Exploring the Gender-Specific Needs of Female Refugees During Resettlement and Integration: A Case Study in Pittsburgh

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EXPLORING THE GENDER-SPECIFIC NEEDS OF FEMALE REFUGEES DURING RESETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION: A CASE STUDY IN PITTSBURGH

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE GENDER-SPECIFIC NEEDS OF FEMALE REFUGEES DURING RESETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION: A CASE STUDY IN PITTSBURGH

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May 2013

Thesis supervised by Dr. Daniel Lieberfeld.

Recently Pittsburgh has experienced a noticeable increase in the number of incoming refugees, which has put added pressure on local service providers to develop more efficient resettlement practices. While female refugee’s experiences have been largely ignored, this study attempts to better understand the gender-specific needs of female refugees who resettle and integrate into Pittsburgh. I used Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework, with a focus on the indicators of “employment,” “social bridges,” “language and culture,” and “rights and citizenship,” and adapted it to a gendered perspective to analyze data from two focus group sessions with 11 refugee women from Liberia, Bhutan, Burma, Iraq, and Morocco. I used an exploratory, inductive methodology to identify common themes, including women’s changing roles within families and the importance of social connections. A better understanding of women’s
needs will help inform the local refugee-serving agencies create more gender-inclusive services.
DEDICATION

To refugee women living in Pittsburgh
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I. Introduction

The focus of this study is to identify the gender-specific needs of female refugees during their initial resettlement and integration into Pittsburgh.¹ Current models of service provision are based on a male-centered paradigm that do not acknowledge that women’s differing experiences prior to resettlement require different approaches to meeting their gender-specific needs, including finding employment, making social connections, learning language, and adjusting to new roles. I believe that directly addressing women’s needs will result in more effective overall service provision, which “has important implications for refugee women’s health and well-being” (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 280). The period of “resettlement” established by the United States government begins when the refugee² steps off the plane and continues for approximately six months (Lutheran Social Services, 2012). “Integration” is more difficult to define because there is no universal formula or policy to assess its success, but most people agree that it is an on-going process that varies by individual, in which refugees adapt to their host society without losing their own cultural identity (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2002).³ More in-depth discussion regarding current models of service provision, resettlement and integration can be found in the literature review.

¹ I chose to conduct my research in Pittsburgh for its convenience and because I have established relationships with stakeholders in the refugee community.
² The Geneva Refugee Convention of 1951 identifies a refugee as a person who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” Taken from the UNHCR website at http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.html
³ Berry’s (1997) Acculturation Model demonstrates four acculturation strategies based on acceptance or rejection of the individual’s native culture and acceptance or rejection of the host culture. Depending on how much the individual mixes his or her native culture with the host culture, the four strategies are assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. See TABLE 2 for model.
In order to better understand the integration needs of refugee women, I used the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2002) definition\(^4\) of “integration” along with Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework. With the purpose of addressing women’s differing needs during integration, I adapt Ager and Strang’s (2004) framework to a gendered perspective. By doing so, I hope to fill a gap in the current literature and contribute at the theory level by showing that gender is an important factor in integration. At a policy level, I hope my study helps local resettlement agencies identify services, including general case management, cash assistance, and employment that can be changed or enhanced to better accommodate women’s participation and access of these services.

To begin my data collection and gain a better understanding of the local refugee community, I conducted preliminary interviews with key stakeholders, including staff from refugee-serving agencies and refugees themselves. As a result of those conversations, I chose to focus my research on “employment,” “social bridges,” “language and cultural knowledge,” and “rights and citizenship,” four key indicators derived from Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework. The raw data of my research on refugee women and integration comes from two focus groups I conducted with refugee women from various cultural backgrounds living in Pittsburgh.

a. Statement of the Problem

All refugees have significant needs during resettlement that may stem from psychological, physical, cultural and environmental problems that “are generally a result of complex interactions between the traumatic experiences they had in their country of origin, leaving their familiar environment, settling in to a new country and the normal

\(^4\) The definition can be found in the Literature Review
demands” of everyday life (Friends of STARTTS, n.d.). According to several recent studies based on interviews with service providers and refugees themselves, the current services, including general case management, cash assistance, and employment, provided to refugees do not take into account the gendered nature of women’s experiences, instead focusing on an outdated male-centered paradigm (e.g., Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 272).

For example, many of the recent refugees coming to Pittsburgh come from Bhutan, Burma, Somalia and Iraq and follow patriarchal norms where the man is the head of the household and is responsible for all decision-making in the family (Macurak, 2012; Rich, 2012). Men may restrict opportunities for women to engage in outside education and employment because they believe it is a hindrance to women’s household duties (Sargeant, 1999). As a result, women are less likely to work outside the home or attend English class, making integration more difficult (Respondent 2, 2012).

Indra (1987, p. 3) believes that “the depth of gender delegitimation in refugee contexts” stems from “the practical and ideological consequences of extant gender bias in definitions of a refugee,” which includes the Geneva Refugee Convention. Haines (2003, p. 326), on the other hand, argues that “sex and gender are already included in the refugee definition” and that adding it to the Convention as a sixth ground “may have the unintended effect of further marginalizing women.” He says that “the failure of decision makers to recognize and respond appropriately to the experiences of women stems… from a partial perspective and interpreted through a framework of male experiences” (Haines, 2003, p. 327). Decision-makers are failing “to incorporate gender-related claims of women into their interpretation” of what it means to be a refugee, as a result the definition is based on the male experience (Haines, 2003, p. 327). Thus, whether it is the

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5 The wording of the Geneva Convention can be found in the footnotes on the first page of this document.
wording of the definition or policy-makers’ limited interpretation, both Indra (1987) and Haines (2003, p. 327) suggest a need for more “gender inclusive and gender-sensitive” policy towards female refugees.

According to Deacon and Sullivan (2009, p. 273), “while refugee men and women share many needs in common, gender role and status differences…produce differences in their refugee resettlement experiences which need to be considered in integration planning.” For example, in refugee camps women are at greater risk for sexual assault, attack, and exploitation by armed forces, border guards, and refugee camp officials (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 273; Indra, 1987, p. 4). During resettlement, these experiences may result in a need for additional health screenings, mental health therapy, or general support and empowerment. In addition, women often have less access to formal education prior to resettlement. Thus, upon arrival women may need access to pre-literacy classes or other educational support. All in all, these differing camp experiences result in differing needs during resettlement than men (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 272). Rumbaut, a leading expert on immigrant and refugee resettlement, suggests that providing services tailored to women’s needs helps the whole family because women “are integral to their families’ successful adjustment and overall well-being in resettlement” (as cited in Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 274).

b. Personal Experience

In this section I discuss my previous experiences that led to my interest and compatibility in working with refugee women. Prior to arriving in Pittsburgh I served as a Health Education Peace Corps Volunteer in rural Tanzania where I worked on a number of projects from developing a solar micro-enterprise program to teaching health
education at a weekly women’s clinic. My interest in continuing to work with internationals led to my internship with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) Immigrant and International Initiative. The Immigrant and International Advisory Council (IIAC)⁶ was established in 2007 and is comprised of members of the immigrant and international communities, consumers of DHS services, and representatives of service provider agencies that work with immigrant and international communities (Barron, p. 2, 2013). My internship introduced me to key stakeholders in Pittsburgh’s refugee community and enabled me to learn about the resettlement process.

My time at DHS was focused on developing and implementing the Immigrant Family Childcare Program (IFCP), a project aimed at developing business opportunities for immigrant and refugee women and increasing the quality of childcare through a home-based childcare provider training program. Through this project, I was able to work directly with refugee and immigrant women and learn more about their needs and the barriers they face. Barriers include cultural-based patriarchal norms of husbands not wanting their wives working outside the home and women not feeling comfortable leaving their children at childcare centers, both of which often result in women having lower levels of English proficiency and less success in integration. Although Pittsburgh historically receives fewer refugees than Philadelphia, Erie, and Lancaster, the numbers are still significant for the region and increasing every year (Barron, p. 2, 2013). This increased influx of refugees is putting greater pressure on local service providers to develop infrastructure to assist integration.

⁶ In January 2013 the IIAC released a five-year report of its organizational history. The document can be found here: www.alleghenycounty.us/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=3796
In working on the IFCP and other IIAC initiatives, I had the opportunity to visit and speak with many of the direct service providers and learn firsthand the extent of time and effort that goes into refugee resettlement. My experience with refugee case workers is that they are forced to manage large caseloads; trying to strike a balance of efficient service provision to current clients while Hurrying to prepare for incoming clients. When I asked about services tailored specifically towards women, many of the service providers acknowledged that women, along with the elderly, represent a current gap in provision because reaching out to them directly is difficult.


c. Filling in the Gaps

A gender-informed framework for interpreting and measuring integration is lacking in the current literature, which on a policy level seems to reflect a male-centered provision of services that ineffectively addresses refugee women. The literature suggests that this gap exists because of the general lack of consensus on meaning and implementation of integration, paired with a limited understanding and interpretation of women’s experiences by policy-makers. Thus, I aim to address this gap in policy and practice in my research by adapting Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework to a gendered perspective with a focus on the indicators of “employment,” “social bridges,” “language and culture,” and “citizenship and rights.”

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7 Refugee needs vary case by case, but some individuals require more hand-holding than others. Scheduling a doctor’s appointment, for example, may seem simple but can require extensive time and effort on behalf of a case worker. The case worker helps to select healthcare providers, schedule appointments and coordinate care, resolve health insurance challenges, provide transportation to medical appointments, and provide interpretation.
8 Various programs include the Matching Grant Program (within six months of arrival) and includes case management, Cash Assistance Program (within eight months of arrival), and general employment services (within five years of arrival) (Vinciguerra, 2012).
9 The Prospect Park Family Center is not exclusively for refugees, but many of their clients are refugees. In contrast to refugee resettlement agencies their work is almost exclusively with women (moms and grandmas) and their goal is to expand their reach to men by offering dad-only services.
Although the scale of my research is small, by conducting two focus groups with women from varying socio-demographic and cultural backgrounds I hope to contribute new insights into refugee women’s resettlement and integration experiences in Pittsburgh.\textsuperscript{10} Having some knowledge of female refugees’ collective and individual experiences during the integration process may be helpful for service providers who work with this group. At the local level I hope my study provides a useful framework for refugee-serving agencies to assess women’s adjustment to their new communities with more inclusive measures that are relevant to women. In addition, I hope this helps lead to a better understanding of female refugee needs, which often include learning language, finding employment, and making social connections. While men may share these needs, their differing experiences require different approaches. For example, women often have had less education than men and may require pre-literacy classes prior to beginning English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. To go one step further, language classes could be structured with vocabulary tailored to women’s daily experiences of going to the grocery store, cooking, or caring for children. According to Deacon and Sullivan (2009, p. 272), “meeting these needs may facilitate the resettlement process and ameliorate the gendered effects of resettlement on refugee women.”

\textbf{II. Literature Review}

My literature review seeks to provide an understanding of “integration” through a gendered perspective. I begin by reviewing definitions of “resettlement” and “integration.” A gendered analysis of integration follows a brief discussion on ways to

\textsuperscript{10} According to Ager and Strang (2004, p. 7), the framework has already been used by the Home Office of the United Kingdom and by the Scottish Refugee Council.
measure integration. Lastly, I introduce the Indicators of Integration framework developed by Ager and Strang (2004), which I will use to analyze the data from my focus groups because it contains both functional and social indicators enabling both qualitative and quantitative measurements of integration. While policy-makers often focus on functional indicators because they are “areas of public activity where integration [can] be assessed,” refugees emphasize social indicators because they describe the relationships between people (Ager & Strang, 2004, p. 3). I adapt Ager and Strang’s (2004) framework to a gendered perspective in order to better understand female refugees’ needs during integration.

Numerous studies have attempted to synthesize a universal concept of integration, identify what constitutes “successful” integration and establish ways to measure integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Dickerson, Leary, Meritt, & Zaidi, n.d.; Gray & Elliott, 2001; Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). Although “women’s experiences have long been overlooked for a male-centered paradigm” an increasing number of studies in the past decade have recognized the need to explore the gendered-needs of resettled refugee women (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 272). These studies provide a good starting point for research, but recognize the limitations of results owing to differences in the socio-demographics of the women, relocation city, and variations in country of origin (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 282; Olsson, 2002, p. 51). Further research has been proposed to explore “the significance of refugee women’s socio-demographic characteristics to their experiences in resettlement” in order to more effectively tailor services to their needs (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 282). My research aims to contribute to the burgeoning field of exploring female refugees’ needs by attempting to address the limitations
mentioned by recruiting women who are from various countries of origin that have resettled in Pittsburgh.

a. Resettlement and Integration

I define “resettlement” by referring to the Refugee Act of 1980 that created the United States Resettlement Program (USRP) which focuses on employment training and placement for economic self-sufficiency, English language training, making cash assistance accessible and providing women equal opportunity. The period of resettlement established by the United States government begins when the refugee steps off the plane and continues for approximately six months (Lutheran Social Services, 2012). During this time, the refugee is offered an array of services, provided by one of ten volunteer agencies or “volags” with money from the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, ranging from employment assistance, language training, cash assistance, and medical visits.

