

Lastly, Kaufmann (2011) asserts that no matter how widely available public and private transit is nor how trained a person is to use it, they still must appropriate those factors to transform potential motility into actual mobility. Traditional transit studies that equated structure with mobility removed the choices that people make – that is, their agency – from the equation. One significant factor that affects a refugee’s choice to use the bus or not is safety. Although all interviewees were settled near a bus line, the walking route to and from the bus stops was hilly, curvy, and did not have sidewalks. Another non-interviewee with whom I spoke was resettled in a different part of town and required a 30-minute walk to and from bus stops on a path that is not well-lit. She expressed the fear she felt in walking home after dark, and pointed out the irony that her caseworker told her never to walk alone, especially not in the dark, while also expecting her to commute to her job from that location.

Another participant, R8, generally felt unsafe in her apartment complex. She and her husband had come home to find their window broken by a rock. After that incident,

they took more precautions, including always closing and locking the door and being more wary of going outside. She commented, “I’m scared around here. My husband say, don’t open the door. Before, [when] I cooked, I opened the door (laughs). But [the pastor] sa[id], don’t do like this. Some people come in, they say.” Aside from safety concerns in their own neighborhoods, another refugee woman I spoke with had been confronted with ugly words and insults on the bus because of her hijab identifying her as Muslim. She said although she knows how to ride the bus now, she doesn’t like to. This incident took place over a year ago; the political climate towards Muslims in South Carolina and across the West has only gotten harsher since then.

One significant note is that safety concerns always came from female interviewees. This fear is heavily tied with the built environment (open/closed, well-lit/dark, private/public access). However, the geography of fear cannot be separated from the social nature of places (dangerous/safe) and women’s social positions (low income, members of ethnic minority groups, and those with disabilities are at higher risk of violence and report higher levels of fear) (Koskela & Pain 2000). Interviewee responses in Columbia align with previous literature on fear and its effects on women’s daily mobilities. Of the three husband-and-wife couples interviewed, none of the wives traveled without their husbands, citing fear of being alone in public. Two of those couples have a car, and in each case it is the husband with the driver’s license. Interviewee R8 said that she plans to get a driver’s license and studies for the test on the Internet, but she was three months pregnant at the time and not planning to take the test soon. Interviewee R4, who was part of the couple who did not own a car, also planned to get a license some day. When asked if they were attending English classes, all three female respondents

commented they did not feel comfortable taking the bus alone to class while their husbands were at work. These women seemingly always stayed at home while their husbands worked, so naturally it was more important for their husbands to get the license first. Although none of these women have had hostile experiences directed against them in Columbia that they shared with me, their fears of traversing Columbia alone reflect a broader environment that is unwelcoming to immigrants/non-white females.

Asserting mobility, whether it be on public transit, learning to drive, or ridesharing, requires boldness. Personalities and comfort asking for a ride may dictate whether a person takes advantage of motility opportunities or not. Interviewees R4 and R5, a Muslim couple, mentioned that they have received multiple ride offers from other Muslims who identify them while walking. According to traditional thought on co-ethnic immigrant networks, one would assume that the couple regularly relies on such rides. However, this couple simply does not want to based on fear of being bothersome. I asked the interviewees if they got the phone number of these “ride angels” for future rides or in case they have a problem. R4 responded, “No, I don’t want to bother anybody because they always say, ‘take my phone.’ They give the phone number to us and they said, ‘Whenever you need any help you can call us. Whenever you want to go, you can call.’ I don’t want bother them...they work too.” This interviewee would rather walk and struggle with mobility than inconvenience others. She noted that the people offering rides have been Indian and Arab Muslims, differing from her own Southeast Asian ethnicity. This could play a role in discomfort of asking for favors, or the couple could simply be shy, as they claimed.

Considering differences in ethnicity serves as a transition to the final factor refugees exhibited in appropriating mobility: positionality. Depending on a person's socio-economic status, asserting mobility evokes different feelings and expectations. Cresswell (2010) exemplifies this subjective mobility when he states, "driving a car is liberating, or nerve wracking, or, increasingly, guilt ridden" (p. 20). The aforementioned Muslim woman who received hateful comments on the bus now has an expectation for her mobility to be unpleasant. Interviewee R7 completed his written and driver's test, obtained a driving permit, and owned a car (with help from his Pastor). However, because he had not established a large network, he did not have any already licensed drivers to accompany him on every trip he took for six months prior to receiving his license. He told me,

"So, I say, what about now, I go to the job, I have to drive. I have no transport, [no]thing. So they say, in Columbia, you can drive. But don't make any big mistakes. No exam, no nothing, but drive carefully [DMV staff] say, they told me that. So, I don't go anywhere that's very far, I go nearby here, that's all."