“Integration” is more difficult to define because there is no national integration policy (Dwyer, 2010, p. 3) or universally accepted definition of what constitutes integration (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 307). Part of the reason for this lack of clarity on integration is because the USRP is not oriented towards long-term integration.

(i) make available sufficient resources for employment training and placement in order to achieve economic self-sufficiency among refugees as quickly as possible,
(ii) provide refugees with the opportunity to acquire sufficient English language training to enable them to become effectively resettled as quickly as possible,
(iii) insure that cash assistance is made available to refugees in such a manner as not to discourage their economic self-sufficiency, in accordance with subsection (e)(2), and
(iv) insure that women have the same opportunities as men to participate in training and instruction.

12 The ten volags include Church World Service (CWS), Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), International Rescue Committee (IRC), US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and World Relief Corporation (WR) http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/voluntary-agencies
It is focused on the short-term by providing “limited, time-bound assistance aimed at meeting the immediate needs of the refugees in such areas as housing, employment, food, transportation, and healthcare” (Dwyer, 2010, p. 11). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the United Nations agency “mandated to lead and co-ordinate the international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide” (UNHCR, n.d.). The three “durable solutions” they offer to refugees include voluntary repatriation (returning to their country of origin), local integration (in the country of refuge), and resettlement in a third country. Their definition of integration in the *International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration* (2002, p. 12) states:

Integration is a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and on-going process. From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one’s own cultural identity. From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugee institutions to meet the need of a diverse population.

I think it is important to mention this definition, not only because it comes from the UNHCR, but because it emphasizes that integration is a responsibility for both the refugee and the host community. This duality is reflected in many of the responses I received regarding integration from the preliminary interviews I conducted with key stakeholders in the local community and in the literature (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309). While this definition relies heavily on social factors of integration, Ager and Strang (2004, p. 9) offer another definition which I will use for the purpose of my study because
it emphasizes both functional indicators and social factors. They believe an individual or group is integrated within a society when they:

- Achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities, and
- Are in active relationship with members of their ethnic or national community, wider host communities and relevant services and functions of the state, in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship in that society.

Including both functional indicators, like employment, addresses policy-makers’ desire to measure integration quantitatively, while social factors, like interaction with the host population, focuses on the need for refugees to build relationships in their new communities. The potential relevance for a gendered understanding of this definition lies in the flexibility of the indicators to accurately reflect women’s situations. For example, employment is often not a good indicator of integration for women because many stay at home to tend to domestic responsibilities.

In conclusion, resettlement addresses the immediate needs of refugees upon arrival to approximately six months. Integration, however, is a more difficult period to define as policy-makers, refugee-serving agencies, and refugees themselves have differing opinions as to its definition. In the following section I attempt to synthesize the current literature on measuring integration and identify common themes that have application at both at the policy level and in the local community.
b. Measuring Integration

According to Ager and Strang (2008, p. 166), integration is a key policy objective related to the resettlement of refugees and other migrants; however, coherent policy development and productive public debate is hindered by the widely differing meanings of integration. There is little in the way of established criteria for assessing whether refugees have integrated into the host society of any of the ten countries\textsuperscript{13} of resettlement (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 10; Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 305). Robinson (1998, p. 118) is cited in numerous articles suggesting that integration is “a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most.” It is generally agreed that there is no standard formula to integration and that it occurs differently for each person (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 167; Dwyer, 2010, p. 5). The Refugee Resettlement Research Project (Refugee Voices) asserts that “the lack of measurement of refugees’ resettlement is an international rather than a local issue,” while emphasizing “the importance of including refugees themselves at all stages of the settlement process, including policy making, service development, service delivery and research” (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p.80). Despite this lack of coherent policy, “integration remains significant” as a stated policy and targeted outcome in countries of resettlement (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 167).

While the concept of integration may be interpreted differently, there are common themes that have application at the policy level (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309). Many studies agree that indicators for refugee integration should serve as tools to define and measure local needs and success in relationship to the host population (Dwyer, 2010, p. 12; Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309). A framework helps policy makers think

\textsuperscript{13} Countries include (from highest number of resettled to lowest): United States, Canada, Australia, Sweden, Norway, United Kingdom, Finland, New Zealand, Germany, and Netherlands. About 1% of refugees are resettled in other countries (UNHCR, 2011, p. 64).
about the different dimensions of integration, allows stakeholders to compare work across different regions or settings, and enables agencies to refine their services and policies accordingly, which promotes multi-agency collaboration needed to deliver more effective integration practices (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309).

Dywer (2010, p. 31) identifies ten indicators of integration that include language skills, orientation programs, healthy lifestyle, mental health issues, access to services, personal safety and security, economic self-sufficiency, educational opportunities, social connectedness, and overall quality of life. Many commentators have stressed the importance of social integration and the interaction between social and functional dimensions, yet in policy terms, the focus remains on the functional because the state views it as having the most influence (Dwyer, 2010, p. 31). Thus, the most commonly used measures are economic through job placement, with little regard to the refugees’ own perspective (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 10).

Phillimore and Goodson (2008, p. 305) used household surveys, in-depth interviews and focus groups to explore how useful Ager and Strang’s (2004) framework of integration is in evaluating progress towards integration. They view integration as “a process that begins with arrival and ends when refugees are in equal position to the majority” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 309). They focus on functional indicators which include employment, housing, education, and health. While they conclude that functional indicators “do have a role in helping us to understand the situation of refugees in relation to the general population” it is the “interrelationship between indicators that is important and offers the greatest potential to deepen our understanding of integration experiences” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 321). They conclude that further research
is needed to “explore how indicators can be used to enhance service delivery and assist service providers in providing support to refugees” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 320). At the policy level Phillimore and Goodson (2008, p. 320) believe the development of integration indicators will “encourage policymakers to think about the different dimensions of integration and to consider its multi-faceted nature.”

In conclusion, while the current literature does not have a universally accepted definition of integration, many support the development of a framework in which to implement and measure it. Also, the literature shows consensus on common themes of integration, including the barriers refugees face, and the importance of “involving refugees themselves at every stage and in each area of resettlement” (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 722; Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 7). In the next section, I discuss integration through a gendered perspective focusing on the gender-specific needs that women encounter during their adjustment.

c. A Gendered Analysis of Integration

According to Indra (1987, p. 3), “one can see the systematic neglect of gender as a critical consideration in every facet of the refugee situation, beginning with the popular culture image of ‘the refugee’” which does “not differentiate men and women as distinct kinds of refugees.” She says that “generalized references to ‘refugees’ obscure more than they illuminate” because they obscure ways in which gender may play a role in how refugees are created (Indra, 1987, p. 3). The Geneva Refugee Convention does not mention sex or gender oppression in its definition of a refugee, which some argue is inadequate because it “does not protect people against all kinds of harm, even if it is serious enough to amount to persecution” (Indra, 1987, p. 3; Newland, 2003, p. 3). As a
result, some people have suggested that gender be added as a sixth dimension (Newland, 2003, p. 3). For example, during resettlement women are often dealt with as dependents of male kin and subject to persecution (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 272; Indra, 1987, p. 3; Newland, 2003, p. 3). Indra (1987, p. 4) concludes by saying that we should consider “that these people are men and women who happen to be refugees,” which will lend itself to more practical gender-informed programming.

Current service provision to resettled refugees has focused on a male-centered paradigm. According to Goodkind and Deacon (2004, p. 723), even when effort is made to include refugees’ perspectives, “formal leaders in many refugee communities are men who often do not represent the views and interests of women and people with varying social status.” A needs assessment conducted with refugee women by Deacon and Sullivan (2009, p. 282) emphasized the need to consider the impact of refugee women’s socio-demographic characteristics on their experiences in resettlement and the significance of their need for basic resources. They interviewed 31 refugee women from various backgrounds who had been resettled in a midsized Midwestern city in order to collect data using questions designed to assess gaps between the women’s needs and resources provided to them (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p.275). They argue that “meeting these needs will help facilitate the resettlement process and ameliorate the gendered

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14 Article 1 of the Convention, as amended in 1967 reads as follows: "A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it." (Bold font added) Taken from the UNHCR website at http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf

15 I am hesitant to say that this is true everywhere in the world, although my literature review does support this with studies from the United States, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand. As the U.S. is the top resettlement country (in 2010 the U.S. resettled 54,077 refugees out of 72,914 worldwide), this exclusion of female experiences affects a disproportionate percentage of refugees (UNHCR, 2011, p. 64).
effects of resettlement on women” (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 275). Their results found that women’s overarching needs were in the area of language, finances, social support, and the ability to access resources (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 276).

A study conducted by the New Zealand Immigrant Service on refugee resettlement found that particular groups, like women and children, are poorly served under current arrangements (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 3). They note that women have needs different than men because “they are more likely to be dependent on spouses and to have responsibilities for children” (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 5). For example, local stakeholders noted that if women want to attend language classes or cultural orientations, it often depends upon childcare facilities and reimbursement for childcare (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 5; Macurak, 2012; Respondent 2, 2012; Rich, 2012; Vinciguerra, 2012).

Yet many are hesitant to use non-family childcare. Women are also “often more enmeshed in family networks than male refugees,” so family reunification holds greater significance for them (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 5). Lastly, they emphasize that women without partners tend to be particularly vulnerable because they are “disadvantaged in terms of access to information, social support and socio-economic status, and may experience poorer health than those who have partners” (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 5).

Phillimore and Goodson’s (2008, pp. 314-319) study corroborates this through the use of surveys, interviews, and focus groups with refugees that demonstrated it was more difficult for some women to access language, employment and health provision because of inadequate child care provision and cultural issues. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) identifies barriers to women’s successful integration to include legal status, language difficulties, isolation, family and domestic responsibilities,
and poverty (as cited in Olsson, 2002, p. 9). Other issues include domestic violence, health, age, culture and tradition. These barriers are interconnected and negatively reinforce each other, which may often lead women to live in isolation and fail to learn the language (Olsson, 2002, p. 10).

Barriers, however, do not always negatively impact, as seen from the UNHCR Executive Committee’s Report on Refugee Women (2001, p. 4):

While displacement created obstacles for empowerment for refugee women, it also creates opportunities. Every day, displaced women and returnee women, overcome traditional roles that inhibit their participation in economic and political life, challenging customs and traditions out of sheer necessity, in order to continue to provide for themselves and their families.

Thus, integration may lead some women to experience greater freedom and opportunity, yet for many it is difficult to negotiate their place within these new contexts (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 273). Goodkind and Deacon (2004, p. 723) note that the “unique challenges refugee women often face as a result of their resettlement experiences, including limited transferable occupational skills, multiple and conflicting roles, the double burden of work inside and outside of the home, shifting gender and power dynamics, and sexism both within their communities and larger society.” For example, in resettlement many refugee women find it necessary financially to work outside of the home and must now balance employment with a full load of domestic responsibilities (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 273). In addition, refugee women are “often triply marginalized due to their economic, racial/ethnic, and gender status” (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 724). Unfortunately, this change in role may contribute to increased

Olsson (2002, p. 41) explores integration through employment by conducting focus groups with female refugees from Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia, comparing women who recently arrived and those who resettled several years earlier. She identified language, difficulty transferring previous employment experience, transportation, stress and difficulty navigating new roles as barriers. Olsson (2002, p. 18) suggests that resettlement, while challenging, can be empowering for women because they are able to work outside the home and make their own money. Like Deacon and Sullivan (2009), Olsson (2002, p. 51) says that further studies are needed to compare the variability of socio-demographic characteristics of the women and location of resettlement.

Goodkind and Deacon (2004, p. 723) conducted studies aimed at understanding needs and perspectives of women in two communities, Hmong women from Laos and Muslim women from the Middle East and Africa, respectively. Their research corroborates other studies documenting the challenges of refugee women, “mainly limited transferable occupational skills, multiple and conflicting roles, the double burden of work inside and outside the home, shifting gender and power dynamics, and sexism both within their communities and larger society” (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 723). In addition, they identify six principles for conducting research with refugee women which I aim to incorporate in my own research.16

Thus, the current literature identifies “a host of challenges to [refugee women’s] daily well-being” that they must face and asserts that although women “frequently have needs that differ radically from those of refugee men, they often are not represented

16 Additional information on the six principles can be found in the Methodology section.
adequately when research with refugees is conducted” (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 724). Common needs identified include language, finances, social support, and health provision, while childcare and cultural issues were common barriers. Although many women often experience greater freedom and opportunity, it is difficult to negotiate their place within these new multiple and conflicting roles. In the following section I introduce and discuss the relevance of Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework.

*d. Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration Framework*

Ager and Strang’s (2004) paper identifies perceived elements of “successful” integration in the United Kingdom, by policymakers, refugees, and the host population. They based their framework on six phases of research including a review of potential indicators, a conceptual analysis of integration, a qualitative study of the experience of integration, linkage of variables in the cross-sectional survey, selection of indicators, and consultation and verification. The ten indicators are divided into four themes (Means and Markers; Social Connections; Facilitators; and Foundation) that discuss achievement and access across the sectors of employment, housing, education and health; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; structural barriers to such connection related to language, culture and the local environment; and assumptions and practice regarding citizenship and rights (Ager & Strang, 2004, p. 3). They developed this framework in order to foster debate and define normative conceptions of integration in resettlement settings.

Ager and Strang’s focus is to facilitate discussion regarding perceptions of integration that is accessible to policymakers, researchers, service providers and refugees
themselves and “does not seek to comprehensively map political, social, economic and institutional factors influencing the process of integration itself” (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 167). Instead, the framework acts as a “middle-range theory” that seeks “to provide a coherent conceptual structure for considering, from a normative perspective, what constitutes the key components of integration” (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 167). Middle-range theory aims to integrate theory and empirical research by beginning with an observation rather than a theory and generalizing it with statements than can be verified by the data (Wikipedia, 2012).

The framework has influenced national (United Kingdom) and regional policy formulation with the goal of being used for commissioning and developing services aimed at supporting refugee integration (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 167). The framework is beneficial because it takes into account indicators of local and national relevance, which allows the framework to be used in “contexts with widely differing conceptions of citizenship, normative expectations of social integration within communities, educational attainment, etc.” (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 185). The authors emphasize that although the framework mentions ten discrete domains, their interdependence is necessary (Ager & Strang, 2004, p. 5). A complaint of Phillimore and Goodson (2008, p. 307) is that the framework places considerable emphasis on functional indicators which downplays social connections, linguistic and cultural knowledge and shared notions of citizenship. This perspective focuses more on the outcomes of the process than the process itself, without explicitly discussing the possibility of institutional adaptation to meet refugees’ needs (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008, p. 307).
Thus, Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework attempts to synthesize a universal, working definition of integration and offer a flexible way to measure both functional and social indicators of integration. In addition, I believe it will be useful for my research because it is structured to be used for both policy and practice. In the following section I conclude the literature review with a discussion on women’s integration needs through a local perspective based on interviews with key stakeholders.

**e. A Local Perspective on Gendered-Needs: Interviews with Key Stakeholders**

I conducted interviews with key stakeholders in the refugee community in October and November 2012 in order to gain a better understanding of local resettlement and integration in Pittsburgh. I attempted to speak with a diverse range of sources including, direct service providers at two refugee resettlement agencies (Northern Area Companies and Jewish Family and Children’s Services), staff at a family support center (Prospect Park Family Center17), a leader of a local cultural organization (Union of African Communities in Pittsburgh18), and two refugee women (from Iraq and Bhutan19). My discussions with key informants focused on a few common themes or indicators20 that Ager and Strang (2004) label “employment,” “social bridges,” “language and culture,” and “rights and citizenship” which I elaborate upon below.

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17 The Prospect Park Family Center is a family support center that was established in 2007 by South Hills Interfaith Ministries (SHIM) through funding from the Allegheny County DHS. The Family Center is free to all families living in Prospect Park with a special focus on families with children ages 0-5 years. Services include home visits, child development screenings, group activities, and referrals. The Family Center also provides field trips, monthly family fun nights, guest speakers on issues like health and safety, youth mentoring and a weekly Family Group. The activities allow families to spend time together, foster community, and provide opportunities for English language development. For more information, see APPENDIX D.

18 The UAC is a non-profit umbrella organization that seeks to foster unity, empowerment, linkages and improve quality of life for Africans in the region. There are over twenty-five countries and communities from immigrants, refugees, students, and internationals represented in the UAC. For additional information, see APPENDIX D.

19 For cultural information, see APPENDIX E.
Employment

While Ager and Strang (2008, p. 170) note that refugees are often highly educated in comparison with other groups of immigrants, this observation lacks a gendered analysis. Many refugee women have had limited access to education and consequently are unlikely to have been employed outside of the home prior to arrival in the United States (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 723). For those women who were previously employed, oftentimes they lack the skills that transfer well to industrialized nations (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 723; Olsson, 2004, p. 42). The staff at the Prospect Park Family Center noted that many of the women they interact with do not work outside the home, so employment is not a good indicator to measure the integration of women (Macurak, 2012; Rich, 2012). In addition, many refugees follow patriarchal practices where all decision-making, like working outside of the home or taking care of children, is done by the husband or male head of the household (Johnson, 2012; Vinciguerra, 2012). Many families realize that it is necessary for women to work outside the home in order to cover bills and once women find employment, it often becomes difficult to balance work and home because they are responsible for household duties and childcare (Aizenman, 2012; Idris, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Macurak, 2012; Respondent 2, 2012; Rich, 2012; Vinciguerra, 2012). Becky Johnson, a housing and employment case manager at Northern Area Companies (NAC), emphasizes that job placement alone is not a good indicator. Instead she proposes using job placement and job retention because this indicates a good understanding of United States working culture (Johnson, 2012). This example reinforces the interconnectedness of the indicators of integration. The next indicator focuses on the importance of building relationships or “bridges” between different groups.
Social Bridges

Refugee resettlement staff emphasized integration as a process that varies individually when refugees become part of their new society by blending, not losing their culture (Aizenman, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Vinciguerra, 2012). Almost every informant that I spoke to mentioned what I termed “micro-integration,” which relates to Ager and Strang’s (2004) idea of “building bridges” (Aizenman, 2012; Idris, 2012; Macurak, 2012; Respondent 2, 2012; Rich, 2012). “Micro-integration” was identified as integration on a smaller scale, or more specifically, into the small community in which a refugee now lives, like the Prospect Park community, not the United States as a whole. An example would be a refugee who lives in Prospect Park, attends English class, and interacts socially with her neighbors and goes to the Family Center when she needs help, but has not yet integrated with the wider Pittsburgh community (Respondent 2, 2012). “Building bridges” is especially important for women because women often come to the United States as dependents and rely on male heads of family. Vulnerable groups that may have additional difficulties in navigating social bridges were identified as secondary migrants and single mothers (Johnson, 2012; Vinciguerra, 2012).

Language and Culture

Many of the key informants I spoke with highlighted language and cultural competency, of both refugees and the host community, as barriers to integration (Aizenman, 2012; Idris, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Macurak, 2012; Respondent 1, 2012;

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21 Secondary migrants are refugees that are resettled in one city, but then move to another city. Pittsburgh’s 2011 claim to most livable city in the United States by the Economist’s Intelligence Unit has resonated with many refugee groups, who are coming because jobs are easier to find, the housing is affordable, and the overall environment is enjoyable. For example, refugee resettlement agencies initially settled around 500 Bhutanese refugees, but due to secondary migration, the number is closer to 3,000 people. This places a greater burden on the service providers, who are already limited in the services they can offer due to inadequate staff and limited budgets (Aizenman, 2012).
Respondent 2, 2012; Rich, 2012; Vinciguerra, 2012). This goes back to patriarchal practices of men not wanting women to leave the house, so they are unable to attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes (Johnson, 2012; Vinciguerra, 2012). House management and finding childcare are issues for women, while men are able to learn English faster because they can attend more ESL classes, go to work and interact with Americans and therefore, get their driver’s licenses (and other certifications) more quickly (Respondent 2, 2012). Thus, not being able to leave home to go to ESL classes or to work severely hinders women’s ability to develop language skills needed to participate actively in their new communities. The Prospect Park Family Center staff also mentioned that resettlement can lead to a change in family dynamics, for better or for worse because of women’s shifting roles (Macurak, 2012; Rich, 2012). Lastly, many informants acknowledged the importance of two-way integration between both refugees and the host community (Aizenman, 2012; Idris, 2012). The host community has a responsibility to educate themselves on their new neighbors. While Pittsburgh has a long history of immigrants, many residents are unaware of what a refugee is, the countries their new neighbors are coming from, and of the cultures they bring with them. The next section discusses the final indicator focused on rights.

Rights and Citizenship

In order to gain citizenship (or become naturalized) in the United States, refugees must take a naturalization test after residing in country for five years which requires adequate knowledge of English. Thus men, who work outside of the home and attend ESL classes more often than women, have a greater chance of becoming naturalized. As with the “Employment” indicator, “Rights and Citizenship” needs to be altered to encompass women’s role in securing their rights. Key informants also noted that
polygamy is an issue that affects the entire family. In order to be resettled to the United States, the husband must choose one wife while the other(s) is effectively made a single mother which further enhances vulnerability (Aizenman, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Vinciguerra, 2012; Idris, 2012).

In conclusion, while policy-makers, refugee-serving agencies and refugees themselves have yet to identify universal measures of integration, the literature and local service providers are in strong agreement that the different experiences of refugee men and women prior to resettlement result in varying needs during integration. Current services are based on a male-centered paradigm and do not effectively serve women’s needs, which include language, employment, transportation, social support, and access to resources. It was also noted that resettlement often alters gender and power dynamics within the family, which some women may find empowering and others difficult. In the next section I connect what I discussed in the literature review to my research methodology. I apply a gendered perspective to Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework to inform my data analysis.

III. Methodology

My research aims to identify the gendered-needs of refugee women using Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework, with a focus on the indicators of “employment,” “social bridges,” “language and culture,” and “rights and citizenship” adapted to a gendered perspective. I will collect my data from two focus groups with refugee women from varying countries of origin and socio-demographics and use an exploratory, inductive methodology. Although I understand there are limitations to my
research, I hope that it yields meaningful findings about the integration needs of women. I begin this section by stating my research questions. I continue by further describing Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework and how I aim to apply it to my research. I conclude with Goodkind and Deacon’s (2004) principles for conducting research with refugee women in order to address any methodological challenges.

a. Research Questions

My overarching research question is: what are the gendered needs of refugee women in Pittsburgh? I will use an inductive, exploratory methodology through focus groups to collect my data and search for themes. Additional research questions include:

1. How do refugee women perceive integration upon arrival to the United States? Does this change over time?
2. How do refugee women’s roles within the family change as a result of resettlement?
3. What are refugee women’s long term goals?
4. What barriers are there to achieving these goals?

b. Using Ager and Strang’s Indicators of Integration Framework

For the purpose of my study, based on time constraints and feasibility issues, I decided to narrow my focus to one indicator in each of the four themes of Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework. I chose each indicator based on information I gathered from the preliminary interviews I conducted with key stakeholders. The four themes Ager and Strang (2004, p. 13) identify are:

Means and markers are key areas for the participation of refugees in the life of communities. They serve as markers of integration in so far as they show
evidence of achieving or accessing things that are valued within the community. They also serve as means to those ends, in that they will often help achieve other things relevant to integration.

Social connection involves the different social relationships and networks that help towards integration. Those connections may be with people who share your own experiences and values through ethnicity, religion or country of origin. These connections are defined as bonds within communities. Connections with other groups are seen as bridges between communities. Finally, connections that help to access services and be fully involved as a citizen are defined as links to services and government. All serve to connect an individual or group into the wider community.

Facilitators are the key skills, knowledge and circumstances that help people to be active, engaged and secure within communities.

Foundation refers to the principles that define what you have a right to expect from the state and from other members of your communities and what is expected of you. These principles include the rights that are given to individuals and the expectations and obligations of citizenship.

In order to adapt this framework towards a gendered analysis, I attempt to identify types of gender differences and inequalities that refugee-serving agencies may take for granted.