Surprisingly, the DMV staff encouraged him to skirt the law in order to accommodate his needs to get to work. While it was surely somewhat relieving to have their blessing, the limitations of driving only nearby and illegally produce a precarious circumstance for many refugee drivers. This driver is disadvantaged because his social network has far fewer available people with driver's licenses than a native-born person yet he must drive illegally to work. Driving gets him from point A to point B, but the experience is nerve wracking, as Cresswell states.

As experienced by refugees in Columbia, accessing mobility is not as simple as having reliable transit lines. Structural access is the first step in being mobile, but beyond that, it is necessary for refugees to obtain skills and to be comfortable with modes of

mobility. While structure is relatively fixed and takes years to improve (including saving money for a car), refugees obtain skills from their more experienced social networks. As refugee networks in Columbia grow, hopefully newly arrived refugees will have better access to the tools that make them mobile. As for appropriation of feeling comfortable in the community, larger processes of acceptance and welcoming narratives must take place.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

As exhibited in this thesis, refugee resettlement in the US is shortsighted to focus solely on economic self-sufficiency. Contrary to the federal government's claims that economic self-sufficiency eases integration, the almost total focus on getting a job precludes refugees from learning English and participating in society. They may be able to pay their rent after three months of living in society, but the perpetuation of bare survival disallows any further monetary or personal growth. The scaling-back of refugee financial assistance has sought to reduce government spending, but by bringing refugees here and under-supporting them, they are unlikely to become economically stable members of society. A lack of upward social mobility has implications for future generations of refugee children whose parents will unlikely be able to pay rising college tuition costs; in Columbia, service providers know of only one refugee student who currently attends university. This failure especially affects refugee children who are placed in states without the educational infrastructure to accommodate them, such as South Carolina. Success at the most basic level of economic self-sufficiency perpetuates poverty, in opposition to what neoliberal expectations theoretically aim to produce.

Further, the federal government applies these directives across the board to all refugees in the US, which assumes they are a homogenous population with the same access to resources. As exhibited in Chapter 4, however, the landscape of resettlement varies widely depending on the state, city size, and resettlement organization. Given that

refugees are not able to choose which state they settle into (and have resources revoked if they move), it is far beyond their personal agency to control these factors. How, then, can the federal government expect the same results in the same amount of time from such a non-standardized process? Refugees are an incredibly heterogeneous population with varying skills, education levels, class backgrounds, and networks, all of which can impinge on employment rates and mobility. Despite this and varying services from state to state, refugees are held to the same standards by the federal government across the board. An illiterate Congolese farmer in South Carolina is expected to meet the same employable time frame and pass the same citizenship tests as an Iraqi with a PhD in San Diego, and if these standards are not met, he is stranded in a hostile landscape without access to basic human services. The U.S. government seeks to effectively invest their aid in refugees by giving them the bare minimum. In doing so, they create inefficiencies that oftentimes place refugees barely above the poverty line at the cost of quality of life.

Refugee agency depends on the tools they are given from various actors: voluntary agencies, social networks, communities, as well as the degree to which the built environment is or is not easily navigable. While refugees do have a few choices such as how to spend the little cash assistance they receive, most of their life choices are restricted by structures in place. VOLAGs, too, have limited choices for how they direct their efforts. Although each step of resettlement is not closely monitored, VOLAGs have little leeway or time to focus on anything other than finding refugee employment in 90 days or less. Underfunded VOLAGs in an unsupportive state means refugees depend on independent volunteers to provide basic services, thus creating a fragmented landscape of official and unofficial services. Refugees' own prior skillsets and aptitudes dictate how

they participate in the work force as well as their ability to move about the city. Mobility is key; in order to fulfill neoliberal expectations of a hard-working New American, a refugee must first be able to arrive at his or her job.

6.1. Pragmatic Approaches to Resettlement

For now, those who advocate for refugee resettlement must be strategic in deciding what their best course of action is. In order to improve refugee self-sufficiency, refugee advocates must focus on changing what is malleable in Columbia. Due to overarching political discussions on the state of refugees, it is unlikely that more funding and fewer restrictions will be provided any time soon. Rather, as historically shown, perhaps the government will determine fewer than three months is enough time for refugees to become economically 'self-sufficient'. The focus must be on aiding refugees in becoming more mobile within Columbia so that they may more easily access key resources, including English classes and job opportunities. Structurally, the city of Columbia is planning for more bus lines; however, carrying out these plans takes years and funds to buy more buses. Coupled with local anti-refugee sentiment, it is difficult to advocate for more convenient bus lines specifically for them without inciting hate that ultimately will be directed back towards refugees.

Increasing a refugee's skillset and comfort in appropriating those skills is the best avenue for increasing their mobility. LSC must focus on immediate and consistent bus training. If they are not able to provide it, they need to utilize their volunteer core and assure that this service is being delivered. It is important to find allies among the naysayers, such as the aforementioned travel trainers with Central Midlands Transit who are willing to show refugees around. Partnerships must be formed quietly in order to

avoid political backlash, but as ugly anti-refugee expressions have come out, they have been met with a smaller but equally as passionate pro-refugee population who are willing to help.