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22 I refer to Crawley’s (2001, pp. 6-7) definition of “gender” as “the social construction of power relations between women and men, and the implications of these relations for women’s (and men’s) identity, status, roles and responsibilities (in other words, the social organization of sexual difference). Gender is not static or innate but acquires socially and culturally constructed meaning because it is a primary way of signifying relations of power. Gender relations and gender differences are therefore historically, geographically and culturally specific, so that what it is to be a ‘woman’ or ‘man’ varies through space and over time. Any analysis of the way in which
during resettlement and integration, such as men and women’s access to and control over resources, along with the different social roles within the family unit and the community (like breadwinner, childcare provider, etc.) (DevTech, n.d.). Gender analysis recognizes that women’s and men’s lives, experiences, issues, and priorities are different; women are not all the same (interests may be determined as much by social position or ethnic identity, as gender); experiences, needs, issues, and priorities depend on age, ethnicity, disability, income levels, employment status, marital status, sexual orientation, and children (Srinivas, n.d.).

The Refugee Women’s Legal Group (RWLG, 1998, p. 3) further explains:

Gender is a social relation that enters into, and partly constitutes, all other social relations and identities. Women’s experiences of persecution, and of the process of asylum determination, will also be shaped by differences of race, class, sexuality, age, marital status, sexual history and so on. Looking at gender, as opposed to sex enables an approach [to the refugee definition] which can accommodate specificity, diversity and heterogeneity.

Thus, in highlighting the gender differences between men and women, while still recognizing the diversity of women, I hope to adapt a gendered perspective to Ager and Strang’s (2004) framework in order to identify gaps in service provision and better meet women’s needs in an effort to achieve gender equity.23 In the next section, I discuss in more detail each of the indicators of integration I have chosen to use for my research,

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23 Equality is based on premise that men and women should be treated the same way and fails to recognize that equal treatment will not produce equitable results. Equity recognizes the need to consider different approaches to achieve equitable outcomes.
which include “employment,” “social bridges,” “language and culture,” and “rights and citizenship.”

*Indicators of Integration*

Within the “means and markers” theme, there are four indicators including “employment,” “housing,” “education” and “health.” I selected “employment” as my indicator because it “provides a mechanism for income generation and economic advancement and, as such, is generally considered by both policy analysts and refugees themselves as a key factor in supporting integration” (Ager & Strang, 2004, p. 14). Employment is related to many issues like promoting economic independence, planning for the future, meeting members of the host society, providing opportunity to develop language skills, restoring self-esteem and encouraging self-reliance (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 170). Ager and Strang (2008, p. 170) identify barriers to securing employment as non-recognition of qualifications of previous work experience and under-employment. As mentioned in the literature review, patriarchal practices often prevent women from working outside of the home because men do not want outside employment to interfere with women’s domestic responsibilities. If women do seek outside employment, oftentimes previous experience or qualifications are not recognized. Once employment is attained, it is often difficult to negotiate their new roles within the family structure.

In “social connections” there are three indicators, including “social bridges,” “social bonds” and “social links.” I focus on “social bridges” which refers to “the relationship between refugees and host communities [and] is generally represented by issues relating to social harmony, and also to references to refugee participation in the

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24 Under-employment is defined as holding a job which does not require the level of skills or qualifications possessed by the jobholder. It is a common experience of refugees in the job market (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 170).
host society” (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 179). This indicator measures connections established with people of other national, ethnic, or religious groupings in order to make “two way” interaction the heart of integration (Ager & Strang, 2004, p. 18). Creating bridges to other communities supports social cohesion, and opens up opportunities for broadening cultural understanding, widening economic opportunities etc.” (Ager & Strang, 2004, p.18). According to the literature and interviews with key stakeholders, it seems that women have less opportunity to “build bridges” because they have less access to resources. Refugee-serving agencies identified women as a particularly difficult population to access in regards to providing services. For example, men are generally the leaders (and therefore gatekeepers) of refugee communities.

The “facilitators” theme has two indicators which are “language and cultural knowledge” and “safety and stability.” I chose “language and cultural knowledge” because “such skills facilitate social connection, both with other communities and with state and voluntary agencies” and “includes very practical information for daily living (e.g. regarding transport, utilities, benefits, etc.) as well as customs and expectations”(Ager & Strang, 2004, p. 21). As has been cited by several studies in the literature review, women often have less access to language classes due to domestic responsibilities. Also, overall cultural competence is seen as necessary in order to effectively integrate into a community, often with a focus on language (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 182). For example, lacking English can be a barrier to social interaction, economic integration and full participation in the host community (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 182). This indicator is also viewed as a two-way understanding of refugees understanding the host community and the host community receiving the refugees,
especially regarding providers of essential services like healthcare (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 182).

Lastly, “rights and citizenship” represents the only indicator in the “foundation” theme which “focuses upon the enablement of rights for those ultimately granted full refugee status or leave to remain” (Ager & Strang, 2004, p. 23). Ager and Strang (2008, p. 173) state that this theme creates the most “confusion and disagreement regarding understandings of integration” because of the “widely different understandings of citizenship.” They say that definitions of integration reflect a nation’s sense of identity and certain values (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 173). The United States supports a “pluralist political inclusion” which emphasizes the right to maintain cultural and religious identity and practices (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 175), yet the United States Refugee Program (USRP) is rescue-oriented with a focus on early job placement and self-sufficiency and “does not take into account a refugee’s potential for integration” (Dwyer, 2010, p. 11). A gendered look at citizenship begins with the assertion of equal rights, but must acknowledge that different groups have different needs so rights must be tailored accordingly (Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC), n.d.). Thus, citizenship is an active concept or “a relationship that promotes participation and agency” so marginalized groups, like women, can “claim their rights and pursue social change” (GSDRC, n.d.)

In conclusion, in order to address my research questions I attempt to adapt a gendered perspective to Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework, focused on both functional and social indicators including “employment,” “social
bridges,” “language and culture,” and “rights and citizenship.” In the following section I describe my research design.

c. Research Design

I intend to analyze the recurring themes of integration identified by the women by using an inductive methodology with the help of Ager and Strang’s (2004) framework. My focus group interview protocol is semi-structured, meaning I have developed specific questions to ask but am also “prepared to develop new questions to follow unexpected leads that arise in the course of [my] interviewing” (Glesne, 2011, p. 134). My aim is to identify common barriers to integration for refugee women in order to help service providers better address their needs. As the literature suggests, the indicators of integration are interdependent. For example, women who have resided in the United States longer have probably had the opportunity to establish more relationships, learn more English and adapt to American culture. In the following section, I begin by outlining my focus groups, and then I discuss Goodkind and Deacon’s (2004) principles for conducting research with refugee women and follow with details on participant recruitment.

d. Focus Groups

The foundation of my study is two focus groups of 10-16 refugee women living in Pittsburgh from various cultural backgrounds. They will be recruited through convenience and snowball sampling.25 The stories of these women will help guide the findings as I search for common themes and patterns within the group and raise questions

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25 Pernice (1994, p. 209) notes that conventional methods of sampling, such as random tables or systematic sampling, are often problematic when working with refugees and immigrants. She states there are three major reasons for this, specifically in the United States, which include “poor availability of lists with correct names and addresses, the high rate of mobility of the refugee and immigrant population in the United States, and their suspiciousness and unfamiliarity with social science research” (pp. 209-210).
concerning findings of previous studies using an inductive, exploratory methodology. Because of the low number of participants and the qualitative nature of the study, I will not be able to generalize my findings to the larger refugee population in the United States.

I chose focus groups as the appropriate method for conducting this research for a variety of reasons based on existing literature in the field: Focus groups can provide new insights from detailed discussion between the participants and the group dynamics of the interviews can be a benefit, since one comment may illicit responses from other members (Salkind, 2009, p. 211). Clarke (2009, pp. 91-92) used a qualitative methodology for her study with Liberian refugee women stating that it helped “to better understand a variety of culture-related phenomena, and its reflexive nature allows for the cultural perspective of both the participant and the researcher to be accounted for in how the data are interpreted.” Goodkind and Deacon (2004, p. 722) state that researchers are putting “more emphasis on using qualitative methodologies to explore participants’ experiences.” Glesne (2011, p. 134) notes that focus groups may also have “emancipatory qualities if the topic is such that the discussion gives voice to silenced experiences or augments personal reflection, growth, and knowledge development.” In the next section I discuss Goodkind and Deacon’s (2004) suggestions for conducting culturally informed research with refugee women.

i. Principles for Conducting Research with Refugee Women

Goodkind and Deacon (2004, pp. 728-729) developed six suggestions for doing research with refugees based on their own qualitative work:

26 I refer to only five suggestions, as the sixth deals with quantitative measure collection.
1. Develop strategies for involving marginalized refugee women in research; They state “many refugee women are somewhat invisible, not only in their new resettlement communities, but also within their particular refugee communities” and are frequently considered “hard-to-reach” (2004, p. 729). It oftentimes “may seem easier to consult with leaders of refugee communities, who are typically men” while “it is much more difficult to connect with the more marginalized members of the community—particularly women who tend to be home-bound or busy working several jobs and taking care of their families, and who speak the least English and may be struggling the most in the United States” (2004, p. 729). In my own experience, I have found this to be true. Many local refugee service providers identify women and the elderly as “hard-to-reach” populations. Also, most (if not all) of the leaders of refugee communities are men. For example, the Immigrant and International Advisory Council (IIAC) recently accepted two new representatives of refugee communities to its Advisory Council. Both are men. Fortunately, my work on the Immigrant Family Childcare Project (IFCP) allowed me to meet and interact with women in the community. I believe this will be beneficial in conducting research because I have been able to build positive relationships and I have been able to demonstrate that I am genuinely interested in learning about the women’s experiences and in helping the community.

2. Consider the advantages and limitations of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and be innovative about combining them; For example, quantitative studies are beneficial for large groups of people to collect demographic information, but are limited in that they are less effective and accurate with people of limited literacy (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 730). While my study focuses
on qualitative research through focus groups, this is a good suggestion for future research to combine both methodologies. Benefits from qualitative studies include enabling “participants to express themselves in a more natural way, allowing for exploration of participants’ experiences and meanings and providing more opportunities for their voices and perspectives to emerge” (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 730).

3. Consider gendered decision-making structures in the lives of refugee women and their potential impact on the research process;

As mentioned in the literature review and in interviews with key stakeholders, it is “important to be sensitive to participants’ familial contexts and to include family members in the process to the largest degree possible, thus ensuring comfort in the research process” (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 733). I understand it is possible that some men may not want their wives participating in the research, but I hope that the relationships I have built through my previous work help to avoid this issue.

4. Plan for refugee women’s common triple burden of working outside of the home, managing their households, and adjusting to life in a new country;

The literature review addresses women’s burden of balancing household duties with work outside the home. As refugee women usually “need to exert substantial time and energy to learning English and dealing with the other demands of beginning their lives in a new, unfamiliar place,” Goodkind and Deacon (2004, p. 734) refer to this experience as refugee women’s “triple burden.” Thus, I need to keep in mind decisions about issues like time, location, and childcare provision in planning my focus groups. I aim to conduct them in locations with which the women are familiar and at times that are convenient to them, which will hopefully lessen any burden being placed on them.
5. Attend to refugee women’s cultural norms and unfamiliarity with the idea of interviewing.

By using cultural mediators, or people that are familiar with both the refugee’s culture and to Western research practices, to recruit participants and by writing my informed consent form in laymen’s terms, I hope to make the research process as comfortable as possible for the women. My interactions with refugee women through the IFCP provided me with an opportunity to enhance my cultural competence by becoming more familiar with cultural norms of the participants. Thus, I believe my previous experience of interacting with refugee women, combined with thorough preparation will allow me to successfully address both cultural and ethical considerations in conducting focus groups.

ii. Focus Group Recruitment

The focus group participants will be identified by service providers within the community, either through the Prospect Park Family Center or the Union for African Communities in Pittsburgh (UAC). Through my internship at DHS I developed relationships with Courtney Macurak, site director of the Prospect Park Family Center, and Rufus Idris, secretary general of the UAC. I believe their clients to be representative of the larger refugee population within Pittsburgh, although this is difficult to determine due to various factors including secondary migration. After receiving IRB approval, I will send emails to my contacts at each organization with the specific requirements for the participants. Recruitment for participation in the focus groups will be a mixture of convenience sampling and snowballing because much of it will be done

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27 For more information on these organizations, please refer to footnotes 18 and 19 on p. 29 and APPENDIX D.
28 As my research deals with women, Rufus Idris put me in touch with Constance Mulbah, a Liberian refugee who will help in recruitment of participants. She is a member of the UAC and the Liberian Community of Greater Pittsburgh.
by word of mouth. In order to participate in the focus groups, participants need to be women and they must have entered the country as a refugee. Also, in order to avoid issues with using interpreters, I aim to recruit women with a good working knowledge of English.29

iii. Setting

The research will be conducted in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a city in the northeastern United States. Pittsburgh is home to four refugee resettlement agencies (Jewish Family and Children’s Services, Catholic Charities, Northern Area Companies, and AJAPO) and is host to a diverse group of refugees from former Soviet Union states, various African nations, the Middle East, Burma and Bhutan.

During the session, my goal is to provide an encouraging and open atmosphere for participants to feel comfortable. Through both my previous (DHS) and current (CEED) internships, I have spent time with resettled refugees in Pittsburgh. I have also volunteered with a refugee youth mentoring project and have attended various cultural celebrations in the community. Thus, many refugee women and their families in Prospect Park are familiar with me through my work on the IFCP, which has helped to establish

29 As has been stated in the literature review, language is often a barrier in working with refugees. I will use an interpreter as needed during the focus group sessions. Pernice (1994, p. 210) notes that if an interpreter is necessary, “the differences inherent in two languages carry broad ramifications.” She goes on to say that “failure to use the appropriate term constitutes a serious breach of etiquette, and refusal to participate in the research project could be a consequence” (1994, p. 210). In addition, using interpreters that are well-known in the community poses problems as participants may feel hesitant to disclose information. In order to avoid these difficulties, I aim to recruit women with a good working knowledge of English, although this has its own limitations as it further limits the sample size and may skew the results. The next section discusses how the women will be recruited for the focus groups.
trust and credibility with the community. I will be responsible for asking the questions and audio-recording, which I will later transcribe.30

One focus group will take place in a woman’s home. She is a Liberian refugee who was initially resettled in Minnesota, but later came to Pittsburgh and is regarded as the matriarch of the Liberian Community of Greater Pittsburgh. Monthly meetings for the Liberian community are held at her house, so it is not unusual for people to gather and socialize together there. She is also a participant of the IFCP so we have known each other for over a year and have built a good relationship. According to the president of the Liberian community, Liberians are the second largest African group in Pittsburgh (behind Nigerians) with approximately 200 people living in Pittsburgh.

The second focus group will take place nearby at the Prospect Park Family Center, a place that the women are comfortable and familiar. The Family Center is one of the many DHS sponsored family support centers. It works mainly with families with children from age 0 to 5 years. While they do not exclusively serve the refugee population, most of their clients happen to be refugees. They provide a variety of services from in-home visits, weekly family group, monthly food pantry and more.

e. Participants in Focus Groups

As I mentioned above, the commonalities of the participants will be their gender and refugee status. They will come from various countries of origin, have various backgrounds (socio-economic, marital status and number of kids), and belong to various age groups. The Pittsburgh region is home to a diverse group of refugees, with some

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30 I will identify if any interpreters are needed prior to the session. If an interpreter is needed, she (due to the content of the research, all interpreters will be women) will be responsible for orally translating the informed consent form to the participant and interpreting during the session. If needed, she will help me transcribe the session. I have approval from Dean Swindal for a small amount of funding from the college to pay for any interpreter expenses.
groups adjusting more easily than others. The nineties initially saw an influx of refugees from the former Soviet Union. The mid-2000s saw a large group of Somali-Bantu, followed by Burmese refugees. Most recently the largest numbers of refugees being resettled are the Bhutanese (according to two refugee resettlement agencies I spoke with, over 90% of their clients are Bhutanese). In addition, there have been refugees from the Middle East and various African nations.

Many refugees experience trauma prior to arriving in the United States, but due to stigma and other cultural reasons many do not seek out mental health services. Upon arrival refugees are assigned a resettlement agency (Jewish Family and Children’s Services, Catholic Charities, Northern Area Companies, or AJAPO in Pittsburgh) that is responsible for getting the refugee housing and basic services. Most refugees qualify for food stamps and other support like childcare subsidies.

f. Limitations

According to Glesne (2011, p. 134), focus group research in general is not without drawbacks. These drawbacks may include ethical problems related to confidentiality, not getting as in-depth information from any one person as with individual interviews, and the possibility that it may silence some people whose ideas differ from those of the majority. In addition, due to time constraints and logistics, I will be unable to conduct a pilot focus group to determine if the focus group questions are culturally appropriate,

31 Northern Area Companies and Jewish Family and Children’s Services (Aizenman, 2012; Vinciguerra, 2012).
32 Cultural background information on refugees can be found in APPENDIX E.
33 In an attempt to address and mitigate these issues, I spoke with two cultural mediators and one consultant with extensive experience in conducting focus groups. Their feedback was reflected in my final focus group interview protocol. Rufus Idris, secretary general of the UAC, reviewed the focus group questions for content and cultural appropriateness. He is a good cultural mediator as he is an immigrant from Nigeria and has gone through his own process of integration, but is also aware of Western research methods and has worked extensively with both immigrants and refugees. Arpiné Porsughyan, a consultant with over
easily understood by the refugee women participants, and ensure that they will elicit responses that address my research questions (See APPENDIX A for initial interview questions).

Also, my study sample is not randomized because the size, location and characteristics of the population are not known. While I will try to make my focus groups as representative as possible by speaking with resettlement agency staff who know the demographics of their clients, my data will represent only those refugees who participate in my focus groups. This population may be skewed to those who are relatively well integrated because they are engaged in community activities at the Prospect Park Family Center or with the Union of African Communities in Pittsburgh and know English.

Lastly, the language barrier may be an issue during the actual session and in interpretation of the final results. I will try to avoid this by recruiting women with a good working knowledge of English and by audio taping both sessions in their entirety. If necessary, I will work closely with interpreters in order to understand the sentiments expressed by focus group participants. The interpreters may influence the participants if there is familiarity between them, which can work as a benefit as participants may feel more comfortable and trusting. Or it is possible that the women may answer questions the way they think they should instead of how they really feel. For example, some of the seven years of experience in conducting, analyzing, and setting-up focus groups, was the second person who I consulted. She provided feedback based on her experience as a consultant for focus groups and as a female, non-American. She gave ideas for potential follow-up questions and suggestions to elicit more targeted responses. Lastly, I shared the focus group questions with the hostess of the first focus group a few days prior to the actual session. She is viewed as the matriarch of the Liberian community and her opinion is highly valued. We discussed the objective of my research and her inquiries and follow-up questions showed comprehension of the focus group questions. Her responses also suggested that the questions were suitable for the kind of information I wanted to gather. She said that the questions were culturally appropriate and the only possible issue she could foresee was that a woman may be reluctant to sign the informed consent form or fill-in the demographic survey. If this was the case, she suggested I speak with participants individually in private.
women may not want to say anything negative about services offered by resettlement agencies because they fear repercussions. In the following section, I will introduce results from my two focus group sessions.

IV. Results

I was able to conduct two focus groups with a total of eleven women (five in the first and six in the second). No interpreters were needed for either session. A prominent woman in the Liberian community hosted the first focus group, which was comprised entirely of Liberian women ranging in age from 22 to 42. The women all knew one another which I believe helped them feel more comfortable with the process, but may have affected the data in that they withheld information they did not want to share with friends. They arrived in Pittsburgh between 2004 and 2012. Two of the women are currently married, two are single, and one is separated. According to the literature review, single women are considered to be an especially vulnerable group, and may “not be able to take full advantage of resources, such as language learning and education, that would allow them to improve their socioeconomic conditions” (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 274). As a result, the varying marital statuses in this focus group may skew results to show that the women have not taken full advantage of resources in the community. The women held various jobs while living in Liberia from map production, secretary, salesperson and student. In Pittsburgh, three of the women are either personal caregivers or nursing assistants, one does not currently have a job, and one is a housekeeper. Two of the women have children, which the literature suggests is often a barrier to integration,
while three do not. On a scale from one (no English) to five (advanced), they rated their English between a three and a five. The session lasted approximately an hour and a half.

The second focus group was made up of three Bhutanese women, one Burmese woman, one Iraqi woman, and one Moroccan woman. Everyone knew at least one other participant prior to conducting the session, which also served to make the women more comfortable. All of the women are currently married and they range in age from 30 to 40. According to Deacon and Sullivan (2009, p. 280), married women may experience more “role conflicts and pressure from their families not to work outside the home.” The women arrived in Pittsburgh between 2000 and 2012. In their home countries, two were teachers (one of special education), one was a secretary, and two did not hold jobs. In Pittsburgh, one is a personal caregiver, one is a housekeeper, one is a babysitter, one works in social services and one works at an after-school program. All of the women have children; four of the women have two children, one has three children, and one has four children. They rated their English between two and three, which is misleading as the entire session was conducted in English and the women’s responses showed adequate understanding of the questions. The session lasted close to two hours.

Some of the women in both groups were known to me through previous work with the IFCP or in visiting the Prospect Park Family Center, which proved to be very helpful. In addition, both Constance Mulbah and Courtney Macurak were able to describe the focus group process to the women prior to the session and also help communicate to

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34 The Moroccan woman arrived as an immigrant, not a refugee which I did not know until we began the session. According to Pernice (1994, p. 207), “whatever the reasons for departure from the country of origin, and however well disposed newcomers may be to the country of resettlement, they are likely to experience varying degrees of difficulties in adjustment.” Thus, although she may not have had traumatic experiences prior to resettlement, she still had similar needs during integration like language and cultural adaptation.
the participants who may have been unfamiliar with me, that I am trustworthy and that my research is beneficial for the community. Prior to audio-taping the sessions, I went over the informed consent form section by section orally and the women also had a chance to read through the document on their own prior to signing. While the women discussed various topics relating to their resettlement and integration experiences in Pittsburgh, I focus my results and analysis exclusively on the themes that they identified as gender-specific.

Table 1. Focus Group Participants

| Focus Group 1 February 17, 2013 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | Country | Arrival to PGH | Marital | Job (Home Country) | Job (Pittsburgh) | English-level | Kids |
| 32 | Liberia | 2008 (Dec) | Separated | Map Production | Nursing Assistant | Advanced | 3 |
| 30 | Liberia | 2012 | Married | Secretary | None | 5-Advanced | - |
| 22 | Liberia | 2004 | Single | Student | Personal Care Assistant | 4 | 0 |
| 42 | Liberia | 2004 | Married | Salesperson | Personal Care Giver | 3 | 0 |
| 27 | Liberia | 2006 | Single | - | Housekeeping | 5 | Yes |
| Focus Group 2 February 19, 2013 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 38 | Bhutan | 2009 | Married | Teacher | Caregiver | 3 | 2 |
| 30 | Bhutan | 2012 | Married | Teacher (for disabled children) | Fair | 2 |
| 30 | Burma | 2006 | Married | No job | After-school Program | 2 | 3 |
| 40 | Morocco* | 2000 | Married | Secretary | Babysitter | Good | 2 |
| 32 | Bhutan | 2011 | Married | No job | Housekeeping | 3 | 2 |
| 45 | Iraq | 2001 | Married | Teacher | Social Services | 3 | 4 |

35 The main focus group sessions were audio-recorded and later transcribed by me. All responses that follow in this paper are given as verbatim as possible from the recorded material.

36 Pernice (1994, p. 209) noted that the informed consent form was a major obstacle in her research as “refugees felt confused and frightened that they had to give consent in writing before participation in a simple question-and-answer session.” She said participants felt that anonymity was negated when a signature was required (1994, p. 209). I acknowledged this and tried to address it by carefully explaining the reason for the informed consent form in a culturally appropriate and non-threatening manner. The written document [found in APPENDIX F] is in layman’s terms that are understandable to the women and emphasizes that I am not connected with any of the resettlement agencies. The document stresses the women’s confidentiality, risks and benefits, and their right to stop participation at any time.
a. Focus Group 1

The first focus group took place on February 17, 2013 in the home of a woman well-known in the Liberian community. When she heard about my research from Constance Mulbah, she wanted to get involved and volunteered her home for the session. As she generally hosts all meetings for the Liberian community, it was a good location for the women because it is familiar and welcoming to them. As most Liberians are Christians, the session started with the hostess saying a prayer and then introducing me to the other women as a friend and explaining the purpose of my research. She encouraged the women to answer the best way they could and to feel free. I believe that her introduction helped put the women who were unfamiliar with me more at ease and encouraged a more comfortable environment in which to speak. She also invited me to return at their next social gathering.