6.2 Future Research

As this study was a master's thesis, the scope of research allowed only for sixteen in-depth interviewees, though these were supplemented by a larger number of observed participants. While this allowed general patterns to emerge, there is room for an expanded analysis of the experiences of refugees by conducting formal interviews with a larger sample size. From a GIS standpoint, a more high-tech approach using global positioning technology would allow for a more detailed picture of refugee travel experiences. This precise measurement would illuminate lengthy travel and waiting times in a more effective way than travel diaries could allow.

My research did not focus on variables such as religion or ethnicity in gauging levels of mobility. However, I did sense a general pattern that Christian refugees had more support from local church volunteers, as well as co-ethnic Christian networks. In comparing the size of local Christian networks with Muslim, it is evident that there is simply more support offered. I asked Christian volunteer interviewees who teach weekly in-home citizenship classes if they only offered those services to Christian refugees. They were firm in their stance that anybody is welcome and they did not limit classes to Christians. Still, upon attending the class, I saw that the final 30 minutes were devoted to reading bible scripture, which may be off-putting or exclusionary for some refugee attendants. These details offer a space for more teasing out and comparative studies on how the religion of refugees affects the services they receive in Columbia, and, more

broadly, the context of the south. SP 1 discussed how when the Somali Bantu people were turned away from Cayce, evangelical faith communities in Columbia attempted to help, but were uncomfortable and conflicted about helping Muslims who would not convert to Christianity.

Another place for expansion on research is exploring the current political climate and laws as they affect resettlement. Nationally, individual states' identities are emerging as clearly more or less welcoming to refugees. How, in the future, will this narrative shape refugee resettlement? As refugees are not able to choose their primary resettlement locations, will it have any effect at all? Will it increase secondary migration to the more accepting states? One could also interrogate specific anti-refugee narratives and the fear-laden claims that come with them. By revealing how unfounded and ludicrous the fear of refugee resettlement is, perhaps there is a chance for a more welcoming landscape.

Research on refugee resettlement in a small city such as this thesis provides documentation to the lived experiences of individuals the U.S. government places within its borders. Although the number of refugees resettled within South Carolina is comparatively fewer than in larger metro areas, they deserve not to be overlooked. State officials oppose resettling and financially supporting refugees in South Carolina; as well, low resettlement numbers make it difficult to receive competitive national grants. At the time of this writing, a local doctor who is starting therapeutic programs for survivors of torture in South Carolina has applied to and been denied over 25 national grants for refugee programs, precisely because of the small number of refugees. My hope is that this thesis and future research helps to elucidate resettlement in smaller cities and give refugees a fair chance towards their own vision of success in America.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TEMPLATES

Refugee Interview Question Template

1. Situation and Location

- What is your household situation? How many people live with you? Are these family members? Friends? Others?
- In what area/neighborhood do you live in now and how did you find this location?
- Where do you go on a daily basis (work, shop, play, socialize, worship) and how do you get there?

2. Challenges, Mobility, and Mediation

- What challenges do you face in Columbia? Do you find it easy or difficult to live in Columbia? Why/why not?
- How have things changed for you since you arrived in Columbia? Are things easier now than they were 6 months ago? Why or why not?
- Do you have a driver's license? Do you have access to a car? Do you use public transportation? How easy or difficult is it to use public transit for daily tasks?
- What agencies and organizations have offered help to you since you arrived in Columbia? Were the services they offered helpful to you?
- Who are your friends here in Columbia, how did you meet them, and how do you help each other?
- Do you have anyone (friends or family members) who takes you places or helps you get to work, shopping, appointments, etc.?

3. Food Security

- Do you normally use more than food stamp money to buy food?
- Do you eat the kinds of foods you want to eat?
- Do you worry that money for food will run out before the end of the month?
- Do you ever cut the size of or skip meals to save money?
- Do you ever go hungry because you do not have money for food?

4. Becoming part of Columbia

- Where do you want to be in the future, and what do you hope to be doing? What do you think you need to do or have to achieve your goals? Is Columbia a place you'd like to stay? Why or why not?
- What would help you the most in making your life in Columbia better/easier?

Service Provider Interview Question Template

1. Organizational Situation and Location

- Tell me about your organization. When was it established? Where is it located and why? What are the services it provides?
- What is your role at the organization?

2. Challenges, Mobility, and Mediation

- What challenges has your organization faced in providing services to refugees?
- What challenges have you seen refugees face in Columbia?
- Is transportation a problem for the people you serve?
- Does your organization work to increase refugee mobility? If so, how?
- How does your organization help refugees overcome aforementioned challenges? What difference do you think you might be making in the resettlement process?

3. Refugee integration

- What is successful resettlement to your agency?
- What do you envision to be the best-case scenario for refugees' life in Columbia?
- What do you think you could be doing better as an organization?
- What resources do you need to achieve your aims?