I began by going through the informed consent form section by section. One woman was concerned about confidentiality and I assured her that her name and any identifying information would not be present in my final document. Once the initial socio-demographic information was filled out, I began audio-recording the focus group. My first question asked, “What kind of advice would you give a friend or relative coming to Pittsburgh?” After about twenty minutes, one woman who had signed the informed consent form and filled out her demographic information but did not participate in the focus group, left early. I believe she happened to be stopping by the house at the time and had not anticipated staying, but felt comfortable enough, or possibly obligated, to fill out the paperwork. Another woman agreed to participate but did not contribute to the session.

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37 Socio-demographic survey can be found in APPENDIX A.
38 Additional questions can be found in APPENDIX A.
She arrived with a young elementary-aged boy, possibly a nephew or grandchild, who remained in the living room where we conducted the session which may have contributed to her lack of participation. In addition, the hostess’ teenage daughter was in the house, either upstairs in her bedroom or downstairs in the kitchen baking bread, while the focus group was conducted. While all of the women were familiar with her, her presence may have affected some of their responses. The discussion covered several issues relating to gender, focusing on women’s changing roles, the importance of social connections, the need for “social bridges” and their suggestions for addressing these needs.

*Women’s Changing Roles*

One of the main issues in the first focus group was adjusting to women’s multiple and conflicting roles in America. For example, Respondent 2 noted that coming to the United States, “the family ways definitely change” as mothers are forced to spend less time with their children because of employment responsibilities. Women are forced to adjust to shifting gender roles and power dynamics. For instance, when discussing the differences between men and women, Respondent 3 reflected that many of the disadvantages stem from back home in Liberia, where even before the civil war, “mostly males go to school, females are always at home. Females stay at home. If you are the oldest daughter, you have to stay at home to help your mom do some job, while your brothers go to school.” This has resulted in a culture where “males are held up to higher standards” where “women are scared to step up and take those [positions of authority] because they are used to having males in those positions” (Respondent 2). An example of this is the Liberian Community of Greater Pittsburgh, where majority of the resettled

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39 One of my research questions pertained to this, asking “How do refugee women’s roles within the family change as a result of resettlement?” Other questions can be found in the methodology section on p. 33.
Liberians are women, but the organization’s president is a man. According to Respondent 1, “females will feel like they are capable, but when it comes to doing those things the man is always the head.” Respondent 3 noted that this is beginning to change as Liberia’s current president is a woman and she is “pushing women forward, [telling them they] can do what men can do.”

As women struggle to adjust to these new roles, men are also finding it difficult to adapt as well, causing friction. According to Respondent 1, some men are reluctant to see these advances for women. She said she spoke with a man who said, “oh back in Africa, the women used to be housewives and they used to respect [men]. But this time, American culture makes them stand-up to us.” In addition, the women noted that the power relations stemming from men and women’s identities and status in Liberia are still in-tact in Pittsburgh as men are still the decision-makers in the community. Respondent 2 said that “when there are events coming up in the community, the women will always cook and bring food, while the men make the decisions.”

**Social Connections**

Another important issue that was raised regarded the social connections that the women have (and have not) made, or what Ager and Strang (2004, p. 18) term “social bridges.” They say this indicator measures connections made with people of other backgrounds to make “two way” interaction the heart of integration. While Respondent 2 mentioned the “family bond” between “Africans in general, no matter where you come from,” the women lacked opportunities to interact with other cultural communities,

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40 Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected president in 2006.
something they noted men are able to do through sports. Respondent 1 said interacting with immigrants from other communities “is something [the female Liberian] community is looking to do” because they “need that social connection.”

The women also noted the need for connection within their own community, what Ager and Strang (2004) term “social bonds.” While the women have strong “social bonds” with their churches and with the African community, they identified a need for socializing specifically for women, where they are not responsible for cooking or childcare. Respondent 1 noted that there are numerous organizations for kids and even for men, but no “real set-up organizations for women.” She continued to say that the women in the Liberian community are trying to organize their own social group so they “have [their] special time to just interact and have a break from the men because sometimes [they] need [their] own social time…because [they] want to empower [their] women.”

**Service-provision Suggestions**

When asked what tools would have helped during their initial resettlement to the United States, Respondent 3 said she would like to see refugee-serving agencies “teach the women, talk to the women and teach them their potential and self-esteem and how they can be really strong in society.” Respondent 2 added by saying that it was important to tell women “that just because their husband has to go out and work, doesn’t mean [they] have to stay home all day. [They] can find a way to better [themselves].” Thus, the women’s responses identified a need for guidance on how to adjust to their shifting roles.

In conclusion, the main gender-specific challenges the women identified related to their changing roles within the family and their need for “social bridges.” While the

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41 The men have organized soccer tournaments, like the world cup, where Nigerians can play Cameroonian, Ghanaians can play Bhutanese, etc.
women believe that they can succeed in positions of power, cultural values have led to more men in leadership positions. As a result, they suggested that refugee-serving agencies develop women-only programming addressed at empowerment and self-sufficiency as a way to help women adjust to changing gender dynamics. The literature suggests that involving men is also important and can lead to less friction within families.

b. Focus Group 2

The second focus group session, made up of three Bhutanese women, one Burmese woman, one Iraqi woman, and one Moroccan woman, took place on February 19, 2013 at the Prospect Park Family Center. All of the participants were acquainted with the Family Center and visit weekly, if not more, so the environment was familiar and inviting. Once everyone had arrived and eaten a little food, I began to go through the informed consent form. I answered questions and the women filled out their demographic information. A couple of the women brought to my attention that they were secondary migrants and had first resettled in other locations, so their year of arrival to Pittsburgh did not reflect their year of arrival to the United States. Then we began our focus group session, which lasted two hours. I had edited and re-developed some of my questions in response to the first focus group, so my first question changed to “What is your life like in Pittsburgh?” When we concluded the session, I was asked if I needed any follow-up and was encouraged to return. As I was collecting the paperwork, I learned that one participant declined to sign the informed consent form and the demographic survey.

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42 Additional questions from Focus Group 2 can be found in APPENDIX C.
43 I did not want to discuss the issue in front of the other participants and followed up with a phone call. After I explained the necessity of her signature in order to use the information she provided in the focus group, she signed the informed consent form.
The second focus group focused on the same topics as the first group, including women’s changing roles and “social connections,” but touched on different aspects. The main difference I observed was that the women of the second group seemed to have a mechanism already in place to facilitate “social bridges,” while the first group is still working towards connecting with women from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Although the women did not rate their English very high, the entire focus group was conducted in English without the use of an interpreter.

Women’s Changing Roles

The discussion touched on the women’s gender-specific roles within the family, including household duties and taking care of their children. Respondent F said that because women are responsible for domestic duties, “men have more chances to learn the language, to get friends, to get a job first, and to [even] change their job.” Respondent C supported this, saying that “just being a mom, limits our jobs.” For example, Respondent F recounted the difficulties she experienced looking for childcare for her child after she got her first full-time job:

It’s so hard to let them [kids] go to daycare. Even the daycare is expensive, too.

The first time I went to get a job full-time I asked my neighbor to take care of my daughter and she said, “Ok, you pay me $150 every week, without a snack,” and I thought to myself, but I get $200 in my job, so I get $50 for myself. I work so long until 6 o’clock and I get $50. What do I do? Staying home is better.

Thus, she decided that it made more economic sense for her to stay at home and care for her child herself. Although childcare was a barrier to employment, Respondent F noted that she was happy to take care of her own children because this allowed her to pass
down cultural beliefs, language and religion from her home country. Working for their children’s future success was a common motivator that the women said enabled them to negotiate their dual roles of domestic responsibility and outside employment. Respondent F said that in coming to the United States she lost her family and her country, but that it was worth it because her “kids [can] get an education, a good life, better than [her] life.”

**Social Connections**

The women also noted the importance of developing social connections within the community and how it was often more difficult for them than for men. Several of the women told stories of their arrival to the United States and how at first they disliked it and wanted to return to their home countries. Much of this was attributed to loneliness, as all of the women arrived with husbands who worked while they stayed by themselves at home. Respondent F said that after three months she told her husband she no longer wanted to stay, so he encouraged her to go back to school or to get a job to occupy herself. She ended up getting a part-time job (and having a baby), but she said that it was not enough to just be busy. She noted that when she made her first friend, a neighbor on her street, that she was able to adjust and be happy.

In addition, many of the women acknowledged the Prospect Park Family Center as helpful in giving them access to a strong network of “social connections.” While women in the first focus group felt that they did not have access to interact with women from different cultural or religious groups, the Family Center has facilitated opportunities for the women in the second group. For example, the focus group itself was multi-cultural with women coming from four different countries which is an example of what Ager and Strang (2004) term a “social bridge.” Several of the women also noted that they enjoy
attending weekly “mother’s group” as well because they can interact with the American staff, women from other cultural groups, and learn something new. Like women from the first focus group, they mentioned the importance of “social bonds” within their respective communities, from houses of worship to cultural organizations.

*Service Provision Suggestions*

Unlike the women in the first group, the women in the second group did not have any gender-specific suggestions to improve services. I think this is because they view the family center as being able to meet most or all of their needs. It as a place where women can “have a good time with the American girls” that work there and also receive services and amenities when needed. Respondent E referred to the center as a “second home,” saying that if she did not live nearby, she might run away. Respondent A mentioned that even when she is busy, she will make time in her schedule to go to the Friday morning “mother’s group.” In an effort to include more men in their service provision, the family center recently changed “mother’s group” to “family group.” According to the women, however, only a couple of men have shown up and were uncomfortable surrounded by the majority women present. The women noted that they prefer “mother’s group” because it gives them an opportunity to speak more freely and laugh with one another.

In conclusion, the women in the second focus group identified similar gender-specific barriers to their integration in Pittsburgh. The women discussed the burden of navigating their changing roles, but identified their children’s future as a key motivator in coping. They also discussed their access to various social connections and the assistance that the family center has provided. In the following section, I analyze the results in connection with the literature review.
V. Discussion

The literature reviewed in this paper suggests that while all refugees have needs during resettlement and integration, refugee women’s differing experiences result in differing needs than that of refugee men. While many authors are hesitant to make generalizations about the experiences of refugee women, previous studies suggest that there are common barriers to their integration. I conducted two focus group sessions with a total of eleven refugee women from various cultural and socio-demographic backgrounds to learn more about their integration and resettlement experiences in Pittsburgh. The goal of my study was achieved in that I was able to gain some insight to the gender-specific needs of refugee women during their integration and resettlement by identifying barriers, learning how women’s roles change, and better understanding women’s long-term goals. I hope that my findings contribute both to the current literature on women’s integration and are able to better inform local service provision through women-specific programming. In this section I analyze the common issues identified by the women, focusing on their changing roles and the importance of social connections, in relation to Ager and Strang’s (2004) Indicators of Integration framework. I also attempt to make comparisons when possible between the two focus groups, as the first focus group participants all came from one country (Liberia), had varying marital statuses, and half of the participants did not have children, while the second group’s participants were multi-cultural (Bhutan, Burma, Iraq, and Morocco) and married with children.

Women in both focus group sessions noted changes in gender role expectations, which Deacon and Sullivan (2009, p. 273) state is normal as “gender roles in refugees’ host nations are frequently different from what members of these communities are used
to, with women now often having greater daily freedoms than they or their families are accustomed to.” These freedoms, while liberating, can also be difficult to negotiate. While many refugee women first experience outside employment during resettlement, majority of the women in the focus groups held jobs in their home countries so they were already accustomed to working outside of the home. In addition, Deacon and Sullivan’s (2009, p. 277) study noted that a significant relationship emerged between the participants’ marital and employment status, where “women whose husbands were residing with them in resettlement were significantly less likely to be employed than were women who were single.” My study does not support their finding, as all of the married women are employed. A couple of the women in the second group, all of whom arrived with their husbands, noted that they sought employment within weeks or only a couple of months after arrival. My data could be skewed for several reasons. For example, the women in my focus groups may not be representative of refugee women in general as they held outside employment in their country of origin and have a good working knowledge of English. Another issue regarding employment that a couple of the women noted was that their previous work experience did not transfer over, making it difficult for them to find a job, something that has been well-documented in the literature for both men and women.44

A role that is familiar to all refugee women and that has been maintained in resettlement is that of childcare provider.45 Several of the women acknowledged this role

44 The IIAC has tried to address this need locally through a program called Refugee Career Mentoring aimed specifically at refugees who have advanced degrees or experience. The program works to pair a refugee with a mentor (a local Pittsburgher) in his or her field. The program is close to finishing its second cohort.

45 Even those women who have not yet had their own children have been responsible for childcare for other family members or at community events.
as a barrier to their own employment, but at the same time, seemed to refuse to view it as a burden. Respondent F said that she left her home country to give her children access to a better life and more opportunity. When she was forced to turn down her first full-time job because it did not make economic sense to pay for childcare, she did not identify it as a barrier or even a burden, but a chance to spend quality time with her child and pass on her culture, language, and religion. Gray and Elliott (2001, p. 5) support this, stating “women have some concerns about bringing up children in a different culture, because of the risk of weakening cultural values” and so “they may be unwilling to use childcare even when it is available.” Thus, refugee-serving agencies must acknowledge women’s role as childcare provider and offer appropriate services. For example, access to language training or other programs “depends upon childcare facilities as well as reimbursement for childcare expenses, yet many are unwilling to use non-family childcare” (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 5). I think this unwillingness to use formal childcare extends across cultures because the concept of using childcare outside of the family is often foreign. Studies suggest that single women are more likely to need access to and use affordable childcare than married women (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009, p. 279).

In addition to women’s role as childcare provider, the first focus group discussed other gender role expectations in the Liberian community, where women are expected to tend to domestic responsibilities while men “make the decisions.” They said that while they believe that women are just as capable of being in positions of authority, they are used to seeing men in power and they do not want to upset that balance. The women noted that these cultural interpretations of gender are beginning to change, due in part to Liberia’s first female president and the women’s own adaptation to United States culture.
While some men are not receptive to these new roles for women, the women seem open to embracing this change, yet this “clash of cultural norms” often results in “stress and tension in the household” (Dickerson, Leary, Merritt & Zaidi, n.d., p. 18). Once in America, men “must learn to deal with their wives working and possibly having a higher income than them” and “their daughters may pursue college and other options that might seem a direct affront to their authority” (Dickerson, Leary, Merritt & Zaidi, n.d., p. 18).

The Liberian women said that they want to begin participating in the decision-making process, especially for issues that affect them, so they are seeking to form a women’s social group to facilitate female empowerment and to engage with other women from different cultural groups. In order to ease this adjustment to new gender and power dynamics, the women suggested that refugee resettlement agencies develop women-specific training during orientation to help empower women and give them resources to mitigate conflicts faced at home or in the community.

Respondent F, in the second focus group, recounted a story highlighting how she has been able to navigate and adapt to the greater freedoms offered to her by helping others in the community. She said that if she sees someone walking down the street and knows them, that she will offer them a ride whether they are male or female. When her husband found out, he told her that she should not be offering men rides because it was disrespectful to her religion. Her response was that she was not doing anything wrong and that it was cold outside, to which he responded by laughing. Thus, this example shows how traditional gender roles can be affected by “differential access to new resources…exposure to strangers with different lifestyles, and different expectations” (Gray & Elliott, 2001, p. 5). In Pittsburgh Respondent F is able to drive a car and be
alone with men who are not family members, things she would not be able to do in her home country because of her gender.

In other instances, however, changes in role can be disempowering, especially “if a refugee woman is left with a double or triple work burden in the end” (Olsson, 2002, p. 45). If a woman becomes the breadwinner, she is still responsible for domestic responsibilities and childcare. This is usually exacerbated because they need to devote “substantial time and energy to learning English and dealing with the other demands of beginning their lives in a new, unfamiliar place” (Goodkind & Deacon, 2004, p. 734). Although domestic violence\(^{46}\) was not mentioned in either of the focus groups, Deacon and Sullivan (2009, p. 273) mention that “gender-role negotiations, when combined with the stressors experienced by refugee men, may also give rise to increased rates of domestic violence within refugee households.” The women may have been reluctant to talk about domestic violence in a focus group setting due to privacy issues, shame, because it is taboo in their culture, or for a variety of other reasons.

In addition to discussing changing gender roles, both focus groups emphasized the importance of developing and maintaining social connections in their lives, which took the form of what Ager and Strang (2004) term “social bonds,” “social bridges,” and “social links.” While initially I had decided to focus on “social bridges,” data from the focus groups suggest that all three indicators have relevant gender-specific implications. Although Ager and Strang (2004) suggest several practice level and policy level indicators in which to measure integration, a gendered interpretation needs to be applied

\(^{46}\) I would not expect domestic violence, or other issues of a more personal nature, to be brought up in a focus group setting due to confidentiality issues.
to make the indicator significant for women. Deacon and Sullivan’s (2009, p. 278) study on the complex and gendered needs of refugee women highlights the relevance of social connections stating:

The degree of social support available to the participants was significantly correlated with their ability to access help for their needs in resettlement. Women who reported higher levels of social support were less likely to experience obstacles to obtaining assistance with day-to-day resettlement needs.

The first focus group seemed to have a solid network of “social bonds” through religious houses of worship and connections with other Africans. Ager and Strang (2004, p. 19) say that these bonds are crucial because without a sense of identification to a particular group, integration risks becoming assimilation. Yet, the women said that while both men and children have their own “set-up organizations,” Liberian women are lacking a formal structure. The women expressed a desire to form a women’s group for Liberians, to help empower Liberian women (“social bonds”) and so they could interact with other women from different cultural groups (“social bridges”). This supports Deacon and Sullivan’s (2009, p. 278) study that found “90% of the women indicated a desire for more opportunities to meet others like themselves, and 94% noted their desire for organized opportunities to meet others who share their language and culture.” In order to facilitate “social bridges,” the women suggested that refugee-serving agencies develop women-

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47 For example, Ager and Strang (2004, p. 19) state that a core indicator at the policy level for “social bonds” is the “number of registered refugee community organisations (current totals and those operational for two years or more.” In order to be more inclusive of women, I would suggest identifying the number of men and women registered in community organizations and what their roles are in the organization (leadership, cooking, etc.) and comparing the data to non-refugee community groups.
only programming in tandem with orientation classes to teach women their potential, build self-esteem, and introduce them to women from other cultural backgrounds.

While women in first focus group suggested the need for more women-specific programming, the second group of women already seems to access and use a “set-up organization” to develop “social bridges.” This is facilitated through the Prospect Park Family Center’s weekly “mother’s group” and other activities, where women of varying cultural backgrounds come together to learn something or do an activity and interact. “Mother’s group” is an opportunity for the women to take a break from men and to socialize with one another, which is what the Liberian women said they lacked. The respondents in the second focus group noted how important attending “mother’s group” is to their sense of overall well-being. Respondent B said that even if she is busy, she will make time to go to the family center on Fridays, while Respondent E described the family center as a “second home.” While many of the Liberian women live near the family center, they do not access its resources. This could be due to the fact that the family center’s main priority is to work with families who have children, infants to five years, and several of the Liberian women do not have children, and those that do, do not have young children.

a. Limitations

My focus group results did not match the four indicators I identified in my methodology, instead going in a broader direction focusing on women’s changing roles and overall social connections. While the women in both focus groups touched on the themes of “employment,” “social bridges,” “language and culture,” and “rights and citizenship,” they did not necessarily do so in a gender relevant manner. If I would have
conducted a pilot focus group, I may have been able to better tailor my questions to my initial indicators. Despite this, I believe that my results are still relevant because they provide insight to better understanding refugee women’s experiences in Pittsburgh, which is helpful for service providers. In addition, by conducting focus groups with refugee women the results help contribute to the growing body of literature on refugee women’s integration experiences using women’s own perspectives.

Additional limitations I encountered dealt with my relationship with participants, the research process, informed consent procedures, small sampling size, and my sampling technique. For example, the small sample size and sampling technique limit the generalizability of the data and makes it difficult to examine all of the differences that may have existed across the groups. Although there were a couple discrepancies between my results and the literature, I believe these variations help expand the resettlement and integration experiences of refugee women. Goodkind and Deacon (2004, p. 722) note that while refugees share similar circumstances, “their experiences also differ widely, based not only upon the particular refugee group and their culture, but also on the different social locations of individuals within refugee groups” and for these reasons, as researchers we must “be aware that refugee communities are comprised of individuals with different interests and needs” (p. 737).

b. Conclusion

My research was qualitative and exploratory. Therefore, I had no formal hypothesis to prove or disprove. Instead, I believe it is helpful to see how these results can fit into the current body of refugee literature on integration. I believe that adding a gendered dimension to Ager and Strang’s (2004) framework, a model that has been
widely used in Europe, enables a more inclusive perspective of integration. While I had anticipated using the indicators of “employment,” “social bridges,” “language and culture,” and “rights and citizenship” to analyze women’s gender-specific needs, data from my focus groups revealed a broader focus on adapting to role-change and the importance of social connections. The women’s responses suggested that while adjusting to their changing roles was difficult, they embraced their greater freedoms. The only significant comparison between the two groups was in access to “social bridges,” where the second group all had children, and as a result possibly had greater access to the family center’s resources.

VI. Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

a. Local Service Implications

One of the main goals of this research was to help improve the provision of services to female refugees by local service providers. Pernice (1994, p. 212) concludes her article on the methodological implications of conducting research with immigrants and refugees by saying that “the role of the researcher and the quality of research could be greatly enhanced if the collection of research information could be linked to provision of social services so that refugees and immigrants recognize they will benefit, at least in the long term.” Deacon and Sullivan (2009, p. 282) also note that “greater access to social support will not only provide these women with significant psychosocial benefits but may also help them become more self-sufficient.”

The results of this study support the literature in suggesting the importance of involving female refugees in all stages of the resettlement and integration process, which
is often difficult to do as men are usually the leaders and gatekeepers of the community, while women are relegated to the domestic sphere of housework, cooking, and childcare. While the small sample size limits generalizability, this study hints at the significance of women’s socio-demographic characteristics to their needs in resettlement. Thus, it is important for service providers to acknowledge that integration is not a one-size-fits-all solution by offering more tailored service provision. I agree with the suggestions made during the first focus group session, for women-specific training during the initial cultural orientation and distribution of resources to adapt to changing roles, like working outside the home and participating in family decision-making. In addition, I think it is important to offer women a space, whether formally or informally, to get together with other women to socialize. I think that the Prospect Park Family Center offers a good model on how this could be put into practice, as they offer needed services for the whole family, like home visits, case management, and help with filling-out forms like taxes, as well as women-specific services like “mother’s group” every Friday.

b. Further Research

Although interviews with key stakeholders in the community identified “employment,” “social bridges,” “language and culture,” and “rights and citizenship” as key indicators for integration, the focus group discussions centered on other gender-related themes, namely women’s changing roles and social connections. I believe further research exploring those initial indicators, specifically investigating women’s gender-specific needs and access to “language,” and how this may affect “employment” and “rights and citizenship,” may yield meaningful results to help local service providers

48 Although most of the refugees coming into Pittsburgh come from traditional, patriarchal backgrounds I do not foresee a problem in gathering the women for a women-specific orientation.
develop more inclusive programming. The researcher would need to devote adequate
time to developing appropriate questions and in conducting a pilot focus group.

While domestic violence and mental health were discussed in the literature
review, often in relation to changing roles and power dynamics within the family, focus
group discussion did not touch on either of these issues. It is unlikely for issues of this
nature to be discussed in a focus group due to their personal nature and possible shame,
but could be studied using alternative methods like one-on-one interviews or surveys.
Depending on the relationship between the participant and researcher, one-on-one
interviews could potentially unveil insights of a more personal nature. Survey
questionnaires, due to their anonymity, may make participants more inclined to give
detailed information in addition to providing biographical information. Also, a survey
instrument can be distributed to larger groups and may enable the researcher to make
broader generalizations.

Olsson (2002, p. 50) states that “to further explore the challenges women refugees
experience, the accounts of women are invaluable.” Thus, this calls for more exploratory
qualitative studies or longitudinal studies comparing refugee populations from varying
countries of origin in order to see commonalities and differences based on ethnic group
experience with women (Deacon & Sullivan, 2009; Dickerson, Leary, Merritt & Zaidi,
n.d.; Olsson, 2004). In addition, social status in their home countries, religion, socio-
demographics, and relocation city have been identified as factors in the integration
process. In conclusion, more studies involving refugee women are needed to help develop
a greater understanding of their experiences, how their experiences affect their needs, and
what can be done to more effectively address these needs when they arrive in the United States.

c. Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe the focus-group narratives reflect common themes of refugee women’s experiences during integration and resettlement. According to the current literature, although each refugee’s situation is unique, refugee women’s gender-specific experiences result in gender-specific needs during resettlement and integration. While focus group discussions revealed significant gender-based needs, the women seemed to embrace the shift in power dynamics that has led to new roles and responsibilities. Overall, I believe that in order to best meet refugee women’s needs, it is important to acknowledge their differing experiences prior to resettlement, which can include less access to education and other resources, and include refugee women in decision-making and service-provision during the resettlement and integration process.
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APPENDIX A
Focus Group Interview Template

1. What kind of advice would you give a friend or relative coming to Pittsburgh? [What would you tell new refugees about learning to live here?*]
2. What do you do differently since coming to Pittsburgh?* What has been the biggest change in moving to Pittsburgh?
3. When are some times you have been surprised/disappointed since coming to America?*
4. How have you learned to survive in the US?*
5. Is this different than men?*
6. What is your life like here? What is life like for your children?*
7. What has helped you the most in settling in Pittsburgh?
8. What do you need that will make you feel more comfortable in Pittsburgh?
9. When are some times you have been worried since coming to America?*
10. When are some times you have felt happy since coming to America?*
11. What do you imagine will happen to you and your children in the future?*
12. Is there anything else that seems important for me to know about your life in Pittsburgh?*

*Questions adapted from Clarke (2009)

Focus Group Participant Survey

Age: _____
Year of Arrival: _________
Marital Status: __________
Job in home country: ___________________ Job in Pittsburgh: ____________________
English Level (5-Advanced and 1-none): __________
Children (how many?): __________
APPENDIX B
Focus Group 1 Actual Questions

Introduction: I would like to learn more about you and what your life is like in Pittsburgh.

1. What kind of advice would you give a friend or relative coming to move to Pittsburgh for the first time? [silence] Or another way to rephrase it maybe is what would you tell new refugees coming here?

2. What has been your biggest change in moving to Pittsburgh? [One respondent mentioned changes for mothers, follow-up question] Do mothers not usually work in Liberia? Or work outside the home? Or they just don’t work as many hours?

3. How have you learned to survive in Pittsburgh? You guys all mentioned that community was important. Are there any other things that you use here in Pittsburgh in order to get by? [Respondent mentioned religion] So other Christians outside of the Liberian community? [Yes] Are there specific churches that help you or is it just a general statement? [more comments on food and events]

4. Do you see the obstacles you are facing here in Pittsburgh as different obstacles that men face? [discussion on gender issues] Do you think that’s starting to change a little bit with the younger generation?

5. Looking towards the future, how do you see your life in Pittsburgh in five years or in ten years? How do you see yourself as being successful or happy? [discussion] So when you’re looking into the future and you see your ideal life, what steps do you see that you need to take to achieve that? [education] Any specific education?

6. The Liberian community in general, do you guys interact with other groups a lot? Do you interact with local Pittsburghers? [mention sports] You guys interact with the Nepali people? [just the men, kids in school] What about the women? [no]

7. Are there times, are there specific times you have been in Pittsburgh and you’ve been really surprised or disappointed by something?

8. Are there other times in Pittsburgh that you’ve been happy? [Do you have specific examples?]

9. Is there anything else important that you think I should know about your lives in Pittsburgh?

10. Do you guys see anything else like a barrier to getting more integrated into the community? [mention stereotypes] What kind of stereotypes besides the ones we’ve already talked a little bit about?

11. Is there any way that you think refugee resettlement agencies could make services that are more catered specifically to women that you think would be beneficial?
APPENDIX C
Focus Group 2 Actual Questions

1. In order to find out more about your life in Pittsburgh now, what changes have happened since you moved here? [differences] What kind of differences?

2. Is there any advice, like, if there is still, if you still have family in your home country or in refugee camps and they found out they were coming to Pittsburgh in a couple of weeks, what advice would you tell them? Is there any way to prepare them? [Someone said there was no one left in their home country] What if you were in your home country, if you could go back in time and now that you know Pittsburgh is like, is there any advice you would give yourself coming here? Is there anything you wish you would have known? [response] Is there anything that could have prepared you?

3. I know you mentioned language as a barrier sometimes to get employment. Do you see any other barriers here in Pittsburgh to doing things? Like obstacles to doing things? [training] Did you guys come here with qualifications from your home country, but they didn’t transfer here? [yes]

4. You said you still have a lot of family back home, but have you been able to build a family here? Like maybe not blood relatives but good friends? [yes] Do you have a club or is it more informal? [mention religious community] So is religion pretty important? Do you have a place you can go to worship?

5. Do you guys see any differences in between your experience coming here and your husband’s experience coming here? [childcare] Do you guys see any other differences that men have?

6. Are there any times you have been surprised or disappointed in Pittsburgh?

7. When are other times that you’ve felt happy in Pittsburgh?

8. You guys mentioned the Family Center a little bit and said it would be difficult if it wasn’t there. What if you lived in a different part of Pittsburgh and it was difficult to come here. What would you do? [mention resettlement agencies] What would be suggestions for the resettlement agencies to be more helpful?

9. I know that men and dads are encouraged to go to the Family Center, but usually it is mostly women. Do you like that? Do you feel more comfortable with women there?

10. So for the future, for your kids, you think education is just one of the most important things?
APPENDIX D
Background Information on the Prospect Park Family Center and UAC

Prospect Park Family Center

My work with the IFCP has allowed me to visit the Family Center several times and participate in both the weekly Family Group and monthly food pantry. Many of the refugee women (and some men) are familiar with me through the IFCP.

Union of African Communities in Pittsburgh (UAC)

Through my work on the IFCP I was introduced to Benedict Killang, president of the UAC, and Zedueh Doerue, vice president of the UAC. I currently intern under Rufus Idris at Christian Evangelistic Economic Development (CEED), a non-profit that provides free technical assistance to small businesses in Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Rufus Idris put me in contact with Constance Mulbah, a member of the UAC and refugee herself from Liberia. Constance Mulbah is also an active member of the Liberian Community of Greater Pittsburgh (which is a member organization of the UAC) and a recent graduate of Slippery Rock University. We met previously while I was interning at DHS and she was interning with a local refugee resettlement agency. She will be recruiting women from the African community to participate in one of the focus groups.
APPENDIX E
Cultural Background Information on Refugees

i. Burmese Chin

The Chin are an ethnic group in Burma who were persecuted for ethnic and religious reasons. Many fled to refugee camps in Malaysia, Thailand, and India where they lived for many years. The Chin are made up of different ethnic groups, who speak 20-25 languages. Most are used to a rural lifestyle where corn and rice cultivation was a large part of life. The husband is the head of household. Many of the refugees that came to America are Christian, young and uneducated.

ii. Burmese Karen

The Karen are also an ethnic group from Burma that fled due to religious and ethnic persecution by the majority Burmese. Most lived in refugee camps in Thailand for as many as 20 years and may need to be taught how to use modern appliances and conveniences, such as running water, electricity, and phones. The Karen also speak several different dialects and was the first tribe to convert to Christianity, although 70% are Buddhist. They trace their lineage through the female line. Men assist with the raising of children. Agriculture is the center of their economy.

iii. Iraqis

Many Iraqis have been immigrating since the Gulf War in 1991, but many recently became refugees due to their work or association with U.S. companies, aid agencies, or government. These recent refugees never lived in camps and are generally more highly educated than adults coming from camp backgrounds. They are used to a higher standard

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49 Except when cited otherwise, the cultural information was taken from handouts I compiled during my internship at DHS. Full handouts can be accessed at the DHS website at: http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/imm-intern/cultural-info.aspx
of living and experience a dramatic drop in their social status upon arrival in the U.S. 
Majority of Iraqis are Muslim and speak Arabic.

iv. **Bhutanese**

The Bhutanese fled to refugee camps in Nepal where they lived for almost twenty years. Gender roles are distinct and clearly defined where women do not generally have equal access to information and resources and do not enjoy equal decision-making authority. Many arrived in the U.S. with little or no English abilities. The Bhutanese have adapted well to Pittsburgh and have formed a cultural organization, BCAP (Bhutanese Cultural Association of Pittsburgh). Approximately 500 were resettled in Pittsburgh, but due to secondary migration (refugees initially resettled in a different part of the U.S., but relocated for family, employment opportunities, lower cost of living) the overall population is closer to 4,000.

v. **Liberians**

The United States Refugee Program (USRP) began resettling Liberians in 1992 and numbers continued to increase by 1998 due to civil war (Schmidt, 2011). Between 2003 and 2005 more than 8,000 Liberian refugees were admitted to the United States (Schmidt, 2011). Most have a rural background, growing rice, coffee and cocoa, with limited exposure to formal education (World Relief, n.d.). In addition, many have experienced “dual flight” meaning they were forced from their place of refuge two, three or more times and as a result of flight, instability and death many families are often headed by single parents (Schmidt, 2011). The Liberian community is the second largest African community in Pittsburgh, behind Nigerians, with approximately 200 people.
APPENDIX F

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY
600 FORBES AVENUE • PITTSBURGH, PA 15282

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: Exploring the Gender-Specific Needs of Female Refugees During Resettlement and Integration: A Case Study in Pittsburgh

INVESTIGATORS: Principal Investigator: Daniel Lieberfeld, Ph.D. School of Social and Public Policy (412) 396-1851

Student Co-Investigator: Kristina (Krissey) Kimura 5863 Hobart Street, Apt. 3 Pittsburgh, PA 15217 (949) 767-7891 krisykimura@gmail.com, kimurak@duq.edu

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master’s degree in Social and Public Policy at Duquesne University.

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project in which we would like to understand ways in which female refugees adjust to their new lives in Pittsburgh. We hope that information learned from this project is helpful for organizations that provide services to refugees.

We would like you to participate in an informal focus group discussion. A focus group is a type of research where a group of people is asked about their opinions about a certain topic. The discussion will begin with a question that seeks to understand your adjustment to life in Pittsburgh. The discussion will take place with 5 to 7 other refugee women for approximately one and a half to two hours. You will be encouraged to participate as much as possible in the

Initiales: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________

Revised: 5/17/02
discussion. The discussion will likely take place at the Prospect Park Family Center and will be audio recorded and then written out by hand. An interpreter will be available, if needed.

You are under no obligation to give us permission to record the discussion. If you do not grant us permission, you will no longer be able to participate in the study.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

YOUR PARTICIPATION:
Courtney Macurak of the Prospect Park Family Center or Constance Mulbah of the Union of African Communities in Pittsburgh has spoken with you about participating in this project. Your participation is completely voluntary. The researchers are not affiliated in any way with refugee resettlement agencies. If you choose not to participate, there will be no negative consequences in the support you may receive from refugee resettlement agencies. If you choose to participate, nothing you say will affect the support you may receive from refugee resettlement agencies.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:
No risks greater than those encountered in everyday life are anticipated. The questions are not designed for the women to relive any trauma or persecution they have faced in their country of origin or refugee camps. Subjects may refuse to answer any question that they find upsetting or uncomfortable.

While there is not a direct benefit to you, your participation may help organizations working with refugees to better understand the needs of women. Some women may see participation in a focus group as a benefit in that they gain a safe environment to talk about things they may not ordinarily have a chance to discuss.

The researcher has resources in place for referrals to help subjects manage distress in the unlikely case that should that occur.
Also, the nature of the focus group means there is potential for a breach of confidentiality from the women themselves. The women involved in the discussion are cautioned not to share information outside of the focus group, but the researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality.

**COMPENSATION:**
You will be provided with food and beverages, including tea, fruit, and cookies.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**
Your name will never appear on any research tools or presentation of the research information or results. You will not be identified by name or institution. Similarly, any identifying details such as personal names, names of local institutions, or of any other person/s you mention in your response will never appear in any research instrument or presentation of the research data or results.

All written and recorded materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the student co-investigator’s house. Your responses will only appear in qualitative data summaries. All focus group discussion materials will be destroyed five years after the completion of research.

**RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:**
You are under no obligation to participate in this study and may withdraw at any time during the focus group if you do not wish to continue. If you withdraw, the researcher will use a copy of the transcripts to remove your individual data from the focus group session. If you prefer not to participate in this study or to withdraw from it, nobody (except the researchers) will be informed about your decision.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**
You will be provided with a summary of results, at no cost, upon request.

**VOLUNTARY CONSENT:**
I have read or heard the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I

Initials: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________
certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Daniel Lieberfeld, Principal Investigator (412-396-1851), Krissy Kimura, student co-investigator (949-767-7891), and Dr. Joe Kush, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-1151).

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Initials: __________________

Date: __________________
TABLE 1
Ager and Strang’s Indicators of Integration Framework

TABLE 2
Berry’s Acculturation Model

BERRY’S ACCULTURATION MODEL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assimilation</th>
<th>Integration</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

*Is it considered to be of value to develop relationships with the larger society?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marginalization</th>
<th>Separation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Is it considered to be of value to maintain one's cultural heritage?*